My Marriage Mystery

By Sydney Watson

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The hush of night was upon all the earth as Addie Foyle stepped stealthily out of the house into the grounds of Bullshanger Hall. The chill of night, too, was abroad, for though it was five or six minutes since the clock over the stables had struck four, yet four is, to all intents and purposes, a night hour at the extreme end of the month of October.

The chill of the air struck the fleeing girl and made her shiver, for the fever of intense excitement which had possessed her for the last seven hours (more especially), and the long night vigil she had passed, had all tended to lower her temperature, and to make her susceptible to the cold.

But she still had six miles to walk, most of the distance up and down the hilly land of the downs that rolled between Bullshanger and the cross-country railway junction to which she turned her face on leaving the grounds of the hall, and she would soon get warm.

For previous parts of this Story, see our Nos. 347, 348, 319, and 330 "Thrilling." — All obtainable.
The first half-mile of her way lay across the park, and there was a weird, eerie sense about this passage, for the shaggy, black Scotch cattle littered the ground everywhere in the neighborhood of the footpath she traversed, and mingled with the hemlocks and parsley plants, to her feel, rose up from its dreams of Scottish hill and glen, by the passage, at this unearthly hour, of a pedestrian across the park.

The hoot of an owl, the silent noisome flight of a bat, the plaintive cry of some night-bird, whose note was strange to the fast-dying, whose words some of the sounds that broke the silence of the place and hour.

But she had no sense of fear of her surroundings; she feared only the horrors she left behind her, and the remembrance of the threats of that soundless, Fenton Poyle, leader again. The room was made invulnerable to fear of anything that she might meet on the way.

Once, just before she reached the high ladder-stile that led over the park fence and out on to the Winchester turnpike road, she almost ran into a bullock, whose proximity had been hidden from her view by the trunk of a mighty beech.

Momentarily startled by the unexpectedness of the encounter, she immediately recovered herself, and in spite of that was pressing upon her mind, she could not fail to notice the magnificent pose of the great shaggy beast, as he stood there outlined against the background of the slaty grey night-gloom.

It is singular how, sometimes, even when the mind is gripped by some great sorrow or difficulty, when every sense is racked to its fullest tension, some trifling memory, some inane fancy, will intrude, which, after the past is recalled by the slightest clue. Some such experience became Addie's as she passed the black bullock and climbed the ladder-stile.

Long, long ago, somewhere—was it in one of the art salons in Paris? was it in some painter's studio on the Continent? was it in America? She did not readily recall and she made no effort to recall just where it was, but she had once, with her dear gardie, stood before a picture of an American artist—Frederick Bridgeman—that rose up before her mind's-eye now as freshly as though it had only yesterday that she had seen it.

The canvas was called "The Procession of the Bull Apis." In the picture, the magnificent bull was being marched in triumph to its installation in the Temple of Osiris. Pharaoh, Ramesses II., acting as a priest, stood on the wondrous pavement of the temple, the mosaics of which could scarcely be seen for the lotus with which it was paved. The bull, which was covered with gold, was striking the sturik (Egyptian timber), her face full of the rapt expression of one inspired. A paunchy priest led the sacred beast, which was housed beneath an awning richly embroidered with designs of that most mystic of all flowers, the scarab, or beetles of the sun. The sides of the choice beast were wreathed with the loveliest of flowers. Behind the bull there had followed a wondrous procession of white-robed priests, bearing an ark-like structure, a ballet of dancing-girls, a choir of singing-masters, and a crowd of priests and worshipers, all robed in the famous Egyptian linen of purest white.

What did it all mean? had she asked her gardie, and he had told her all the story of the sacred bull, how that the Egyptians had kept a bull of gold, that was the true symbol of their religion. The priest, the god, the whole of the pharaoh, was the bull, the gods, the gods, the gods, the gods, and the gods.

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The clock struck five as she crossed the first downhill, and she began to try to think where she should take a ticket for when she should arrive at the station.

I would go to dear Miss Gryffith at Malvern, I mused, but if the postman examines any search for me, it is there that he would probably go first.

The eastern horizon began now to lighten ever so little. Her eyes noted the change that spoke the coming of the dawn, and somehow a new sense of hope and cheer came into her soul, her step lost its lag, and she stepped out once more in the way it always was.

Each new day-dawn, like every spring-time, is a resurrection, and at a spring-time, to the watcher, so at day-dawn to him who watches it, new hope and cheer are born.

The sun appeared on the horizon, and as the eyes of the watching girl took them in, and her quickened feet took her nearer her destination, and a sense of the horrors which she had fled, she found her spirit rising until presently, she was saying to her self, I'll try.

"I am young and strong. I can do many things that ought to enable me to earn my living. I have nearly seventy-five pounds in money, and the jewels I have ought to realise quite that amount again, even if I sold at a minuscule disadvantage. I have a clear conscience, I have God overhead, my father and friend, through Jesus, His Son, my Saviour, so why should I despair? I have the assurance also, in my soul, given me, I am sure, by God's Holy Spirit, that dear gardie is living, and that he will return to England. Such a return will sure be to be hailed by the man who has told him that I can make him happy.

Her lips gave vent to a little laugh of sweet assurance that filled in all the unfinished picture of her thoughts and of her broken sentence.

The first gleam of gold and pink of the new day climbed over the range of the next downhill, and her lips broke into that laugh.

Five minutes later she walked into the apparently deserted junction station. Twenty minutes after she was in the train on her way to London. By nine o'clock she was at Waterloo.

CHAPTER II.

Giving a Lie the Start.

It was less than a quarter of an hour after Addie left her room to flee the house, the door of her chaperone's room opened again, and, wrapped in a worn dressing-gown, and with a candle in her left hand, the half-eyed, unscrupulous woman crossed the corridor to the vacant room of her charge.

Entering, and closing the door silently behind her, she began a rapid, silent overhaul of the drawers, boxes, dressing-table, and other places. She discovered a number of things, such as valuable lace, handkerchiefs, silks, a dressing-case of great value, the mental fittings of all the bottles, etc., being of gold, she made the whole of her selection into a well-compartmented pile, then opening the doors, and ascertaining that there was no one about, that there was no sound abroad in the house, she picked up the purloined pile, and sped swiftly back to her own room, returning a moment later to Addie's apartment for the candle she had left there.

She spent the next three-quarters of an hour in carefully storing away in her own boxes the things she had stolen, a satisfied smile filling all her face, as, with the sophistry of an evil heart, she murmured:

There is no harm in this move, I am sure: it is only the proper precautions of a lady in my position, for as there is always, of course, just the possibility that Fenton may do some tom-fool thing, and not carry me after all, but give me my corse, well then, it is just as well to be prepared, and as the old song says, "Feather your nest while you still have enough to knit your own clothes.

The clock had just struck five when she had finished the storage of the "perquisites," she yawned as she locked the box, and muttered:

"Five o'clock! I am sleepy enough to get another good nap. I can easily have another three hours if I can get a few more minutes.

She disrobed again, and got into her bed, and in three minutes was asleep.

When she went for breakfast at nine, she entered
the breakfast-room, looking more charming than ever Fenton Foyle had seen her looking before—at least he thought so, and, under his breath, he whispered what he thought. Then, as there was no servant in the room at the moment, and a large screen sheltered them, he drew her swiftly, silently into his arms, and passionately kissed her time after time.

A step sounded in the hall outside, and they were three yards apart when the servant entered the room.

"Where is your lawyer, Mr. Foyle?" the chaperone asked. "Does he not breakfast with us?"

"He breakfasted an hour ago, and is training it to town by this time," replied Fenton Foyle.

All this, alone, was meant for the servant's ear. Then, turning to the maid, Constance Bristow asked:

"Do you know if Miss Foyle is coming to breakfast this morning, or whether she is taking it upstairs?"

"I will enquire, ma'am," replied the servant, hurriedly leaving the room.

"I did not look in upon her as I came down," Constance remarked to Fenton Foyle, "for I thought it possible that she might be sleeping late, after a probable bad night due to the excited state I found her in last night."

The pair took their places at the table, and the chaperone had just begun to pour out the coffee, when the maid returned with a scared face.

"Miss Addie's rooms are empty, sir, ma'am," cried the frightened-looking girl. "Her bed has not been slept in, her drawers are all open, and her things are lying about everywhere, and—"

The eyes of Fenton Foyle and Constance Bristow met, the same expression of questioning wonder in both their faces, natural on his part, well acted on hers.

"What can it mean?" he asked.

"I will go up to the room and see if there is any clue to the mystery," she said.

She left the room and she followed her, the maid bringing up the rear.

"There's no doubt about it," she said, a minute or two later, as the trio stood in the middle of the vacated bedroom, and the evidences of a hurried flight were everywhere apparent—more pronounced by reason of Constance Bristow's visit to the apartment four hours before.

"There's not a shadow of doubt but that, for some reason, she has bolted, and—" he continued.

Constance Bristow meant the servant to hear her reply, though she pretended to utter them in a whispered aside.

"Then I fear my suspicions were not unfounded," she said, "and that poor, misguided Addie has eloped with a man who is utterly unworthy of her, and whom I—"

She paused, giving the servant time to look unconcerned, before she glanced towards her; then she whispered in a lower tone, yet still one which carried every word to the maid's ears:

"I will explain what I mean later, Mr. Foyle."

The pair protested to be very much concerned about the flight of the absentee, but returned to the breakfast-room, and did ample justice to the good things provided.

After breakfast, in a well-aired chamber, Fenton Foyle said:

"Will you give me half-an-hour to talk over what is best to be done in this painful matter, Miss Bristow?"

The lady assented, and left the way into his den. As soon as the door closed upon the pair, and they were far enough from it to prohibit the possibility of any listener outside hearing anything, he turned to his companion, and said:

"Connie, my dear, what does it mean? Was there any foundation in what you said in her room?"

"Not a shadow, my dear Fenton, she replied. "But it struck me that, as that girl was listening, and that all we said would speedily travel, and as you were
in that hole of which you told me last night, that a report of an elopement on the missing lady’s part might serve your purpose.”

He looked at her admiringly, as he said: “You’re a clever woman, Con, and the more I see of you, the more I like you, and—”

He put his arm about her, drew her into its circle, and kissed her.

She withdrew herself from him with the faintest air of protest, as she pouted: “It seems to me that you are a very audacious as well as a very inflammable natured man; for, from all I can gather, you have no love to every woman with whom you find yourself alone for five minutes.”

He was going to protest. She stopped him.

“Let us drop all fancies for the present,” she said, and talked business. Where is that foolish girl likely to have gone? and shall you try to trace her and bring her back?”

“If she has gone anywhere,” he replied, “I expect it is to Malvern, to Miss Gregory, whom she went to school for years; they were ‘all-hear’ friends. As to bringing her back, I shouldn’t think of it. She has gone of her own accord, and she must abide by the consequences of her act.”

A look of annoyance came into his face as he continued: “I must, of course, make some show of searching for her; and as I have a letter that makes it almost imperative that I should run up to town to-day, it can be supposed that I have rushed off in search of that wild-cat.”

He glanced at the clock on the mantel, was evidently surprised at the time, and, with a sharply-italicized “By jove! I had no idea it was that time!” he turned to her again, and said:

“I cannot very well get back until evening. I will wire you to come down what train I can catch, and you can send something to meet me.”

He held out both his hands towards her, saying:

“Good-bye, till to-night, Connie!”

She gave him her hands in response to his gesture of farewell, and led him to kiss her.

Then, as she drew herself out of his embrace, she said, with a saucy smile, “I won’t hinder you now, but you and I must have a serious talk to-night, for it will never do for you to go on kissing me like this while there is no kind of understanding between us.”

He tried to repeat his offence, murmuring tenderly: “Why, my dear Con—”

She stopped him. “I won’t hinder you now,” she cried, “but there must be, as I have already said, some straight talk and understanding to-night.”

They were interrupted by a knock at the door; the groom wanted to know if there were any orders, or should the dog-cart be sent back for another load.

Fenton Foyle ordered the dog-cart to take him to the station immediately, and while he was speaking Constance Bristow slipped away.

He did not see her again before he went, she purposely kept out of his way, for she was a wily woman, one who had a big purpose to fulfil, and, having read his character like a book, she was dealing with him accordingly.

“All day long he will be thinking of me,” she mused, “and when the night comes I shall have him, though, but when night comes I shall play my game, and just wind my fish with a plump.”

By noon that day the whole country-side, gentle and simple, had heard that Miss Foyle had eloped with an artist. The details of the elopement varied very much, the story, as told in one place, bearing no likeness whatever—save in the bare statement of elopement—to that told in another place.

Among the first to hear it were the Fletchers at the rectory. One of the girls, out walking, heard it within five minutes of leaving the house, and rushed back with the news.

The rector, two minutes later, was on his way to Bullshanger Hall, to learn the true particulars.

Constance Bristow came down to see him, and told him a very plausible story of having had her suspicions aroused (just before she herself went to London), that her charge was carrying on a kind of clandestine correspondence with a young fellow whom she had twice seen Addie with. That she had renounced with the girl, who had said that her friend was an artist. She told him that he was a veterinarian, who was a baronet, and that as he was the direct heir to the title as well as the estates, as soon as the funeral was over he should hurry back, call upon Mr. Foyle, and openly ask for permission to pay his addresses to her poor foolish girl. Then, as I dare say you know, Mr. Fenton Foyle was pulled away on business to London. I was only away thirty hours, but it is evident that these madcap young people must have made the best of my absence to arrange all their plans. I have ascertained that Addie was absent all day, and when returning to the hall I found her coming in her own room, and evidently under some strong inward excitement. The rest is easily told in a word—her bed had not been slept in, her wardrobe was in turmoil, and she was missing this morning.

“It is most inexplicable,” said the vicar, with a sigh.

“Addie was so evidently a true and devoted Christian, that I cannot, cannot understand the affair at all. What does Mr. Foyle think?”

He added, so far as you may well suppose, very much distressed, and I raced off to London, thinking that a scrap of paper he found in her room this morning may afford him some clue to her discovery.”

The godly old clergyman went sadly back to the rectory, full of perplexed thought, yet strong in his belief that Addie had done no wrong. That there was some mystery in the whole affair he easily recognised; that there had appeared to his fair parishioner and church-helper some real, rightful reason for flight he was well assured, and thought at present all was dark and inexplicable, he felt equally sure the girl had acted from the purest and best of motives.

Arrived at home, he told his news, and found an unanimity of opinion like his own on the part of his wife and daughters, that Addie had been driven from home in some way.

There were tears in the eyes of the girls and their mother as they talked over the affair, and when the rector said, softly:

“We must kneel together and pray for her,” all knelt, while he besought God’s preserving, sustaining grace for the absentee, who was so dear to them all.

CHAPTER III

A Queer Beginning.

ARRIVE BY THE 10.15, TO-NIGHT; SEND SOMETHING TO ME—FENTON FOYLE.

He was the wire that reached Constance Bristow about six o’clock that evening.

“Tell cook that she need not arrange dinner, she remarked, to the servant who brought in the telegram, “I will have a tea-meal in the breakfast-room about seven. Mr. Foyle will not be home until late to-night.”

She had her meal, as arranged, at seven o’clock, and amused herself after her own fashion until ten o’clock, when she heard the notice of the wheels of the vehicle that was starting to the station to meet the master of the house.

In half-an-hour he arrived, and to carry out her role of the anxious chaperone, she met him in the hall. Her first swift comprehensive glance at him told her that he had been “imbibing” more freely than usual.

His voice was somewhat louder than ordinary as he greeted her, his first words being:

“Ah, Miss Bristow, you are as anxious as ever!”

For the benefit of the cook, he added: “It will take me hours to tell you all that I have been through, and the things which I have discovered. I would not keep you up, but it is imperative that I consult you to-night that we may take other steps in the morning.

Have you dined?” she asked, “or shall a supper be laid for you?”

“Thanks, no, I have dined, dined late, and well. I shall want nothing more to-night, thank you,”
The butler stood close by as he spoke, and he turned to him, saying:  
"See that there are some sodas in my den. Hazel, then you can look up, and everyone can go to bed. I shall be late, as I have many things to arrange, and a lot of correspondences to decide each night."

In ten minutes the house was as still as a tomb; if any of the servants were up they were in their own quarters. Fenton Boyle and Constance were closeted together in the den.

He had laughingly explained, the moment that they were shut in together (professively in conference over the eloquence of "Miss Addie"), that all he had said in the hall before the servants was only a blind, that, of course, he had made no discoveries, that he had done the business which had taken him to London, and had thought to have returned the day before yesterday. He continued, "I met with three old friends whom I had not seen for five years, and we dined together, and had a high old time, Connie, I assure you."

"I can't believe that," she remarked, dryly.

"Which air meant serious," he replied laughingly, and adding: "You know Bret Harte, of course, Connie?"

He crossed the room, and listened at the door for a moment, then popping a chair cornerwise, so that anyone entering unexpectedly would notify them coming with a bang, he seated himself at the table, and bending down over the chaperone—she had seated herself in an armchair, he lifted her face in his hands, kissed her, and said, eagerly:

"You darling! I've been thinking all day of what you said this morning before I went away. What did you mean, Con?"

"What could I mean?" she asked, "but the one thing? Without the least encouragement from me, you had the audacity, a day or two ago, to take me in your arms and kiss me, and then—"

"You darling!" he exclaimed, excitedly, as dropping on one knee by the side of her chair, he kissed her again and again.

"How could anyone help kissing you?" he cried.

"Listen, and don't interrupt me," she continued, making no resistance, however, in his caress, no effort to release herself from his embrace.

"You repeat your offence again and again, even though I tell you that you have no right to kiss me, until—"

"That's just like," he cried.

"You used the word 'until' before, but you did not finish. You did not say until when, or until what?"

She was about to speak again, but he checked her.

"Stand up a moment, Con," he said, "and let me talk to you."

She stood upon her feet and faced him. How beautiful, with a bold, ardent, passionate, seductive kind of beauty, she was. If he had not lost his head over her before he would have done so now.

"I know what you mean, of course, my darling," he went on.

"But I want you to give me the fullest right to caress you."

He put his arm about her, drew her close to himself, and going down into her bold, black eyes, he went on:

I'm the only woman I ever felt to want for a wife. You are warm-blooded, you have got some of my own vim in you. It is time I was married, and I swear you are the only woman whom I ever asked to marry me, and you will, will you not, Connie?

For a full half-second she gazed into his eyes, then, as a radiant smile crept into the curve of the lines of her mouth, she leaned swiftly up to him, and for answer she kissed him full upon his lips.

"You're a brick, my love," he cried, when he could recover his breath, after the shower of kisses he gave and received in return.

"Now tell me, dearest, how soon you will marry me?"

"How soon do you want me?" she asked.

"Not later than three days from now, and earlier if you can," he replied. "You don't want to fuss with a wedding-dress, and all that kind of thing. I've been thinking it all out to-day. I'll go off to-morrow morning and get the list, and see a clergyman in a little pickled-oar place in the city, and arrange for the wedding for ten o'clock the day after to-morrow."

"You can come up to town to-morrow afternoon or evening, put up at one of the hotels, bring what things you will want, and announce that you are leaving until "Miss Addie," come again."

"We can spend the evening together to-morrow; in the morning after we'll be married, and for a few months at least we will travel. I should not mind a year of it. Just before our return, we can have the marriage announced in the newspapers, then coming back home people will be prepared to receive you as my wife. What do you say to my arrangements, Con?"

"It shall be just as you say," she replied.

"They eat for a couple of hours longer, he mixed several branches for himself, and from a cellarette in the dining-room he fetched a decanter of sherry, out of which he filled her glass again and again, till both of them were maddening and stupid with drink before they retired to their respective rooms for the night.

That was a cheaper season for those who proposed starting an united life in a few hours' time.

CHAPTER IV.

Telepathy!

DDIE FOYLE had been practically two whole nights and days without sleep, and on arriving at Waterloo, at the end of that first sleep of her life, she felt the absolute need of immediate rest. She was faint, too, for want of food, and enquiring of a policeman just outside the station for a quiet, respectable hotel, he directed her to a private one a few yards away and in the York Road.

"You will be comfortable there, miss, if anywhere in London," continued the officer. "They are Christian people, and do their best to make everyone as happy and comfortable as possible. Just you say that Constable Ward sent you."

"Christian people," murmured Addie, repeating the constable's words. "How glad I am to find such a place; I shall lie down with greater ease knowing this.

Ten minutes later she was in the house to which she had been directed. She delivered the policeman's message, and was assured by the kindly-faced servant that she should be made "as comfortable as though you were in your own home, miss."

In a few minutes an appetising meal was set before her, and she ate heartily, gratefully. Her whole nature had yearned for a cup of tea, but she had feared to take it lest she should be unable to sleep after it, but the chocolate that was made for her was delicious, and helped her digestion later on.

The bedroom to which she was shown was, she was told, the quietest in the house, and as her eager senses took in the cleanliness and sweetness of the apartment, her heart also swelled with overpowering gratitude when hung several beautifully-executed illuminated tests, one of which especially arrested her attention, bearing the words:

"BEHOLD! I AM WITH THEE AND WILL KEEP THEE!"

The maid who had shown her to the room, noted how her eyes were riveted on this text, and she said, quietly, respectfully:

"Our lives, miss, become very different when once we can truly appreciate those words, and feel that they are true for us."

Like an oasis in a desert, like clear, cool water in a thirsty land, these words of the servant fell upon the ears of Addie. Tears rushed into her eyes, and turning gratefully to the maid, she said:

"It is sweet to find one who loves God in this great, strange city. Thank you, dear girl, for your loving words of cheer. I, too, love the Lord, and needed comfort just now, for I am passing through great trouble."

She sighed, as she settled herself.

"But I am dead-bast for want of sleep. I have been up two nights, and travelling, and full of deep anxiety, I must get to bed at once. I hope I shall sleep until the evening."

The maid bade her "Good-night" (from force of habit, surely, since it was only a few minutes after ten o'clock, and left her.

After committing herself to God, Addie undressed and lay down in the bed, and in spite of the hum and muffled roar of the street, in five minutes she was sleeping as
soundly as a tired child, her last waking thought and uttered word being:

"God send my guardian home quickly, and let us find each other soon."

Almost in the centre of the sral of the king of one of the most savage of Africa’s tribes, in a low, wattle-hut, lay three men sleeping. The sun had risen half-an-hour before, and the light that found its way into the hut through the doorless opening in the side of the frail structure, directly upon the three seated figures, showing that two of the men were whites, the third a negro, a Cape Coast "boy."

The whole island was very still, though here and there in individual hutts some few of the people were a-stir, and their voices, the babble of the village, might be the voices of the inhabitants waking up. There was no sign of movement about or within the hut.

In the hut with which we have to do, one of the whites was seated with his knees drawn up to his chest, and yawning. He remained perfectly still for a moment, then, with a sign, he turned slightly on the opposite side to that on which he had been sleeping, and glanced at his companion white.

Perhaps it was this last movement that aroused his friend, for the latter also woke and opening his eyes, met his companion’s glance, and gave him a smiling, "Good morning, Gerard!"

"The same to you, George," replied the man who had awakened first.

"We’re not in Piccadilly yet, Gerard," remarked the other.

"Not yet, George, though I’ve got an idea which, if we can work it, will hurry us through to that place so dear to the West and Englishman."

"The dickens you have, old man!" cried George (the Sir George Connolly of a previous book). There was excitement in his face and in his tones.

"Tell me what you mean," he added, quickly.

"The child is a-ward," explained Sir Gerard Noel, "or in visions of the night, of soul communicating with soul, though the two may be thousands of miles apart?"

"That’s a big question, and it covers a lot of ground, George," said Sir Gerard, "but never mind what we believe or don’t believe, tell me why you asked the question?"

"Well, I have had the most vivid sight of home, of three whom I felt, and of that appeared to me the way things ought to be, and I am determined, George, that we shall take this opportunity of communicating, short of actually living through it all. I saw a casally cousin of mine, Feaston Featley, who would be the heir-at-law to Bullshanger, etc., installed as master in the old place. The tenantry seemed to be satisfied or sad according to the mood of their different dispositions, when brought under a hard, tyrannical, rule, such as that villain Feaston seemed to be exercising over them. But worst of all, I saw my beautiful girlie, my Addie, suffering on her side of activity, at the hands of that scamp of a cousin. Then things got mixed up a little; I could make nothing out clearly, until suddenly Addie stood out plainly before me—"

He paused a moment, and there was an audible click in his breath, while his eyes stared fixedly, excitedly into thin air, for the upper lid of his right eye was tremor ingly, as the angel of fever and terror, was it not, and the dream he was actually now beclouding what he was describing.

"I saw her," he went on, "as plainly as I see you, George. Her eyes were streaming with tears, she (for the lower lid of the left eye was streaming, and the tears might be detected where such of the inhabitants as were asleep were either preparing breakfast for themselves or for others.

But he was quite awake, and the Marchioness’s feelings were very tender and affectionate, and she said: "Oh, guardie, guardie, save me, come to me quickly!"

"Queen!" ejaculated Sir George. Then, as he recalled a memory of the earlier days of this same hunting-trip, that had brought them into their present difficulties, he said:

"By-the-bye, Gerard, did you not have some such vision once before, about that poor, lovely girlie Rosenthal?"

"Yes, I did," replied the dreamer. It was just as vivid as this one, and the next thing we heard, you remember, was, that poor belle was dead—shut.

He shuddered visibly, and his voice trembled as he went on:

"God grant that nothing has happened to my girlie, it would-wake-high kill me.

"But what is this plan of yours for reaching Piccadilly?"

asked Sir George, who was anxious to divert his companion’s mind from a too morbid dwelling on the tragedy of Belle Rosenthal’s untimely end.

For a moment Sir Gerard Foyle did not reply, then presently he said:"

"It is evident that it is no use our trying to escape from this awful imprisonment; we should not get a score of miles away (even if we got out of the kral undetected) before we should be captured again. But I have an idea that if we can secure another audience of the king, and suggest that he may call anything of us, of material things, up to, let us say even to ten thousand pounds, that we will swear to him by any oath that he may see fit to administer to us, to deal rightly, honestly by him, if only he will suffer an escort of the town or city guard to be able to negotiate for our cash. We will swear to him in our Cape and English newspapers that we owe our lives to his clemency, and to his loyalty to the British nation by sending us under protection to a civilized town. We will point out to him that he may instruct the escort whom he shall send with us to play us if we attempt anything like treachery on our arrival at the town. We will also offer him an agreement in writing to do all we promise him."

Sir Gerard’s face was full of eager hope as he unfolded his thought, and Sir George added:

"We can but try this chief, George. And since already we have proved (what we knew only about the great trouble come upon us) that God does answer prayer, let us pray Him to give success to our idea."

"The black man was astir, by the way, for it is difficult to either of the two whites or citizens to be sleeping, and no one knew of the storm that at this moment, and with a loud yawn, sat up and looked around.

"No we’ll go back in, Tom," said Sir George, with a smile. It was an old joke between them, because the Cape Coast had onc asked his masters, "What dar bases go ter when seller go ter sleep?"

Sartilly, come back a gen, sah," the black now replied.

Grinning at him, he rose from his feet, knocked his sleepy eyes, wiped yawning through, as he did so, a deep, great cavern of a mouth and a set of magnificent teeth, thrust his ten fingers up through his woolly hair, and moved outside the hut, "Jes’ ter see dat de kral air dis morning! it was wurt dis, and he wunt go back on der grin.

The two whites rose to their feet, gave themselves a shake, and began to talk eagerly over their plans—how to get audience of the king.

CHAPTER V.

DDIE slept unbrokenly until six o’clock, the first thing her waking eyes lighted upon being the words in the frame on the wall: "Behold! I am with thee and will keep thee," and her heart leaped with joy at the consciousness that this promise was all for her, as though an angel had appeared from God Himself bearing the words to her as an individual message of comfort to her soul. And, lying there in those first moments of awakening, with all her unknown future before her, she communed with God, and was conscious that her heart grew strong through the fellowship.

A few minutes later she got up and began to dress, her mind still full of the Divine care for her, and her lips almost unconsciously beginning to hum:

How do they measure the round? For ever, for ever, I adore.
I blush in all the age to abound.
The servant is above my Lord.

Invited to prove and pay.
A suffering life my duty.
The Son of God, the Son of Man.
He has known to lay his hand on my head.

But let us talk He has prepared.
For we whom watchful angels keep.
Yes, He this myself becomes my me.

She paused a moment in her hummed matin, her soul was so full of a gracious peace that her eyes filled with tears and she felt a choking in her throat.

Presently, however, she took up the strain again, and this time clear, rich voice sang in low, sweet tones:
She shuddered at the thought of what might have happened, then slowly, wearily made her way to the house where she was staying—her sudden departure born of a sudden fright, and of the reaction of all she had gone through during the last few days.

In spite of her long sleep during the day, she slept again at night, and next morning rose considerably refreshed. After breakfast, she put on her Sunday dress, and the spirit in which she made her way to work, the distance whence she took train for Manchester, determined to put as great a distance between herself and Bullsanger as was practically possible.

It was Friday now, and during the Saturday, spent in Manchester, she secured a very comfortable bed-sitting-room.

A couple of hours spent shopping, and she had purchased all the clothing and other things she needed to go on with, and by half-past six she was settled into her lodgings, and enjoyed her tea, then rose, and dressed herself in her very best.

She had never been in London alone, and never in the part she was now going into. She moved along York Road, eventually emerging into the Westminster Bridge Road. Turning to the right, she took the way over the bridge; the breeze from the water being deliciously cool to her hot and fevered face. She had put on a thick, silver-grey gauze veil that she might not be recognized, and she bade the hansom into the street and asked to have all the value of the river breezes—but she did not yield to her longing.

She passed over the bridge, turned up Parliament Street, and eventually found herself in the Strand.

"Waterloo!" she heard the omnibus conductors cry, and followed in their wake until she came to the opening which led to Waterloo Bridge, crossing it as a matter of course, and finding herself at a terminus. She was soon crossing the bridge on route to York Road.

About half-way across the bridge she paused to look up the river, charmed with the wonderful effects of the 6.45 from Glasgow, where the Thames was a blaze of lights, the two banks of lighted houses, as they flited like fire-flies on the great boulevard, the mystical effects of the reflected lights on the muddy river, and a thousand other things of a like kind.

Suddenly a man's laugh rang out shrill and clear from the direction of the roadway, and she caught her breath, while a sudden clenching pain seized her heart.

Yet, in spite of her fear, she seemed compelled by some uncontrollable power to turn her head and gaze at the hansom that was just passing, and from which the laugh had come.

She had just time to note two things—that there were two men in the cab, and that the one who was laughing so uproariously was Fenton Boyle.

She had been certain, before she turned, that it was him, for his laugh was always of the most peculiar character, and unlike that of anyone else to which she had ever listened.

Onwards swept the vehicle towards Waterloo Station, and Addie had no doubt that her persecutor was en route for her.

"He may have even been on the hunt for me already," she mused. At these thoughts her heart beat violently, and she knew that if she could but see her face she would find it ghastly in its pallor.

"It is well that I am wearing this veil," she murmured, and "that I resisted the temptation to throw it up the better to watch the breeze. He might have recognised me had I been unveiled, and then—"

...
am not mistaken in yours. I quite understand your position, that, for some reason, you wish your past to remain hidden; it is not, I am sure, a past that you need be ashamed of. It is probably one in which tyranny, persecution, or some other kindred thing has at last driven you from home. I think it is very likely that you have neither father nor mother; you feared to trust any more acquaintances, you have got as far from home as you possibly can under the circumstances — you were born and reared in the south of England.

In a burst of amazement, Addie cried;

"How —"

The old lady stopped her with a merry laugh, as she replied;

"Thy speech bewrayeth thee," as the Palestine servant girl said to Peter the Galilean.

"But that does not matter," she went on. "I want a companion, you want a companion. I like you enough to accept you on your own conditions, and, in the months and years to come — for all my friends say I shall live to be a hundred — if in the time to come you ever feel that you can give me your confidence, you can, but you will be as dear to me without as with it. Now, what do you say, Miss —?"

"Miss Adah Guard," replied Addie, giving the name which, for safety, she had chosen to adopt, going back to her gypsy days for the Adah, and taking the first syllable of her pet name for her absent guardian, for a surname.

"Well, Adah Guard," continued the old lady, "which is not your real name, but it is good enough for me, and it is, of course, well for you to be on your guard — if that sounds like a pun, please forgive its poverty, and remember that the perpetrator is sixty-five years old, a time of life when many people are in their dotage."

She laughed as merrily as a girl of eighteen, as she went on;

"What a garrulous old soul she is!" you will be saying to yourself, Adah. Well, to get back to business; I like you, I will take you at once, if you are willing to give me a trial. What do you say, dear?"

Tears had welled up in the eyes of the astonished, delighted girl, and now that she tried to answer this wondrous friend whom God had so suddenly raised up for her, she found her voice choked with sobs.

"Where are you lodging?" asked the old lady, not waiting for any reply to her previous question, but taking it for granted.

"In Exeter Street, Ardwick," replied Addie. Her voice was full and choked as she uttered the words, and turning her beautiful face, full of gratitude now, upon her companion, she added;

"How, how can I thank you —"

She paused as though waiting to finish her sentence when she was interrupted by one of this wonderful new friend, who seemed almost to have dropped from the skies.

"My name," said the old lady, interpreting the meaning of the sudden pause, "is Marsden, Miss Marsden, for I have missed matrimony, I am an old maid; I do not flirt — it's a fact, though I dare say I look frivolous enough to belie the statement — and I have no intention of marrying anyone I assure you."

Addie was obliged to smile at the drollery of this sweet-faced, white-haired old lady, who was evidently using all the pleasantries possible that she might rally the spirits of the girl at her side.

"No, no marriage for me, my dear," went on the sweet, silver-haired old soul. "I am like the old woman in a song which a rattle-pasted nephew of mine used sometimes to sing, who is supposed to say:

I'm ninety-five, I'm ninety-five,
And to keep up I'll continue,
I'll continue.

She had sung the words in a low, sweet, musical undertone, and flashed such a merry look at Addie as she did so, that taking all the drollery together the girl laughed heartily.

"Ah! that's better, Adah," the old woman went on.

"Laughter is a good medicine. I once heard ten thousand children at the Crystal Palace sing:

Laughing is contagious; it's very advantageous.

And I believe in laughter. But, back to business, my dear; what do you say to jumping into the brougham with me, and letting my man drive us to Exeter Street, where, in your room, cosily alone, we can have a little more talk, and make final arrangements. If you liked you could come back with me this morning, and we could send the waggonette in this afternoon for your luggage."

It was all very like some delightful dream to Addie. She took her place by the old lady's side in the carriage, was driven to Exeter Street, then came a quarter-of-an-
CHAPTER VI.  
A Momentous Interview.

FOR a full quarter-of-an-hour the tribal chiefs, the warriors, and after them the common people in the kraal of the African potentate who held Gerard Foyle and Sir George Connelly prisoners, had been sitting in the great square, in the heart of the kraal. Silently, grimly, expectantly the great crowd gathered, each section moving orderly, regularly, like some well-trained army, in fact, the watching Sir George whispered,  
"It's like a bit of Kiraly's best-organised stage-work at the Olympics."  
Stern, grimly-picturesque, silent as statues the savage troops took up their position in a close ring outside all the while Gerhard, who, as the more personal troops of the king, formed a body-guard about the place where the monarch would presently sit.  
One, two, three—deep, hollow taps on a flat-sounding drum, broke the silence presently, and the king's own body-guard marched through a lane left between the massed people.  
Silence reigned for a moment, then there was a sudden, hideous blare from a score or more of rude horns, accompanied by the banging of innumerable drums, and the beating of polished copper cooking vessels, and the king suddenly appeared.  
"A kind of General Booth reception at Exeter Hall," whispered Sir George, under his breath.  
The king squatted on the leopard-skin spread for his dicky highness. He was a huge man, only clothing a waist-cloth, and a leopard-skin over his shoulders. The flesh of his trunk hung in thick, one-over-the other festoons of fat. There were bags of fatty skin under his eyes, his mouth was enormous, and his thick lips full of a horrible sanguinary expression.  
For fully ten minutes after he had squatted on the leopard-skin carpet he remained in absolute silence, his brows lowered, his narrow, cunning eyes apparently fixed on the ground, but in reality watching the two whites who sat directly in front of him.  
At the end of ten minutes he made a guttural sound without lifting his head. An attendant moved to his side, bearing a calabash of beer. The huge head of the monarch nodded, and the attendant filled a brightly-polished tin mug holding about a pint, and handed it to his majesty. The savage took the mug, and lifting it to his thick lips, drained it at a draught.  
Then he resumed his former silence, sitting like some hideous god carved in ebony, the two prisoners watching expectantly that no word be uttered, for an executioner would be sufficient to launch their souls into eternity.  
Suddenly the silent monarch lifted his head slowly, and gazed full and direct at the two whites, and a moment later gave them the signal to advance.  
Rising to their feet, they walked to within a yard-and-a-half of their captor.  
"Speak!" he cried, in his own tongue, a native interpreter translating to the prisoners.  
Gerard was spokesman, and through the interpreter made the offer which we heard him rehearse to Sir George in the hut.  
The king listened stolidly to all that was said, and at the close, after a moment's silence, surprised the pair by himself speaking in very fair broken English:  
"You English?" he began.  
Gerard remarked in the same language.  
"You Queen's name Luckurstia," continued the monarch, "and you love that ivory-faced lady more than your God, more than your lives?"  
Gerard assented to this also, satisfying his conscience as to loving Victoria more than God by saying to himself, "The bulk of my nation do, I suppose, the military part of it especially."  
There followed a half-minute's silence on the part of the savage monarch, during which time both prisoners were praying to God as never before in their lives—for men who are not converted Christian, will pray fervently enough in such critical moments in their lives.  
The king's next words sent a thrill of almost delicious delight through the waiting whites.  
"You shall have your wish," he said, slowly, deliberately.  
"You shall go to the great kraal of the white man, with an escort, and in return you shall send me back the price of ten thousand oxen; only, first, you shall swear by your Queen's name, and you shall sign your name to the pledge you give me—in your own blood."

For a moment the king appeared the eager, surprised, delighted pair, and they could not speak for the emotion that filled them. Then, as they found their voices, they poured forth their thanks in a stream so united and so voluble, that the grim face of the savage relaxed into a smile.  
"Have you the writing-sticks and paper?" was the purport of his next question.  
They told him they had, and Gerard produced an indelible pencil and an old sketch book.  
"Write, and what you write will be translated and carried to the great kraal. You will receive a horse and all the supplies you require, and you will have the king's approval, with drunk cases of smoked hogs, and a most magnificent reception in the kraal."

Gerard had by this time bared his left arm, and with a small lance he always carried when travelling, he was preparing to draw the blood for his signature.  
The king left his play of opening and shutting the two blades of the penknife to watch Gerard's operation. The next moment a little burst of crimson dyed the white skin of Gerard, and filling his quill-nib he affixed his name to the covenant he had drawn up, Sir George Connelly following suit.  
The rest of the strange and wondrous interview need not be detailed.  
Next morning the two whites and their Cape Coast boy started under escort for the nearest township, after being prisoners nearly two years in the kraal of the native king.

CHAPTER VII.  
Addie's Old Maid.

The carriage containing Miss Marsden and Addie arrived at Mount Joy (as the old lady's place was called) just in time for dinner.  
"I am very, very, very old-fashioned, my dear," Gerard had explained to her new companion, "and I always make the midday meal my dinner. I have a cup of coffee an hour afterwards, and then I do not need that bit of modern custom—four-o'clock tea—but have a real old-fashioned Victorian 'kitchen roundabout' dinner, and a good deal more stout and six or seven, and no supper."  
With a little tender touch of her tiny fingers upon Addie's head, she continued, "But this is liberty-hall, my dear, and if you prefer to have a light tea between the midday dinner and the seven-thirty meal, in his pocket, when the king stretched forth his hand for it. He uttered no word, made no request, but Sir George understood the gesture, and handed the pearl-handled, silver-mounted little thing to his majesty.  
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MY MARRIAGE MYSTERY.

laid aside her hat and jacket, washed her hands, and prepared to take her first meal under the roof of the most delightful old maid--the world with whom she was now to be united.

After dinner the pair adjourned to a cozy sitting-room, where coffee was served them. By this time Addie's luggage had arrived, and she spent the afternoon unpacking and arranging her things in her rooms. Three rooms had been allotted to her—a dressing-room, bedroom, and sitting-room, and there being a direct communication between the three.

"Just rest after you have completed your unpacking and settling things, until the going goes for tea," the old lady had said, and as she added, "and I'll be there to tell you to the room, so shall have to be in my own room," Addie had adopted her friend's advice.

At seven o'clock they met again, and Addie was more than ever impressed with the sweetness and vivacity of the old lady's character, and from several things she had overheard she was convinced that she was a bright, happy-hearted Christian.

The decision was confirmed when, towards the end of the meal, her butter asked her a question about "The marriage room," and the old lady replied:

"Mr. Allen will not be here for the service on Sunday; he is down with the influenza, poor dear man, but we shall be sure to have someone, Dodson."

"Yes, ma'am," replied the man, and with a smile, he added, with the air of an old experienced and well-pleased soul: "If I'm not mistaken, comes (and a great many of the people would rather, for this reason, that there were more breakdowns in the suppers, you will take the service yourself, ma'am.)"

But mistress laughed, and turning to Addie, she said:

"I had a mission hall built some years ago at the south corner of my grounds, to supply a great need among a lot of poor people who live out that way. It has been made a great spiritual blessing, and now we have it crowded every Sunday, and I could count on you to face the people very often. I give him a message for them."

There was a hallowed light in the sweet old face, as she continued.

She spoke more and more, every day that I live, the necessity for redeeming the time, for the days are very evil. They are, I believe, included in the last times of which Paul speaks to Timothy, "for men, as he prophesied, have become lovers of their own selves." This is essentially a selfish age—covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, male-baiters (or breeders of quarels, as the word means), incontinent, harlots, despisers of those who are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures, despisers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

"Paul goes on to say, you remember, Adah, that as Jezebel and Jambies (the Egyptian magicians) withstood Moses, by their conjuring enchantments, so also do men in these last times, and there are devils, (of no judgment) concerning the faith, who resist the truth by conjuring with the Word of God, making things disappear that God has placed in the Word, and introducing things which have no part in the glorious Scriptures—just as people use to conjure."

And all this, my dear, has to come before Jesus returns in the air, to gather His Church to Himself, the world must grow worse and worse (in spirit and in practice— that is), though polish, education, culture, and all that is most refined and noble, and I must say these things are not spiritual, and, of themselves, are apt to blind men's eyes to their own condition. Just as I have known more than one utterly depraved man and woman who were so taught to admire the sign, and leave off the wise and that virtue, and become musical, melody-living, reformed characters, that the two are not connected; and have gone so far as to declare, that that was all that was needed to fit them for the eternal dwelling with God in all His holiness and purity.

"Poor Addie! It was hard work to tell the rest of her story, and the tears would come. Our readers know it all, so that we need not repeat it."

Miss Marsden took her in her arms at last, and kissing her tenderly, said softly, rapturously:
CHAPTER VIII.

Back from the Dead.

It was a month after the marriage of Fen ton Foyle and Constance Bristow. The pair were on the Continent somewhere; Bullshanger Hall was shut up, the furniture wore brown holland placings, and only the housekeeper and one of the gardener’s wives (who had been installed as help to the housekeeper) were left to care for the fine old place.

It was winter now, a dreary, dark last week in November. A storm drove up to the hall, and Gerard Foyle, wrapped in a heavy fur-lined coat that reached to his ankles, alighted. He shivered as he ran up the hall steps and rang the bell, for he was feeling keenly the sudden change from Africa’s heat to the damp, raw, nipping cold of the English winter day.

The housekeeper opened the door, and stared at him as though he looked a ghost.

“The master!” she gasped, as she gave her his hand in a kindly greeting.

“Yes, Mrs. Dodge,” he replied. Then, as the seared look in her face and the frightened tone of her voice struck him, he added:

“Did you think I was dead?”

You were reported, sir, and I am afraid I did believe it. But how dear Miss Addie never would allow that you were, sir?

“Ah! where is Addie?” he cried, eagerly. “At Malvern, with Miss Gregory, I suppose?”

The pair were still standing in the hall, Gerard too excited to think of eating dinner at once the matter which he most wanted to know.

“Miss Addie at Malvern, sir! Why, have you not heard?” asked the housekeeper.

Gerard took alarm at her manner. In eager anxiety he cried:

“I have heard nothing. I have only just landed at Southampton. I have seen no one, heard nothing. What do you mean about Miss Addie? Nothing has happened to her?”

His voice rose to a tremendous pitch, for the woman’s manner worried and excited him.

Then, in speech as rapid and coherent as she could command, the housekeeper told her master all that had happened during the brief reign of Fen ton Foyle.

“It was put about by Miss Bristow (she was Miss Addie’s chaperonne, sir),” continued the woman, “and by Mr. Foyle, that Miss Addie had eloped with an artist gentleman. But none of us in the house believed it, nor yet Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher, sir, and now hardly a creature but myself in the house believes it. Everyone now thinks and believes, sir, that poor, dear Miss Addie was driven from home by Mr. Fenton Foyle, for one of the servants who was passing the door of the drawing-room on the night before the night that she was last seen, heard Mr. Foyle ourselves speaking to Miss Addie, and that Miss Addie was consoling her. The servant, she was a quiet, timid little thing, sir, only told me (this on the day she was leaving (when all the servants, in fact, were leaving), for Mr. Foyle discharged almost every one.”

“And where is Mr. Foyle now?” cried Gerard, in a fever of anxiety to learn everything in one breath.

“He has gone abroad with that Miss Bristow, sir, and it is reported that they are married. But poor Miss Addie has never been heard of again.”

Gerard interrupted the housekeeper again, though he spoke his own thought to himself rather than addressed her, as he said:

“But could Jonathan Kelp have allowed that man to take the possession of the place, and even if he did that, he ought to have taken proper measures for ensuring Addie’s safety and comfort?”

“Ah, sir,” cried the housekeeper, “that is where all the trouble came in. Mr. Kelp died suddenly, and it is now generally believed that Mr. Fenton Foyle must have had control of it on the same day, and came down here and took possession, saying that Mr. Kelp had desired him to do it.”

In spite of the coldness of the day, Gerard Foyle’s forehead was beaded with perspiration, and mopping his face and head, he cried:

“What a hideous tangle everything has got in?”

He darted to the hall door, which was still partly open, and looked out. The fly which brought him home was still there.

“Wait one moment,” he cried, “and I’ll get you to drive me to the rectory.”

He turned back to give one word of direction to the housekeeper, then passed out of the house and entered the fly, and was driven at once to the rectory.

The Fletcher family know more than good old Mrs. Dodge,” he told himself.

A week had passed since Gerard Foyle had landed, and as yet he had learned nothing of Addie. He was half-distracted, and looked and felt ill with anxiety, for it would take another week, quite, for Bullshanger to be fitted with servants, and be prepared for habitation.

He had just been on his way to consult a firm of private enquiry agents, and his thoughts were on matters of tracing and advertising for Addie.

“Space no expense,” he had said, “only find my girl.”

He had given them his club address, and was now walking aimlessly back to his club, feeling, as he told himself, like a fish out of water.

Suddenly he heard his name being shouted by someone, and turning his head in the direction of the sound, he saw Sir George Connelly, his late companion in captivity, waving a walking-stick from the inside of a hansom.

The next moment the hansom was out of the cab, and the two men were gripping hands.

“Come into the cab with me,” said Sir George. “We can exchange notes as we drive. Where do you want to go to? or where were you going? I was just driving to your club to find you.”

Gerard explaining that he, too, was bound for his club, the pair entered the cab. It did not take many moments for Sir George to get out of his friend all the wretched story of his difficulties and sorrow. Then he replied:

“I am a little in the same hole as yourself, Gerard, for my father has died since I left England, and I seem to have hardly a creature left with whom I can ‘foregather,’ as my man Scotty used to say, so, at eight o’clock this morning, I wired a great-unt of mine, a jolly old lady who lives in the country for Sir George, and I could take her by storm to-night. Now, look here, Gerard, you had better come down with me. I can send off a wire from the station before we leave, saying that I am bringing a friend, and she’ll be delighted to have us both. You will be better with company, and as there is nothing that calls for your personal attendance in town, and you can get all your correspondence as quickly almost as though you were up here, eating your heart out alone in this wilderness of bricks and mortar, so say you’ll come. We’ve a half-and-hour’s drive before we start, though, given permission to times for your man—you’ve got one by this time, I suppose—to pack your traps.”

Gerard did say he would go, they caught the train by which Sir George had proposed to travel, and they arrived at their destination about six, and found a carriage awaiting them.

A drive of half-an-hour brought them to the house of Sir George’s elderly relative, who met the arrivals in the hall.

“I thought you were in India,” cried the excited old
CHAPTER IX.

A Strange Proposal.

OR a moment or two neither of the pair spoke; each heart was too full for words. Addie, under the stress of her excited joy, sobbed softly, and even Gerard's eyes were full of tears.

"Oh, guardie! dear, dear, guardie!" cried the girl, at last. She had lifted herself from her breast, and had clasped her arms about his neck, and now raised kisses upon his bronzed face.

He gazed down upon her with a marvelling wonder in his eyes; the downward reflection of his own in her, had almost staggered him. She had always been beautiful, but the development in her since he last saw her was wonderful enough to hold him dumb.

They stood thus together, his arms locked about her neck, as they talked in rapid, jery, excited sentences at first, but presently settling down into more orderly question and answer.

Suddenly Addie remembered that dinner would be served soon, and that her loved one must meet a meal after his long journey, so without summoning a servant, she herself led him to the room prepared for him.

Having seen him safely there, she hurried away to her own apartments, and passing into her bedroom, threw herself upon her knees, and poured out her thanks to God; for, on the night of their arrival, of her invention, she had been very excited, and had talked of "my nephew George," but never once during the day had she given him his full name, and talking, too, of his probable arrival from India, there had been nothing to give Addie the slightest clue to the fact that the expected visitor of her benefactress was the debonair Miss Marden, whom she had met at Southampton on the day of her guardie's departure.

There had been a brief notice in the newspaper of the arrival of the two London gentlemen, on the day after their landing; but it had happened that neither Addie nor Miss Marsden had looked at the paper that day, being busy with the distribution of tickets for winter coal and other comforts to the poorer members who attended the mission hall. Then the next followed the gentleman, in town, arranging matters of supply of them with the local tradesmen, and in these and other ways the newspaper for that day had been utterly forgotten, hence the ignorance of both Addie and Miss Marsden as to the arrival of a new and dear relation.

Now, after pouring out her praise to God, the rapturous, heart-girled rose from her knees, and made a rapid change in her toilette, donning a lovely white silk dinner dress.

When the second gong presently sounded, and she went down, she found him gone, and Addie had greeted her with exclamations of delighted wonder, for she had never looked so exquisitely lovely to either of them before. Her blue eyes were all in a story of the rapturous gladness that filled her heart, and the excitement of the hour had lent a rare and tender peach-bloom flush to her cheeks.

Answering the triple exclamations of delight, she said: "I felt that the occasion demanded some extra dressing, for it is the happiest hour of all my life."

Then: "What a meal that was! Joy, too! full almost for words, brooded like some lovely bird over the little party. Then, when it was over, sweet old Miss Marsden said: "I have had a good fire made upon the dinner-room, as well as in the drawing-room, and I believe we shall be happy to enjoy the little and the two parties when Miss Addie and I shall have the pleasure of your company.

What do you say, Mr. Foyle? What do you say, Addie, to the arrangement?"

What could either say? They could only delightfully acquiesce.

Addie, together in that lovely drawing-room, with its cozy warmth, sitting within the shelter of a wide, six-fold Oriental screen, cried suddenly: "Guardie, dear, I want you to promise me something to-night, in this hour of great, glad reunion.

"Anything, my darling," he cried. "You can ask me nothing that I will not gladly do for you, or give you, or promise you."

She lifted herself until she lay within his arms, and was seated on his lap, in the attitude of clinging affection that had been so common to her in the old, the earlier days before his departure.

He clasped her very tightly to him, for his heart was very, very full, and a strange, delicious sense of joy that; after all the misery he had undergone, was almost more than he could bear, filled him, as he said:

"What is it you want me to do, darling, to promise you?"

Her eyes were full of tears as she replied:

"That you will never, never leave me again; never turn from me, dear, darling; never let us be parted for a day, if that be possible?"

He gazed down into her face, marvelling at her wondrous beauty, but more than that at this new, a strange stirring of his heart towards her, a new feeling altogether. For a moment the falsification that this meant staggered him; but he was dumb for a second.

But he was watching him, and began to plead with him again.

"You will promise me this, guardie, dear," she cried; "will you, dear, for I feel now that I have got you back once more, it would killed me to be parted from you again."

She clung to him, lying there in his arms. Her fingers were locked together behind his neck, she laid her lips on his, and gave him cares upon cares, as though, like the child she was in heart, she would bribe him to yield to her tenderness.

"My darling," he cried, suddenly, "of course I will promise you what you ask, for, God knows, I would not willingly ever be parted from you for one hour."

She clung closer to him, she used every endearing term she could find for flattering him. And he?

By some strange, swift mental process his memory suddenly recalled the woman to whom he had given all the love he had to give in those days, and the face, and form, and voice of Belle Rosenthal all suddenly rose before his eyes.

He gazed, mentally, upon the picture, and there swept over him a sense of renunciation, and even as Addie's kisses fell warm upon his lips, and her words of endearment filled his ears, his heart bowed itself a moment before the memory of the dead Belle, as a man will bow his head and bow his head a moment as a funeral passes him.

Then gazing down into the lovely face of the—girl—of this superb woman—who lay so closely knit to his heart, and before his arms, he estranged her passionately to his heart, and kissed her again and again.

"Never, never, never more to be parted, guardie," she cried. "Oh, the very thought of it is heaven to me!"

And for a moment she lay quite still, her warm cheek nestling against him.

And his long down into her lovely face, said softly to himself:

"Why not? I am not too old, only twenty-one years, or not so much perhaps, older than herself, and what is age when a love is so passionate?"

"My darling," he replied, presently, to her last exclamation of joyous delight, "what about leaving me of your accord when you marry?"

"When I marry?" she echoed. "If to be married would
mean to leave you, dear, as I suppose it would, then I never want to marry, so that is settled.

He felt his breath heaved, and at once choked with the excitement of the thought that rushed through his brain. He felt how his breast heaved, she heard how fierce and fast her own breath came and, looking into his face, she was alarmed at the excitement in his eyes and face.

"What is it, guardie? What all you, dear?" she cried. He strained her passionately to his breast, and caressed her almost feverishly, before he said: "I never thought of you as old, dear; you have always seemed like an elder brother to me. And now—now to marry you!"

"I never thought of you as old, dear?" she replied, "but you have always seemed like an elder brother to me. And now—to marry you!"

He paused, then kissed her and going home, he watched, her, having muttered: "Take me, dear guardie, and make me all your own, so that we may never be parted again." She buried her face in his neck and then turned to him and then hugging him for a moment. Then he bent his head to whisper tender words into her ear, but he paused. The door had opened, and the voice of Miss Marsden was saying:

"Give us some room, young people, and have come to say 'Good-night.'"

They had just time to leap to their feet, when the dear old lady and Sir George appeared round the end of the screen.

"I amused over your young people, and have come to say 'Good-night.'"

Addie, too, was passing through a strange mental experience, the hot, burning kisses of her lover—as her guardie had suddenly become—were fresh upon her lips, and in a whirl of wonder at the strange turn events had taken, she sat down by her bedroom fire to think out things which it seems so strange!" she murmured. "But suppose it is all right, and I certainly could not love him more (perhaps not so much), even if we had been strangers who had met and loved the ordinary ishine.

Yet, amid all her thoughts, there was nothing that jarred upon her mind over the prospective marriage, though what it was she could not well define, and finally she put it down to the unexpectedness of the whole arrangement. Then, after coming to this decision, a tiny shiver chills her, as, still, thinking of the strange arrangement to their meeting, she disbelieved and got into bed.

CHAPTER X.

A Troubled Conscience.

MARTHA CLEVERLY (she was a widow now, and had been for six months) was dying. She might live a week or a fortnight, and again she might live a day. The doctor had told her, when she insisted upon knowing the bare and naked truth.

She feared death, not because she had been a backslider from class for so long, nor because she had dropped all but the most formal, nominal connection with her church (as recorded in a previous chapter). There would be "bends" in her death, doubtless, over the things, later on, but the present fear of passing into the other world came from the consciousness that she held a terrible secret locked up in her guilty breast, which she felt would drag her down to the judgment of God, and the minister hurried away to catch the first train for Bullshanger.
CHAPTER XI.
A Wondrous Frustration.

It was the day arranged for the wedding of Gerard Foyle and Addie, but in spite of their deep love for each other, there rested upon them both a strange sense of depression.

"I have forgotten God. I fear, amid all my intense joy at guardie's return," mused Addie.

"I feel that I have not honoured Him as I should have done. I have prayed, I fear, in a spirit of perfunctoriness, and it is possible that this is one reason why my heart seems so joyless over the thought of my marriage to my darling, who, God knows, I love so dearly."

Her train of thought was broken into by a sudden mental vision of Sir George Connelly. This had happened more than once of late, and had compelled her to realise how dear he had grown to her, "as dear as any brother could be, she had told herself more than once.

Her memory recalled the look of yearning, of regret, almost of despair, which she had seen in Sir George's eyes only the day before, and she sighed. Why she should sigh she could not have told.

Her maid was putting the last touches to her bridal costume. In ten minutes she would be driving to the church, so she thrust the many strange thoughts impatiently from her.

In his own room, dressed ready for the ceremony, which was timed for two o'clock—it wanted a quarter to two now—Gerard Foyle was fighting the fiercest mental battle he had ever engaged in.

"I cannot understand this feeling of awful repugnance to the marriage," he muttered. "Why should it be? What can it mean?"

His forehead was damp with sweat, the collar he wore was getting moist where it absorbed the perspiration from the shirt-collar to which it was fastened.

"Ought I, dare I back out now, or at least postpone the marriage?" he asked himself.

There was a tap on the panel of his door, followed by the turning of the handle, and the "best man," Sir George Connelly, appeared.

"Ready, Gerard?" asked Sir George. His tones were not buoyant at all, his manner was constrained, his eyes held a depressed expression in them.

"Yes," replied Gerard. But he sighed under his breath.

Twenty-five minutes later he was before the communion-rail of the church. Addie was by his side, a sense of almost overpowering hysteria upon her, a longing in her heart to fling herself upon the bridegroom's breast and cry: "Take me home, guardie; let me be your little one again, for I cannot be your wife."

"Therefore," the minister's voice was repeating, "if any person here present—"

There was a little bustle at the door, and a stranger, a little man in clerical garb, hurried breathless up the aisle, his right arm raised as if in protest.

"Knows any just cause or impediment why these two persons should not now be joined in holy—"

The little man was near enough to the rail now to cry: "Stop! stop, please!"

The officiating minister paused. The gathered people stared and listened open-eyed and breathless.

"Can I speak to the bridegroom, Mr. Gerard Foyle?" asked the strange interrupter.

Gerard stepped aside a moment, exchanged one word
Gerard was walking alone in the grounds of Bullshanger, the warmth and gladness of a great hope at his heart as he murmured:

"I can wait with patience and with hope now. In my heart I know she loves me, and when the right time comes and I answer, she will love herself to me.

We have no space, not a line, to detail everything. Enough has been said on the whole mysterious affair to enable the reader of the other books to fill in everything. We have other characters, of whose future we must get a glimpse.

But before taking up this, let us say that, with the repetition of the same of Martha Cleverly, and of the village of Elton, I am glimmering of those early days spent in the carrier's house earlier, coming to the mind of Addie. And as she fell as though she must be away from Bullshanger for a time, she asked Gerard, at dinner that night, to take her to Elton next day.

"Let me see this place, guardie, and this poor woman, for I should like, if it is possible, that some farther recollection of those childish days should return to me. After Elton, let us go somewhere for a month or two out of this place."

"Let us all go to Elton tomorrow," cried Sir George, eagerly, "and after that, let us get back to Mount Joy to dear Aunt Marsden. She will be delighted to have us!"

It was arranged so, and the next afternoon found the trio, Elton to see. The man was walking in a dream, Addie moved about the place, recollecting, recalling back thoughts, images, shadowy way. They were too late to see Martha Cleverly, who had died that morning. The trio went on to London that night, stayed at an hotel, and journeyed to Manchester next day.

CHAPTER XIII.

Across the Widd.

It return to the story of Belle Rosenthal, as we feel in duty bound to do.

The Englishman, yielding to Belle's entreaties by offering her as much as he could, and struck the trail of a wagon track—not the same track as that which the Dutch settler had taken, but one almost diagrammatically it was.

For nearly an hour he kept silence, that the girl might have time to recover herself. At the end of that time he said kindly:

"Do you feel stronger? You have had a severe shock, I fear. May I discover the lantern, that we may see each other?"

She answered "Yes" to his last question, or maybe, in her mad, she let the word of assent answer as a reply to all three of his queries.

He fastened the lamp on the bed of the wagon, slipped off its sheath, and holding it aloof, said, with a pleasant smile:

"Now we can see each other, and know whom we are addressing. My name is Charles Addissoon. I am an Englishman, as you might have guessed. I am on my way to Capetown, and from thence, via England, to America, where I have made my home. I have been on an exploring expedition into a remote bit of Africa, to examine and photograph the remarkable ancient ruins, previous to writing up a book on an expedition which has absorbed my mind for the past forty years—for I am sixty-five years old. I have a dear, devoted wife and two grown-up daughters at Poulekeepsie, in New York State, where our home is, and I shall not be fully content until I am safe home with them."

He hitched the lantern on to a hook, dropped a canvas curtain over the half-front of the wagon, where Belle was sitting, and remarked:

"We can have the comfort of the light now, without any fear of anyone seeing you, even if there should be any pursuit, which I don't at all apprehend."

Then, with the same kindly smile his face had worn when he first addressed her, he said:

"Now tell me, dear child, who you are, and what has happened to you, and you may rely on my fullest protection."

Belle knew in her soul that she could trust this kindly-voiced, honest-eyed old man, and told him all the story of her life, and, accepting the offer of his protection, she added:

** Two hours later, when Addie was lying on her bed, disrobed of that hateful bridal finery, and with her aching head bound up, Sir George Connolly, who had heard just all the details of the story from his friend.
MY MARRIAGE MYSTERY.

I have means enough with me for all my immediate necessities. I have a large income from my poor husband's property, which I command again directly I land in America, so be a father, a friend to me, a poor, helpless girl in a strange land, and let me travel home to New York with you.

Charles Addeson agreed heartily enough, the pair shook hands on the compact, then he said:

"Now you must get some rest.

The wagon was stopped, and with the distinctness and sweetness of an old campaigner he quickly arranged a comfortable bed for Belle, then putting the sheet over the lantern, he went in and turned in comfortably, while he arranged some matters with his drivers.

In due course the pair arrived in America; he went to Poughkeepsie to his wife and girls, and she went to the town where the asylum, in which her husband was confined, was situated.

At the earliest possible date she had an interview with the chief doctor of the asylum, and learned that her husband was likely to live for a month, and two months later the Press Agency supplied her with news of Gerard Foyle's death.

Restless after the receipt of this news, she began to make arrangements for a voyage to England, but in New York was taken ill with typhoid fever, and it was three months before she was well enough to travel.

"Take a sea voyage," said the doctor, and accordingly she arranged for a passage in a sail vessel to England, preferring the comparative discomforts of this type of craft, with the certainty of being longer on the water, than as though she had travelled by a smart steam liner.

Arrived in London, she wrote a momentous letter, then waited.

Gerard Foyle had given Sir George Connelly permission to wed Addie, and the girl herself was ridiculously happy.

Gerard sighed when he was alone, and more than once asked himself what he should do without his wife; and again, as always when this kind of depression seized him, he murmured:

"If only dear Belle had lived!

He sighed. "I can never forget her," he went on;

her memory seems twined up with every fibre of my being.

He was feeling particularly lonely and depressed this morning. A servant entered, bearing several letters on a salver. It was the second post.

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CHAPTER I.

At Oxford.

KENNETH, if you knew how earnestly I wish you were a Christian!"

The man who said this was young—not more than thirty-two years of age. His name was Arthur Grey; he was short of stature, and slight and fair, but his appearance was redeemed from effeminacy by the look of decision about his mouth and chin, and the noble contour of his brow.

He looked like a scholar; there was a dreamy thoughtfulness in his blue eye; he looked kind and good and gentle; the sweetness of his smile made little children cling to him, and stray dogs count upon an encouraging pat or a friendly nod.

His friend and chum, Kenneth Scott, was of a widely different order of man. They had been chums during their three years’ stay at Oxford, greatly to the amazement of all who knew them. They seemed so totally dissimilar, it seemed impossible they could have a single taste in common. Kenneth Scott was tall and strong, with a fine head set grandly on a fine pair of shoulders, and a set of muscles which were the pride and glory of his college. He was an athlete of the first rank, champion at cricket and at football, a splendid man in a boat, and unequalled in what is called "the noble art of self-defence."

But with all this, he was not a fool. A head so finely shaped must needs contain brains of decent calibre. If he had exerted himself sufficiently, he might have been one of the first men of his college. As it was, he was
going away after a three years' residence, with what
might justly be termed "honours."
His features were irregular, and rather massively than
delicately cut. Without being handsome, he had what is
usually called a "fine" face. His eyes were gray, some-
what deeply set, and very piercing. His hair, swept well
back from his brow, was of raven blackness; his nose
somewhat pronounced, and his mouth and chin square-
cut and resolute.
Some people said he was an aggressive-looking man.
Certainly there was a challenging gleam in his eyes, and
a passionate fulness about his lips, which would incline
one to think he could stand up for himself in his passage
through the world, and that it would be well for those
who met him not to rub shoulders with him too hardly.
Nevertheless, he could make his smile almost as winning
as Arthur's when he chose.
It was in Arthur's rooms the two were sitting on the
last night of Scott's stay at Oxford. He was to leave for
London very early in the morning.
He smiled with an air of good-humoured indulgence at
his friend's remark.
"My dear fellow, don't you bother about me. I shall
do very well."
"I hope so, Ken. I do indeed most earnestly hope so;
but if you were a Christian I should be sure."
"My dear fellow, Christians have their trials like other
folk."
"Trials—yes, they are among the 'all things' which
work together for our good. We accept them, but cheerfully
as we would accept a healing draught from the hand of
a wise physician. But it is of you I am thinking just
now, Ken."
"I shall do all right, Arthur, never fear," said Kenneth,
lightly.
"Of course I know you have excellent prospects. Those
brains of yours are sure to do great things for you at the
Bar. It won't surprise me at all if someday I hear you
are Lord Chancellor. If ever a man was fitted to shape
his own future, you are. But oh, Ken, dear old Ken—
—he rose from his seat and laid his hand on his friend's
shoulder as he said this, and his voice trembled with
emotion—"I wish you were a soldier of the Cross. I wish
you were marching beneath the banner of Jesus Christ.
I shouldn't have a doubt about you then. I should know
that you were safe."
Kenneth Scott was not unmoved. He loved his friend
too well for that. He took his hand and wrung it hard.
"You're a good fellow, Arthur," he said, with a quiet
gentleness of manner which showed how deeply he was
touched. "But indeed you make a mistake in bothering
about me. The truth is, it wouldn't do for all of us to
shape our lives alike. Your nature is spiritual, mine is
eminently practical, and it is better we should each
follow our own bent."
"Kenneth, you know that has nothing to do with it."
"Yes, it has. Religion suits you perfectly, Arthur. I
can't say I like the taste of it in other fellows, but I
positively love you all the better for it. But it wouldn't
suit me—not a bit. And yet I'm not going to turn out a
black sheep. Don't you fancy that for a single moment.
Thank God, I'm not a vicious chap, and I don't ever mean
to be. I mean to live a clean, honest, decent life. And
in that—I don't say it would be so to everyone, mind you—but
to me it will be as easy to do that without religion as
with it. It will indeed."
Arthur Grey smiled, but his smile was a very sad one.
He took a vase from the mantel-piece, and turned it
round and round in his hand.
"You see this vase, Ken?"
"Of course."
"You know what it's made of, and how?"
"Made of clay, I suppose, and on a potter's wheel."
"Yes. Now look here, Ken! When you speak of
shaping your life for yourself, I am reminded of the
potter and the clay. Could this vase have shaped itself,
think you? You know it could not. Well, humiliating
as it is to human pride, we are no more able to shape
ourselves into a thing of beauty, than the clay of which
this in composed was able, of itself, to take this shape

"My dear fellow, don't you bother about me. I shall do very well."

DON'T FIRE!
and form. It was only by submitting to the potter, by being plastic and yielding to his hand, that it became a thing of grace and beauty. It is just so with us. Of ourselves we can do nothing. If we cannot so much as make one hair white or black, it is not likely we can rule our lives aright. You must needs come into the hand of the Potter, Ken, but it lies with yourself to say whether you will yield to, or resist, His moulding. There lies the awful mystery, and the awful responsibility and power, which we call Free-will. And then, too, a vessel may be marred in the hand of the potter. The Bible gives that very word of warning. You forgive me for speaking so plainly, don't you, Ken? You know how affectionately I hold you in my heart."

"I know you're the best fellow in the world," said Kenneth. "And it's all right, Arthur, I assure you it's all right. I mean to go as straight as a die. You needn't fear for me."

He spoke with the cheery confidence of a man who feels his own strength. He put his lips together with a touch of resolution. His eye was calm and clear.

And yet if he could have foreseen the future, surely his heart would have trembled—nay, his very flesh would have shrunk back appalled—so full of evil was his life to be, so full of evil, of gloom, of woe.

CHAPTER II.

The Downward Path.

In one of the gambling hells with which London abounds, a dozen men were grouped round a table, playing at roulette. The electric light poured down its clear radiance upon their faces, lighting up each one, and revealing the marks of exhaustion, anxiety, or fear, which distinguished all in turn, as the chances of the game went for and against them.

"Thou shalt not covet!" might surely have been sounded with trumpet-call among those men, for in every eye there lurked the last of greed. Each looked at his neighbour's gold as the wild beast may be supposed to look at the flesh which it is forbidden, yet madly longs to rend and tear.

The most conspicuous among the group was Kenneth Scott. It was barely a year since he had quitted Oxford, but he looked fully five years older. His cheek was hollow and haggard, there were lines of care on his brow, and in his eyes there was by turns a feverish anxiety and a sombre gloom.

If Arthur Grey could have seen his friend he would have said he was marred—even in appearance—sadly marred.

He put five gold pieces—his last—on the red. The hawk-faced woman, who was the proprietress of the hideous den, whirled round her wheel. Kenneth watched it with a countenance of outward calm—so far, he could command himself—but his nails were pressed into his palms, and his whole frame trembled with excitement. He had lost sixty pounds that night.

The needle whirled and stopped. Black was the colour it indicated. The bank had won!

Kenneth turned a shade paler, and set his lips together very tight. But he said not a word, simply turned and strode out of the room.

When he reached the street he stood a moment, hesitating. Anyone who had chanced to look at him would have seen that a great struggle was going on in his mind.

He himself knew well that he had become the slave of the frightful vice of gambling. It had taken such a hold upon him that he was powerless to escape from it. His very struggles after freedom seemed but to tighten the hideous chain.

Man is so "feearfully and wonderfully made," that he never suspects the possibilities which lie hidden in the deep womb of his own moral nature—possibilities of good, possibilities of evil. If anyone had warned Kenneth Scott, when he first entered that hideous gambling hell—just for the sake of seeing "life," and led thither by a careless friend—that he would, within one short year, sink to the degradation and degeneracy of a confirmed gambler, he would have smiled in saucy scorn.

He thought himself so strong; and therein lay his
weakness. It is the man "who thinketh he standeth" that, above all others, should "take heed lest he fall." He stood under the fuming gas-light, beset by a strong temptation. He had no more money to stake, his pockets had been emptied of their last coin. If he went home to breakfast he would have to walk there. He had committed them at the gambling table if he had chosen. The proprietor would have given him what he deemed their equivalent. His pride, however, would not have sustained this. There were men whom he knew standing round. He could not bear that they should see the straits to which he was reduced.

The pawnbroker's shop was not far away. He moved towards it. He reached it. He paused outside the door. In his heart he was conscious that he was on the point of sinking to a level lower than that to which he had attained. He made a feeble effort to resist the temptation, but it was too strong for him, the gambling fever ran too fiercely in his veins. He entered the shop, and emerged from it in a few minutes with his light overcoat buttoned over his vest and round the top of his head. Straight back to the gambling game he went, as if drawn there by a mighty yet invisible hand. He laid down a stake, and lost it. Another, and lost that also. His cheeks grew pale, and his eyes were running. All eyes were upon him, everyone commented on his wonderful "run of luck." It seemed to him he was being borne upon a tide which could not turn. Now was the time to retrieve his losses of weeks past. He made a dash, and the stake—considerably over two hundred pounds—upon the red. The needle whirled round, then pointed grimly to the black. His head fell at him the critical moment, just as the daylight was ebbing from its victims when he had led them into the abyss of despair.

For the second time that night Kenneth Scott left that table without so much as a penny-piece upon him.

CHAPTER III.
His Last Chance.

The next morning he sat in his chambers, weary and depressed. He had a splitting headache, he and his horses were pate. Although it was nearly mid-day, he was still in his dressing-gown and slippers. He felt sick both in body and in mind. He had no heart to dress.

There came a tap at the door.

"Come in!" he called, languidly, then rose to his feet with a flushed face, for his visitor was one of the very last whom he would have desired to see at that moment—Mr. Capper.

The lawyer, a man of large and well-assorted frame, and was for six times running. All eyes were upon him, everyone commented on his wonderful "run of luck." It seemed to him he was being borne upon a tide which could not turn. Now was the time to retrieve his losses of weeks past. He made a dash, and the stake—considerably over two hundred pounds—upon the red. The needle whirled round, then pointed grimly to the black. His head fell at him the critical moment, just as the daylight was ebbing from its victims when he had led them into the abyss of despair.

For the second time that night Kenneth Scott left that table without so much as a penny-piece upon him.

Mr. Capper had told him the case was one of peculiar interest and importance, and had urged him to study it with assiduity. He had fully intended to do so, but night after night spent at the gambling table had unfitted his brain for study. Day after day had slipped past, and found him weary and depressed, fighting with fever in his blood, and depression at his heart. In such a state, intellectual work is an impossibility.

"Yes, sir, I know. And I am sorry if I have disappointed you. But I have been very pressingly engaged during this last fortnight.

"And perhaps may be for the next fortnight also," said the barrister, in a tone of peculiar significance.

Kenneth flushed high.

"If that is meant to imply that you wish for the second time, sir, the thing is easily done," he answered, haughtily.

The barrister rose from his seat, and took a step towards the door, then stood still, as if hesitating, and finally turned back and stood in front of the young man.

"Scott, I know your father. He was a good friend to me when we were young men together. Nay, he once saved me from making shipwreck of my life. Now that I am an old man, I would gladly do as much for his son."

"You are very good, sir! Thank you for your interest," said Kenneth, gravely.

He spoke with restraint, but not with petulancy or pride. There was an air of earnestness and sincerity about Mr. Capper which could not but impress him.

"My lad, may I speak plainly to you?"

"Certainly, sir."

The young man had laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, while his face softened, and his voice grew full of feeling.

"You know you may, sir;" but Kenneth winced at the thought of what was to come.

"I will not waste your word. But it has come to my knowledge that you are a gambler."

The word cut Kenneth like a whip. He could bear to be guilty of the fatal vice, but he could scarcely bear to hear himself designated by its name, so contradictory a term is to the nature of the young man.

"Now I know as well as most men what is likely to be the end of such a curse," went on Mr. Capper.

"If I had not been pulled up in time, I should probably have been one of the sandwich-men who shuffle along the gutters in the Strand, instead of a respectable lawyer, at this moment. I know enough to fear that you are already badly bitten, but I would hope you have strength of will to break free from the vile habit. Wait a moment! I haven't come here to lecture only. I believe you are embarrassed for money, and money is a very useful thing."

"It is true, sir."

"Pass me your word of honour never to gamble again, and I will lend you a thousand pounds, on your own undertaking to repay me when you are making a decent income at the bar."

Kenneth was touched, deeply touched. Mr. Capper had the reputation of being a man who loved his money. This offer of a thousand pounds from him was a generous act indeed.

"I wish I knew how to thank you, sir," he began, and then stopped short.

"Remember, Scott, I want you to accept this offer. Only give me the promise I ask, and I will write you out a cheque this very moment. Come now, say the word."

"I can't, sir."

"Why not, sir? I have had hope of a fair sum from the till of the tempter when the way was comparatively easy! He struggled fiercely with himself, and for one half-month it seemed as if the higher nature would vanquish the lower, as if good would triumph over evil."

"I don't know if it has."

The voice of the soul would crush down the carnal lusts and appetites.

But the moment passed. The lower nature was too strong for the enslaved will. The E van, within him, vitiated by excess, could not hold his birthright higher than the time of poverty. The young man at Newmarket races would be run. He was resolved to attend them already. He had a large sum of money staked upon a horse. He meant to make a still more. He was certain the horse would win. And if it did, he would be justified. No he should be in need of Mr. Capper's thousand pounds.

The temptation may seem as nothing to those who have never felt its force. It may seem to them that the vice of gambling is, of all others, the easiest to break away from. But those who have been in its deadly grip know and
tremble at its power. It is a veritable Apollon in the
way, and it has brought many a Samson to the ground.

It held Kenneth, Kenneth, Kenneth, Kenneth, Kenneth, Ken
his grip now, and after a few ineffectual struggles he weakly
yielded.

When the race was over, then—so he promised con-
science by way of a bribe—then he would relinquish the
habit, but this once he must indulge himself. He literally
could not keep off work until he had seen the race and
knew its outcome.

With a flush on his face, and a shamed look in his
eyes, he thanked Mr. Capper for his generous—oh, but
didn't he deserve it?

"In three or four days, at most, I shall be back at the
chambers, and hard at work. I do assure you, sir, I
mean to keep at it steadily, and grind away as I've never
done before. And as to money, it's wonderfully good of
you to say what you have said, and I shall never forget
it, but neither shall you, however much even from you
I shall manage very well. I've been a bit foolish, I
admit; but things are not so far gone but what I can
pull myself round all right. If you'll be so good as to
expect me on Friday morning, sir, we'll go on with Day
and Darling.

"Very well. Just as you please, of course, Mr. Scott,"
said the lawyer, a little stiffly. And without another
word he took his leave.

He had felt a genuine interest in his pupil, and had
brought the habits and traditions of a lifetime in offering
to lend him a thousand pounds. But he was not disposed
to press his offer upon him. He must go his own way,
and see whether it would lead him.

Kenneth watched him go with mingled feelings. He
was glad he had sought him out in his hour of need, but
he was not so glad that he had been tempted to call him back, and give him the promise he
asked for. But the thought of the race mastered him.
He felt he could not forgo that. And so he let his friend
depart, and by so doing took another step on the down-
ward road, another step to the abyss towards which he
was gravitating with frightful speed.

CHAPTER IV.
The Race.

The race-course was crowded with people. It may be questioned whether any such a sur-
rounding, pulpitudinous mass of humanity could have
been got together by any other attraction under
Heaven.

Royal progresses, Royal weddings, the de-
parture or the home-coming of heroes, the funerals of the
good, and the funerals of the bad, all attract people;
but never crowds so wildly and so deeply moved.

Thousands of hearts were melted like wax: thousands of
cheeks flushed red with excitement, or turned pale with
despair, at the hoisting of a number or the mere sound
of a horse's name.

To a man who has staked all his hopes—nay, more, his
honour and his very life—on the fleetness of a horse's
legs, the tremendousness of the issue may well appeal with
frightful force. Madman though he necessarily is, he is
yet sufficiently to realise that he has set all his on a leather,
a bubble, a straw. The price of a needle, the
rolling of a pebble, may easily suffice to plunge him into
ruin.

Among those who occupied a place on the grand-stand
was Kenneth Scott. His tall, fine figure attracted atten-
tion, and the crowd, the crowd. Many a man turned to give him
a second glance, many a fair girl's eye dwelt on him with
desirable approval.

He had the art of commanding his countenance. No
one could have guessed, by looking at him, what a turmoil
was raging in his breast. He was good as good at looking against the
rails in an easy attitude, and with an unconcerned expres-
sion of face; and yet conscience was tormenting him
sorely, and he knew that if a certain race went against
him, he would be plunged so hopelessly into despair that
he would blow out his brains.

The earlier races interested him but slightly. He had
only comparatively small stakes upon them. He watched
them with listless interest. He was thinking all the time
of the moment which was to decide his fate. He was
lingering for it, and dreading it at the very same moment.

In one of the intervals between the races he was roused
from painful musings by hearing someone pronounce his
name. He looked round quickly, and saw the nearest
relative he had in the world—the nearest, but by no means
a near one, for Sir Linley Scott was only his second
uncle. He had been Kenneth's own sport, and as a little child,
perhaps, and there was a species of mutual dislike between them. Sir Linley, who was a fair, little man of
delicate physique and penurious disposition, had felt him-
self snubbed from early boyhood by his stalwart, open-
handed cousin, and had disliked him accordingly. Kenneth,
found for him, in return, a contempt which he was too proud
of attempt to disguise.

"Ah, Kenneth, you here? I didn't know race-courses
were a preparation for the Bar."

Sir Linley spoke with a perceptible sneer.

Kenneth looked him full in the eyes, and answered
coolly:

"That only proves you don't know everything. I
rather suspect it does.

Sir Linley had no retort ready. He passed on, but
in a minute or two returned with a couple of elegantly-
dressed young women. Kenneth knew them by sight.
They were the sisters of Lady Scott. There was a little
crowd, and the party had come to a standstill at
Kenneth's elbow. He, of course, expected his cousin
would take the opportunity to introduce his sisters-in-law.
Instead of doing this, he kept them pointedly aloof from
him.

Kenneth flushed red. He felt the implied insult.

One of the young ladies glanced at his direction, then
whispered something in Sir Linley's ear.

Kenneth was sure she was expressing a wish for an
introduction.

Sir Linley shook his head, and put on a look of affected
gravity. Kenneth heard a word or two of his reply:

"Going to the dogs fast. Not a fellow I should care
for you to know."

Kenneth felt himself consumed by secret rage. That
is the man whom so much despised should presume to
desire him was almost more than he could endure; and
yet in his heart he knew he had no one but himself to blame.
If his cousin had not heard that he had de-
gnated him into the ranks of corrupters—neglecting his prof-
ession and ruining his prospects, he would not have
dared to speak of him like that.

He set his teeth hard and looked very stern as he
thought of this. The sternness was all for himself. He
was thinking that when once he had recovered his losses
by the winning of the horse on which he had staked his
all, he would bet and gamble no more; he would work as
man never worked yet; he would redeem the past.

But he must secure his winnings first. They were
absolutely necessary to him; they would cover the many
terrible mischance, the horse should lose, he would be entire
ruined.

He would not have a penny in the world.

But it would not lose—it could not not.

So he told himself vehemently, and tried to believe his
own assurance; because, although his heart was beating like a
sledge-hammer at the very thought of failure.

* * * * *

At length came the moment for the eventful race.

Only three horses were to run—Sir Toby, Lightning
Flash, and Black Agnes. It was Black Agnes on which
Kenneth Scott had staked his all.

She was the favourite, not only with the multitude, but
with the knowing ones; her success seemed an infallibly
certain thing.

She was a magnificent creature, coal-black in colour,
with a coat of satin gloss and sheen, a profoundly-arched
neck, and a rolling eye. Her riders was a mere slip of a
boy, entirely unpractised, but giving every sign of being
sure and giving every sign of being
well bred, and his dress, and his girlish figure, and his
breast, and his girlish figure, and his

His colours were scarlet and orange. As he made his
way to the weighing-machine the multitude cheered him
uppermost. He was probably as wicked and vicious a
little fellow of his age; he could manage arguments, personal, intellectual, or moral, to recom-
mand him to sane and sensible people; he was simply
"a crack jockey," a miserable, deformed, diminutive
specimen of humanity. And yet the crowd—among it
men of culture like Kenneth Scott—had as if he had been the saviour of his country, or the
leader of some fortior and glorious hope.

The moment for the start arrived. Although there were
only three horses it was difficult to get them off together.
Black Agnes was nervous and excited, and would not be restrained. At least three false starts were made before the flag was finally dropped, and a roar of voices announced that they were off.

Black Agnes immediately took the lead, and kept it with such apparent ease that rows of derisive laughter went up from those who had had the good fortune—as they fancied—to lay their money on her. Kenneth Scott heaved a long, deep sigh of relief. He told himself he was "safe."

Suddenly the laughter changed into a shout of consternation and alarm. The ominous cry of "Black Agnes loses! Black Agnes loses!" began to pass from lip to lip. Kenneth had dropped his field-glasses so confident was he that the mare's success was certain. She was but a quarter-of-a-mile from the winning-post, and Lightning Flash and Sir Toby were toiling laboriously quite a quarter-of-a-mile behind her.

An awful spasm of fear clutched his heart as he heard those ominous cries, and, looking through his glasses, saw that the mare had suddenly dropped into little more than a walking pace, and was exhibiting symptoms of acute distress.

"Six to one against Black Agnes! Eight to one against Black Agnes! Ten to one against Black Agnes!" screamed the book-makers, in quick succession.

A something of furious anger, swelling each moment in volume, went up from the crowd.

"It's the jockey, — him! Somebody's got at him! See how he's pulling at his mouth! It's a put-up job! He's been bribed to sell the race! If I'd got the villain here I'd pull his heart out of his miserable carcass!"

Then followed ejaculations loud and deep and horrible.

The man who had cheered the jockey as a hero ten minutes ago, were ready now to rend him limb from limb.

Kenneth Scott spoke not a word, made not a sound. Despair had got him in his iron grip, and he was paralysed beneath it.

What mattered it whether the race were lost fairly or unfairly, so that it was lost? The dishonest jockey, if his guilt could be brought home to him, might be warned off the turf; but what good would that do him, Kenneth Scott? He would be ruined all the same.

Oh, what a fool, what a madman he had been! The very profession he had chosen should have taught him how to gauge chances for and against. It should have taught him the worse; than madness of staking all his future on the honesty of a jockey and the fleetness of a horse's legs.

But while he thus reproached himself in the bitterness of his agony, a sudden wild gleam of hope revived within him. The jockey, as it consisted of the opprobrium which was being heaped upon him, rose up in his stirrups, and strove, with voice and whip and spur, to carry the noble brute beneath him to the winning-post.

It roared itself, and made a gallant effort. Sir Toby was now close behind—nay, it thundered past. The mare made a tremendous spring. She seemed to gather all her strength together, and to literally fly through the air. She gained on Sir Toby! She reached him! She passed him by! She was barely a hundred yards from the goal! One more spurt and she would reach it!

Kenneth felt himself growing sick beneath the intolerable torture of suspense. His brain swam. His heart kept in his bosom; a horrible red mist seemed to float before his eyes.

The crowd was now frantic with excitement. The yelling and the cheering were alike frightful. "She wins! She wins! Black Agnes wins!" was the shout that went up simultaneously from a thousand throats.

And in truth the noble creature had done her best. But even her best was of no avail. When within ten yards of the post she quivered all over, gave one great convulsive twitch and bound, then fell like a stone upon the ground.

The jockey was up in a moment; but the mare breathed her last before he could get to her head.

Sir Toby dashed by her dead body, and won the race.

In the midst of her terror, Doris recognised Kenneth Scott.

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<td>Illustration of a jockey on a horse, looking distressed, with a crowd in the background.</td>
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CHAPTER V.

Disgrace.

THAT night Kenneth Scott sat in a Piccadilly café, with gloom on his brow, and a still deeper gloom at his heart.

He had chosen an isolated corner, where he could brood over his misery, as he believed, without the interference of anyone who might not have felt a sympathy with his sentiments.

Miserable enough he was. He was completely ruined. He had scarcely five pounds left in the world, and had his few effects been sold they would not have sufficed to pay his debts.

A week was over, he told himself bitterly, over at twenty-four. He might as well be lying at the bottom of a river, or in his chambers with a bullet through his brain, as live the kind of life that was now left him.

He was almost morbidly proud and sensitive. He could neither bear the sners nor the pity of it. He could not bear to ask their help, or even to accept it even if it were offered. Another man might have gone to Mr. Capper, and implored him to help him. He could not.

Certainly there was no one else to whom he could appeal. Arthur Grey had no means, and, indeed, was on the Continent, acting as an guardian to a young nobleman. Sir Linley had the means, and was his kinsman: but Kenneth ground his teeth as he told himself he would never accept a favour at his hands.

So he sat brooding in his solitary, hopeless misery, wonding of a world of wonder at the folly which had brought him to this. He was考核ed of the gambling fever at last. It had subsided, leaving a strange coldness and languor in his veins. He could only ask himself now what its spell had been.

He did not even care to enter into the question which was agitating half London—the question whether Black Agnes had been "discussed," whether Turning, the jockey, had ridden straight or not. What did it matter to him? Let the jockey he honest or dishonest, he was ruined all the same.

The next four young men entered the room, and took the table nearest him. He looked up, and recognised his cousin, Sir Linley. He and his friends had just come out of a theatre, and were in evening-dress. They were discussing the race. Although they sat at some little distance from him, Kenneth could hear every word they said. Sir Linley knew this, and, with the malice of a small and mean mind, he took the opportunity to mortify him.

Affecting not to see him, he went on talking about the race.

"For myself, I rarely bet," he said. "I like to see a race run, and I occasionally stake a moderate sum; but anything in the nature of habitual gambling, I dislike. I consider it cowardly self-indulgence for a young man to ruin himself in this way. I do not think, therefore, that many young men do nowadays. They try out and make a pretty fuss if their relatives refuse to know them; but if a man leads a respectable life himself, he naturally likes to keep himself clear of disgrace or dishonesty."

Kenneth's cheek burned redly. The blood surged madly through his brain. It was only by a strenuous effort of will that he kept himself from leaping up from the table, and clashing his fist into his cousin's face.

The truth was, he had been drinking heavily during the evening, and had drunk too much wine, as well as with the cigar. He was in that mad-determined, desperate mood when men do deeds which seem to contradict, and sometimes to undo, the whole tenor of their previous lives.

"He shall pay for his insult!" he vowed to himself, fiercely, as he ground his teeth and clenched his hands. "I am as he thus resolved, Sir Linley rose, and still affecting not to see him, bade "Good-night" to his friends, and moved towards the door. Kenneth rose, too, looking very black and grim, and followed him. He was just sane enough and sober enough to reflect that he would be better off if he did not follow him, especially at one where there were ladies present. He would get his cousin into the street, and then—

Sir Linley stepped into the street. His haun was waiting for him; he had all but reached the door before he became conscious that his cousin was beside him.

Then he turned to see him white with fury, and with glittering eyes.

"I have come to tell you you are a lying coward!" he hissed almost in his ear.

His look was menacing. Sir Linley put up the light candle he carried. He did it to his hurry and confusion, not with the intention of striking his cousin, but the movement robbed Kenneth of the last vestige of his self-control. He flung himself on Sir Linley, seized him by the throat, and shook him like a rat.

Sir Linley was the match for him in bodily strength, even if he had had the intention to defend himself; but there was plenty of help at hand. His servant came hurrying to his assistance, as did also the restaurant porter, and, a moment later, a couple of constables.

Of course that was the end.

Sir Linley's hat was knocked off in the course of it, and he himself all but knocked down. Kenneth, when first the constables touched him, struggled fiercely, and it was only when he became conscious that resistance was little more than a delusion, and stood, pale and breathless, bowlering at his cousin. Sir Linley was pale, too, with anger and vexation.

"I give this man in charge," he said, in a strident voice.

A police inspector, who had just come up, tried to murmur a word in his ear. Kenneth, all pale and dishevelled and wild-eyed as he looked, was unmistakably a gentleman. The inspector thought it a case which ought to be "hushed up." Sir Linley was too furious. He had been too severely handled to be in the mood for anything but vengeance.

"I give him in charge," he reiterated, vehemently. "I have been the victim of a brutal assault. I shall suffer for it. I shall certainly appear before him in the morning."

With this he got into his hansom, and was driven off.

Kenneth was taken to the nearest police-station. The inspector-good-natured man he couldn't be easily arranged, but he declined to fall in with the suggestion. He had certainly drunk too much wine, and its fumes, coupled with his mad excitement, had now plunged him into a state of sunk insensibility.

He was placed in his cell, and, while his cousin's friend was communicated with, and so he was locked up in a police cell for the night.

Thus had he retaliated his life, which he had so confidently taken into his own hands. He had boasted that, for him, it would be as easy to live cleanly and soberly, without religion as with it.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

* * * * *

The next morning he was brought before the magistrate to answer the charge.

He was now himself, and felt to the full the humiliation and abjectness of his position. He looked at his eye, as it swept round the court in search of his cousin, was huffy and defiant. His face was very pale.

But Sir Linley was not there. A night's calm reflection had softened his irritated vanity, and had made him feel it would be wise not to drag the family name through a police-court. In his stead there appeared a lawyer, who respectfully represented to the presiding magistrate that the prosecutor wished to withdraw the charge.

The magistrate was a benevolent and sensitive man. He had listened in a melancholy way, and, as his eye, as it swept round the court in search of his cousin, was huffy and defiant.

"Shame and sorrow made sincere shadows in his eyes.

That night in the police cell, that appearance in a public court, had been terrible to him. The memory was like the touch of his iron. In his mind, sensitivity he felt as if he could never escape from the shapes of his sins, as if he were a marked and branded man for life.

Shame and sorrow made sincere shadows in his eyes.


But I have no means!"

Such was the thought in his mind when, as he passed a pub-house, he saw a recruiting sergeant there.

Like lightning there flashed through his brain the suggestion that here was the opportunity to quit for ever the surroundings which had become hateful to him. He
The 8th marched through London before it sailed. The windows were full of spectators. At one of them a young clergyman stood with his pupil, to whom he had been acting as travelling tutor.

Arthur Grey had only just returned to England, and was determined to hunt on this his friend and chum, Kenneth Scott. He had not heard from Kenneth for months, and was concerned about him.

Little did he dream, as he watched the soldiers slowly filing by, that the one who marched with cardinal dignity head was the friend who had quitted Oxford with such high hopes, and proud resolves, and brilliant prospects, little more than a year ago.

The clay was in the hand of the Potter, but it seemed as though it was doomed to be marred there—why, to be "broken in pieces as a vessel that cannot be made whole again."

**CHAPTER VI.**

**Doris Adair.**

HE 8th was quartered in the hill country. War had not yet broken out between Great Britain and the native tribes, but was constantly suggested in the air. The officers' quarters were in the midst of the plain, and the residents of the place were the soldiers of hospitality.

Colonel Adair was in command of the 8th. He was a widower with an only child, who had been born in India and who rarely left his side. He was a gentleman of age, with a visage, and was generally well-regarded. He was tall and slender, with a mild expression. He was one of the few officers whose conduct was such as to inspire respect from his men.

Doris Adair sat in the verandah of her father's bungalow, conversing with her cousin, Minna Scott. She was a charming girl, with a vivacious air. She was seen by the officers as a possible partner for their bachelor officers, who were often seen with her.

An officer of the 8th crossed the strip of garden, and stood before the two girls, bowing low with his forehead in his hand. "Captain Vincent, this is an act of charity," cried Minna. "We were longing for someone to take pity on us. If you hadn't come, Doris and I would have quarreled—just for the sake of something to do."

"That's nonsense, Minna. I don't believe Miss Adair would quarrel, even with a firebrand like you."

Captain Vincent spoke gently, but there was a look in his eye, as it dwelt on Miss Adair, which showed he was half-serious, too.

There was a chair near Doris. "May I?" he said, in a tone of gentle courtesy, and, as he took it, contrived to direct it towards her sister.

It was an open secret that Captain Vincent was in love with the Colonel's daughter—an open secret, that is, to everybody except herself. She suspected it occasionally, but, in her anxiety to disbelieve, perpetually disarmed the suspicion from her mind.

He was a very handsome man, about thirty years of age, of middle height, slender build, and gentlemanly carriage. His face was aristocratic, his complexion pale, his eyes dark and keen, his nose aquiline, his mouth perfect in shape, but marred by a look of haughtiness which bordered on arrogance. He wore a slight moustache, which, like his hair, was of raven blackness. A servant appeared with a tray, on which he set a table in the pleasant air of the verandah.

"You will let us give you some tea?" asked Doris.

"Thanks, I shall be only too grateful. I'm wanting to see the Colonel. Is he anywhere about?"

"No; he has walked into the town. He will be back in the course of an hour, I think. Will you wait for him?"

"I will if you'll let me." And again his tone was bewitching.

"Of course we'll let you, won't we, Minna?" returned Doris, also across at her cousin, as if determined to draw her into the conversation.

She poured out the tea as she spoke. Life in India is by no means so conventional as in England. Ladies are more self-contained, less dependent upon chaperons: even they are not expected to be as entirely entertaining the officers of her father's regiment.

They had scarcely finished tea when a shower fell across the green, and a private of the 8th stood beside Captain Vincent, with his hand raised to his cap in respectful salute.

It was Kenneth Scott—James Scott, as he was called in his new life. He looked older, many years older than he had done when he quitted Oxford, though it were barely two years ago. Kenneth was already clean shaven, and definitely unmarried, and had been exposed to Indian suns; a settled melancholy dwelt on his brow and in his eyes. He rarely smiled, and never laughed. He was the most melancholy of men, and this melancholy was always interesting to a woman—still more to a girl of nineteen.

"Here, take this!" said Captain Vincent, handing him the hastily-scribbled note. "Make haste! Don't let Doris down."

Again his voice was unnecessarily harsh in its accent of command.

Kenneth took the note, saluted, and strode away. Minna looked after his fine, upright figure till it was lost to view, then she exclaimed, "Well, of all the splendid-looking men! Does he belong to your company, Captain Vincent?"

"I regret to say he does. He is the most troublesome fellow in it."

"Oh! Indeed? I should never have dreamed that, said Doris. "Do you know, I thought he looked like a gentleman?"

The Colonel laughed rather bitterly.

"We don't get gentlemen in the ranks nowadays, Miss Adair. Don't they get gentlemen, they keep themselves out of such positions. No, this fellow is simply an insolent, stiff-necked upstart who prides himself on his fine figure, and tries to walk like a Field-Marshal."

Doris looked gently incredulous. The Captain saw the look, and was angered by it.

"There isn't a man in the company I more dislike," said he, vehemently. "It isn't only that he gives himself airs, and is a sulky brute; he's worse than that. The fellow's a rank atheist."

Doris looked very grave—nay, more grave—surprised and grieved.

"Oh, I do hope not," said she, very earnestly. "An atheist! How dreadful!"

"Oh, it's just what you may expect from a fellow of
that sort. He's had a smattering of education, and that coaxes him up to fancy he knows more than anybody else. Any way, he's a rank atheist—always sneering at religion."

"I am so sorry," said Doris, gently. "I do think an atheist must be the most miserable creature on earth."

"He's not worth your pity, Miss Adair," exclaimed Captain Vincent, hastily. "Take my word for it, he's a thoroughly bad lot."

"You only make me pity him all the more," said Doris, with a sad little smile. "To be wicked is to be wretched."

The Captain turned the conversation into another channel. He assumed his sprightliest manner, and exerted himself to please, but still the shadow lingered round Doris's sweet mouth and in her sunny eyes.

She could not forget the man who was an atheist. Again and again she thought of him, and wondered what was the secret history which lay behind those melancholy eyes.

It was three days before Doris saw Kenneth Scott again. Then, as she walked through a plantation in the neighbourhood of the barracks she came upon him, sitting on a fallen log, with a book in his hand.

Her heart beat a little quickly at sight of him. He had been much in her thoughts, and she had been longing for an opportunity of speaking to him. Captain Vincent, piqued by her interest in him, had thought to disgust her by telling her he was an atheist. Instead, he had but deepened her interest. She herself was an earnest Christian, longing for nothing so much as to lead souls to the Cross of Christ. She had been impressed by Kenneth's appearance; but when she heard he was an unbeliever, a tender pity, and a still more tender yearning, became associated with him in her heart. She wanted to win him for her Lord.

Should she speak to him? That was the question she asked herself, with a fluttering heart. Surely she could never hope for a better opportunity. Surely this one had been Divinely planned.

If he had looked less like a gentleman her task would have been much easier. She was accustomed to speak to her father's men. Her life in India, lived among them, had led her to regard them much as a young English lady regards the labourers on her father's lands. She had a kindly smile and word of greeting for them all.

But this man looked so exactly like one of her own order, so grandly pious in bearing, so nobly intellectual. Well, he was all the better worth the winning.

So, with a fast-throbbing heart, and a slightly changing colour, she walked up to him, and accosted him with:

"Good-afternoon. What a pleasantly shady place you have found."

He rose, and saluted her with the precision of a soldier, but his air was that of a gentleman. He did not speak.

She felt embarrassed, but she was brave. With one little low-breathed prayer for guidance, she went on:

"You belong to my father's regiment, do you not? I am Miss Adair."

He was standing with his hand to his cap. He bowed low, but did not speak.

Poor Doris's cheek flushed hotly. She began to feel strangely flustered, but she would not give in.

"I don't think I have seen you before—that is, not until last week. You came to the bungalow with a letter for Captain Vincent."

"Yes, madam."

"Have you been here long?"

"No, madam."

"I know most of the men, and I think they all know me. We are very good friends. Many of them I meet on Sunday afternoons. We have such pleasant services in the mission hall. I think I have never seen you there."

"I never go."
DON'T FIRE!

He spoke curtly. If his voice had been less cultured it would have seemed almost rude. "I wish you good-night, Miss B锁. I should be so pleased to see you."

And it is really very bright and pleasant. I think you would like the service. Will you go—to oblige me?"

"Thank you, I would rather not."

He spoke coldly, nay, even haughtily. Doris felt so discomfited that she could scarcely keep the tears from welling to her eyes.

"I am sorry," she said, very gently. "Please forgive me for asking you." And she walked on.

Kenneth watched her out of sight, then sat down again with a curious and distracted air. He had seen her been on the point of shedding tears, and the sight had caused a restriction and spasm across his throat. For tears, ay, and sobs, too, had been half-evoked by the touch of human sympathy in that sweet girl.

She was left to herself daily. It was a ball of torture such as his proud spirit scarce knew how to bear. The Colonel's daughter, in her white robes and with her sweet voice and winning looks, had seemed like an angel come to bring him some healing balm of pity. He had rejected her overtures, simply because he could not have accepted them calmly. Little did she suspect it, but he had been so deeply moved that if he had not put a stern restraint upon himself he must have fallen at her feet, kissed the hem of her garment, and sobbed like a child.

His heart was indeed full of burning. When a man of birth, education, and culture becomes a private soldier, he must needs have much to endure. The equator of purity, the circumference of virtue, the circle of discipline to which he is subjected, and beneath which a proud spirit shames itself to laceration—all these Kenneth had borne with stoical endurance, discounting it utter a murmur or complaint.

But the thought of something had befallen him—the worst thing perhaps that can befall a private soldier—he had incurred the enmity of an officer, his own Captain, Captain Vincent.

It had been a curious secret antagonism between the two men from the very first. Vincent's arrogant manner had been offensive to Kenneth; Kenneth's superior air and bearing had, in its turn, irritated Vincent. He was a man who chose to regard the men under his command as something little better than brute beasts.

But since they had come to India an incident had occurred to deepen the Captain's antagonism into active hate. He was a tyrant, and one day he perpetrated an act of peculiar tyranny in Kenneth's presence. Kenneth uttered a protest, contended and disputed without any consideration, and the other saw it. The next day Vincent received from his superior officer a rebuke which showed that that particular act of tyranny had been reported at headquarters. Kenneth suspected that it was one of the greatest

That James Scouery was the tale-bearer. He was utterly wrong in this, but it was, nevertheless, the cause of his hating Kenneth with a fierce and bitter hate. Henceforward he did his utmost to make his life a burden to him.

He succeeded only too well. That very day, before Doris saw him, Kenneth had been well-nigh maddened by his insolence. He had been tempted to tell him to the earth, to spit on him, to trample on him, let the consequences be what they might. He was in that frame of mind when a man rushes on death gladly to escape the tortures of his life.

She thinks me a brute," he muttered, as he watched her from the road, his face contorted and distended with anguished woe. And yet, sweet angel, she wants to lead me to believe in the justice of God?

She stood on the hillside, and walked back to quarters with a lowering brow. In his absorption he did not notice that he had left his book on the log where he had thrown it. He only Doris came back and saw the book lying there. She recognised it as the one she had seen in his hands. She looked at it with interest. Her interest increased, and mingled with amazement when she saw what it was—Dante's "Inferno," in the original. A private soldier who read Italian. Captain Vincent had said, she remembered, that "the fellow had picked up a smattering of education." But surely this indicated more than a smattering. This mysterious soldier, who

looked so noble, and who spoke so proudly, must surely have originally belonged to the same rank of life as her own.

She opened the book and saw a name in the fly-leaf. It was not the name Captain Vincent had called him by. The name written there was "Kenneth Scott." Again she wondered what was the secret history of this man.

CHAPTER VII.
The Rescue.

FEW days later Colonel Adair and his daughter were driving home from a dinner-party. The road was a lonely one, the hour late. The Colonel was asleep in a corner of the carriage. Doris was very wide awake, and very full of thought.

Suddenly a light flashed in at the carriage window. The next moment the horses were pulled up so violently as to be thrown upon their haunches. Whatever was the matter? exclaimed the Colonel, suddenly waking up from his nap. "John, John, what are you doing?"

John made no answer. The Colonel put his head out of the window, and, to his horror, saw that two men were dragging him from the box. At the same time another window opened before the door of the carriage, and one of them, clapping a revolver to the Colonel's temple, demanded his money or his life.

He saw in a moment with whom he had to do. The scoundrels belonged to a band of robbers who infested the hills in the neighbourhood, and whom long immunity from capture had rendered impudently daring.

Colonel Adair was an elderly man, but he was quick both of eye and hand, and of great courage. He wrenched the revolver from one of the robbers, and doubling after him, and keeping out of the carriage, turned upon his assailants. His resistance was useless. Before he could draw the trigger, a blow from behind struck him to the ground, where his prostrate body lay beside that of his coachman. Colonel Adair had sat parallel with horror until now, but when she saw her father fall—as she believed—led, she uttered a piercing shriek, and attempted to fling herself upon his body. The moonlight fell full upon the jewels on her neck and at the top of her hair. One of the villains seized her by the arm, while another roughly tore the necklace from her throat.

Again her shrieks rang out on the still night air. Father! father! she shrieked. Oh, they have killed him! He was my father! A man's step sounded on the road, and a man's voice shouted encouragement. "Hold on! We're coming!" shouted the voice, and in another moment a tall figure in a soldier's uniform came flying up the road.

In the midst of her terror Doris recognised Kenneth Scott.

He leapt among the scoundrels with flaming eyes, and arms out, and rushed beside their leader, and as if he were a battering-ram. Two of the robbers fell like ninepins; but there were six of them, and he was unarmed, and they had both knives and pistols.

It was too dangerous to maintain it with desperate courage, Doris meanwhile clanging to the carriage window, white and white trembling, and breathing agitated prayers to Heaven.

The scoundrels overpowered Kenneth. They beat him down to his knees. Doris saw his face, ash-pale, and smeared with blood, in the moonlight; she gave all up for lost, when suddenly she saw John, the coachman, rise stealthily to his feet, seize a pistol which had fallen to the ground, and point it at Kenneth's cowardly assailants.

One of them bit the dust in a moment; the other three, not having noticed John's return to consciousness, and fancying themselves surrounded by numbers, gave up the fight and rushed away north-south into the darkness.

"Thank God! Thank God!" Oh, thank God!" cried Doris, fervently, and, retaining something of calmness,
though she trembled in every limb, she again left the carriage, and knelt beside her father.

"Doris! He’s not dead, only stunned," said John. "I’ll give him a drop of spirits. See! he’s coming to."

The Colonel opened his eyes in great bewilderment. It was a moment or two before he could realize what had been done to him to recover, he did so very rapidly. The blow on his head had stunned but not seriously injured him.

He was on his feet quickly.

"My child!" was his first exclamation, as he clasped Doris in his arms. Then he turned to Kenneth. "Scotney, my good fellow, is it you?" he said. "We owe you our lives," he added, with soldier-like bravado.

"I have a scratch or two, sir—nothing to hurt," said Kenneth, coolly, and got up beside the coachman on the box.

In five minutes they were at home.

Colonel Adair led his daughter into the drawing-room, then hastened to bid the doctor come in also.

"He is a brave fellow. Fancy his keeping up the fight against six men, and he unarmed!" he said to Doris.

"We must see what we can do for him, my love."

At that moment Kenneth entered the room. Doris saw that he was bleeding slightly; he carried himself erect, his face was deathly pale.

"Well, Scotney, my fine fellow, I wish I knew how to thank you," began the Colonel, taking his hand with generous warmth.

A spasmodic pain crossed Kenneth’s face. He winced and staggered backwards.

"Oh, papa, he is hurt!" cried Doris. "See how he is bleeding. Look at his poor arm. Oh! dear, oh! dear!"

The last exclamation was almost a shriek, for Kenneth had fallen heavily to the floor, but to his rescue had come the Colonel himself, to examine his injuries.

"He has bled terribly," he said. "There is a wound in the shoulder, and a nasty cut on the head. And he said he had only a scratch! What a noble fellow!"

"Papa, let me help you." It was Doris who spoke, very gently and softly, as she came to his side.

"No, no, my dear. You had better go upstairs. This is no place for you."

But she pleaded to be allowed to stay—pleaded so earnestly that her father could not but consent.

The surgeon came, stopped the bleeding, and dressed the wounds. Not until this was done did Kenneth recover consciousness.

The doctor was putting his instruments away. The Colonel had left the room to give some order. The only sound was that of Doris, she was bending over him with tender pity in her eyes. His heart gave a great throb. In that moment, even in his weakness and his pain, a revelation swept across his mind. He was in love with his Colonel’s daughter! Yes, in love with her! Until this he had never given a woman a second thought. He had never even thought of love.

But ever since she had spoken to him in the plantation her image had been before him, and now that she bent over him with that smiling grace in her sweet eyes, and he lay thrilling in every nerve and fibre beneath it, he could disguise the truth no longer.

He was a fool, a madman—he knew it—but he loved her. It seemed to him in that moment that he would have laid down his life gladly, if only he might feel the touch of those white fingers on his brow.

"Do you feel much pain?" she asked him, and her voice was so soft and sweet as to be almost a caress. It thrilled him as her touch might have done.

I have no pain now," he answered, and spoke the truth. He could feel no pain while she stood beside him.

The doctor turned back to his patient, and began to make suggestions for his removal. The Colonel, who had re-entered the room, spoke with decision.

"We will stay here for the present, Payne. He has risked and all but lost his life, in saving my daughter’s and mine. The least we can do is to take care of him. He shall not be moved."

And indeed he seemed scarcely fit to be, for even as the Colonel spoke he once more fainted away.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Pleading Gift.

Doris would listen in silence; she rarely asked her father a question about him, rarely commented on anything he told her, but many were the thoughts of her heart.

"If it be the end of the fortnight Kenneth was able to be up and dressed. Then the Colonel said to his daughter:"

"Doris, love, I think you should just go in and see poor Scotney. He is so grateful for every attention. And besides, we owe him our lives."

"Of course I will go, papa," said Doris, obediently. Her heart beat painfully fast as she stood outside the door of the room where Kenneth was. She knew how it was she felt so strangely agitated. Her feelings were a mystery to herself.

She entered the room. Kenneth was lying back in an easy-chair, the old nurse sitting beside him. He was still very pale, and his right arm was in a sling.

"At sight of Doris a deep colour overswept his face, then retreated, leaving him even paler than before. There was a look in his eye, an erectness in his countenance, which he could not understand, but which, by some strange magnetism, called a mist of tears into her own."

He rose to his feet in spite of his pallor and weakness, and stood silent before her, with bowed head. Staring thus he looked truly noble.

"Please sit down," pleaded Doris, softly. "You are not strong enough to stand yet."

Then she asked after his health, sympathised sweetly with him, remained only a few minutes, and went away, wondering much at the manner of her mind.

After this she went to see him for a few minutes, every day as long as he remained at the bungalow. Gradually those few minutes so spent became the pivot on which her whole day turned; before she went she was trying to imagine how he would look and what he would say, after she had gone she would sit for hours musing on his looks and words.

In those days nothing in her life was so subtly and so romantically interesting to her as her brief interviews with the man whom her companions knew as James Scotney. At length he was well enough to go back to barracks.

So charmed that the Colonel was not at home when he left the bungalow; but Doris, by her father’s desire, sent for him into the parlour to bid him farewell.

He came in with an easy and manly bearing, though his eyes were heavy, and his face was pale.

Not many words passed between him and Doris. She was always strangely embarrassed in his presence. But when the moment of parting was come, she took from her dress a beautiful and little golden pocket Bible, and held it out to him with an air of sweet timidity, as if she scarcely knew whether to offer it or not.

"It is a Bible," she said, simply. "Will you accept it—and will you read in it sometimes—for my sake?"

A wave of colour swept his face from chin to brow. He took the book. She saw she had written name in the fly-leaf.

TO PRIVATE JAMES SCOTNEY, FROM HIS GRATEFUL DAUGHTER.

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye have Eternal Life.

In that moment he could have fallen on his knees before her, and kissed the hem of her gown.
If he had not put an almost superhuman restraint on himself, he must have done some mad, some desperate thing. It was only the recollection that one unguarded word might shut him from the sight of her angel-face forever which held him back.

"Thank you," he cried, in a hoarse, strained voice. "Yes, I will read it—God help me!"

And then he hurried from the room and from the house.

CHAPTER IX.

In the Plantation.

A FORTNIGHT passed.

Kenneth was pronounced cured. He was again under the authority of Captain Vincent, and cruelly that authority was used.

If anyone had told Vincent he was jealous of a private soldier he would have curled his lip in haughty scorn. Nevertheless, he was jealous—bitterly, insensately jealous of Kenneth Scott.

The fact that he had saved Doris's life, the fact that he had spent weeks in the same house with her, that she showed an interest in his welfare, was enough to kindle the cruel rage of jealousy, and when once a flame it could not be subdued.

Kenneth bore his tyranny with silent contempt, but at length a crisis came.

The company were at drill one morning, when Doris chanced to be passing through the barrack ground with her cousin and a young aide-de-camp.

The aide-de-camp stopped to speak to Captain Vincent. At the same moment Kenneth Scott hurriedly crossed the court and took his place beside his comrades. He was the last to fall into line.

The hawk-eye of Captain Vincent pounced upon him. He saw an opportunity to humiliate and degrade him in the eyes of Doris.

"Who is that lounging?" he called out, harshly. "Scot-ney is it? Ah, I thought so. Sergeant, if you don't turn your attention to that fellow, you will be neglecting your duty. His insubordination is becoming unbearable."

Then he marched up to Kenneth, and addressed him furiously.

"What the — do you mean, sir, by keeping the company waiting in this fashion? I've noticed your dilatoriness before. If I see any more of it, it shall be the worse for you. My company isn't the place for a set of fast, pampered loungers, who fancy themselves above their station. I'll make you know your place."

Now it chanced that Kenneth had been detained by no less a person than the Colonel himself, who had spoken to him as he left the barracks. Taking care to speak with outward respect, though the heart within him was consumed with rage, and its flame glowed in his eye, he attempted to explain this.

But the Captain stopped him furiously.

"Silence, sir!" he shouted, raising the rattan in his hand, and bringing it near Kenneth's face as if he would have struck him. "Silence. You cur! You unreasonably, lying, insolent brute! I want to hear none of your lying excuses. How dare you presume to prevaricate to me? Another word, and I'll have you marched off to prison. Now, sergeant, hurry up. Why the — don't you begin? Am I to be kept waiting here all day because of that lazy lout?"

Doris heard it all. Her own cheek flushed crimson with generous indigitation; she glanced at Kenneth, and saw that he was deadly pale. His face might have been carved out of marble, so white was it, so rigidly set. But there was a flame of hatred, almost of murder, in his eye.

She passed on with an aching heart, and a curious, choking sensation in her throat. When she reached her home she went straight upstairs, threw herself on her bed, and wept bitterly.

Perhaps she herself scarcely knew why she wept. The motherless girl scarcely dared analyse her own heart too closely. But from that heart there continually went up a voiceless prayer: "O Lord, keep him from evil. Keep him by Thy mighty power."

That afternoon she went for a walk in the plantation.
DON'T FIRE!

where, once before, she had met Kenneth Scott. Scarcely had she entered it before she saw him standing with folded arms, and eyes moodily downcast.

He heard her light footfall, and raising his eyes, fixed them upon her with a look she never forgot, so full was it of fiery yearning, of passionate longing, of tender worship.

Only for one moment the look lasted, then he dropped his eyes again, almost suddenly, and with a silent smile stood aside for her to pass.

But she passed him. That look had melted and almost broken her heart. She felt she must speak to him.

"You are in trouble," she said, gently, "Forgive me for nothing saying it. I do, do, I do want to be your friend. Believe me, then, I would not have helped you to all this morning. Captain Vincent was cruelly harsh and unjust. But forgive him, try to forgive him." She paused, then added in a hesitating voice, "For our sake.

He misunderstood her. The group of the regiment said Captain Vincent was her lover, and in the frenzied jealousy Kenneth fancied it was because she feared harm to him that she made that sweet appeal.

It broke down all his reserve. The pent-up feelings of weeks rushed forth in a torrent of burning words. He scarcely knew what he said. It was only afterwards he realized that he had revealed the innermost secret of his heart.

He turned very pale, but she spoke with gentle dignity.

"Captain Vincent is not my lover, and you ought not to say such things to me. It is very wrong of you; but I forgive you, because I know you have been cruelly deluded. I told you that you are not quite strong and well. Do you think I have forgotten you saved my life? If I ask you not to be tempted to use violence to Captain Vincent, it is for your own sake—not his—I ask it. It is because I foresee the misery it would bring on you."

Her voice faltered. The tears rose to her eyes. The sight was more than Kenneth could bear. He gave a deep sob, and flung himself on his knees before her, kissing the hem of her gown.

"You are an angel," he cried, "and I am a brute—a brute, a wretch until you make him more well. Do you think I have forgotten you saved my life? If I ask you not to be tempted to use violence to Captain Vincent, it is for your own sake—not his—I ask it. It is because I foresee the misery it would bring on you."

Her voice faltered. The tears rose to her eyes. The sight was more than Kenneth could bear. He gave a deep sob, and flung himself on his knees before her, kissing the hem of her gown.

She drew her dress from out of Kenneth's clinging fingers, and moved hurriedly away from him. He rose to his feet only just in time. The next moment he saw a figure come out of the smoke. Doris hoped he had not caught sight of her. She disappeared swiftly among the trees. Kenneth, though powerfully agitated, stood his ground.

Captain Vincent passed him without speaking, and with a look of undignified contempt.

CHAPTER X.

The Quarrel.

Two days later war was declared. Colonel Adair's regiment was the first to be hurried up to the front, and to be in action against the foe.

Kenneth Scott showed signal prowess, and would most assuredly have distinction had his captain been any other than Edgar Vincent. As it was no mention was made of his valiant deeds.

A thirst for military glory now took possession of him; he burned to do some deed which should make his name to the furthest ends of the Empire. If only he could be raised from the ranks! If only he could win an officer's commission!

Then he might one day win Doris Adair. In birth and education she was his equal; it was only the barrier cast up by his position in the world that kept her. Her heart Doris had linked a delicious hope that she herself was not perfectly indifferent to him even now. In that moment in the plantation, when he had dared to show that he loved her, there had been a nameless something in her look and manner which had told him that under happier circumstances his love might have been returned.

One evening he was taking a solitary walk at some distance from the camp, thinking of these things with a fast-throbbing heart. On the morrow, or the next day at furthest, another action was expected. Within himself he swayed either to do in that action or to some deed which should bring him nearer Doris.

Even as he registered this vow, he heard a harsh voice close behind him, a hated voice, of Captain Vincent.

"Return to camp at once, Scouery," was the command he heard. "There is a message to be sent to headquarters—you will take it.

Kenneth flashed an angry red, then turned very pale. He knew why he was being sent away on the eve of action. It was to rob him of all chance of winning honour.

He could resist nothing. He turned on the Captain like a tiger, fire flashing from his eyes.

"You are a coward!" he hissed out from between his clenched teeth. "A mean, paltry, black, false-hearted coward. You abuse your authority. You are not fit to use it. You know you are ordering me away out of malice, simply that I may have no chance in the action to-morrow. Your hatred dogs me everywhere; you will not let me rise. But for once you shall hear the truth—"

Doris stood beside her father, her eyes transfixed on Kenneth, who did not threaten. She simply broke into mocking laughter.

"Oh! that's your game, is it, my fine gentleman? You think if you rose from the ranks you might actually win your Colonel's daughter? Ha! Ha! I wonder what the Colonel would think of your impudence. But I wonder what he would think of his daughter, too. If I took my advice, he'd shut her up in her room till she knows how to act with more discretion than to let a fellow like you be hauled at her feet, sobbing over her gown.

At that taunt, at the insult to her, Kenneth lost all self-control. His temper was, at all times, passionate, now it was inflamed to madness.

He literally threw himself on the Captain. There was a struggle, short but fierce. They wrestled together till the Captain reached a tolerably deep declivity, near which they had been standing. Then Kenneth struck the Captain a terrific blow, which sent him crashing down the side of the hill, where he lay like a log. A cold and deadly fear succeeded the emotion of rage in Kenneth's soul. Was it the Captain he had killed? Those were the awful questions which filled his brain.

He essayed to descend the hill, but he himself had received a stunning blow in the course of that mad struggle. His brain reeled, he staggered and fell, and he himself fell unconscious to the ground.

When he opened his eyes it was to find himself surrounded by a corporal's guard, and charged with the murder of Captain Vincent.

CHAPTER XI.

"I LOVE HIM!"

DORIS ADAIR stood in one of the rooms attached to the hospital at the headquarters of the force.

Her face was marble pale, her sweet eyes held a look of utterable dread.

She heard an approaching footstep, and rushed to the door, trembling all over with eagerness.

"It was her father who entered; he looked very grave. "It is over," he said, in a low voice. "Of course, there was but one sentence possible: 'Be at death!'"

"Now, waiting cry broke from Doris. "Oh, no, no!" she cried; "not death! not death! She saved our lives. Oh, papa! papa! Save her!"

"My darling, God knows how gladly I would save him if I could; but it is impossible. My influence would count for nothing against such a crime. Poor Vincent was falsely murdered."

Doris shuddered from head to foot. "Not murdered!" she breathed in a scarce audible whisper. "He was not capable of such a deed as that. They fought. He never had such a man as me, no, no!"

She put her hands up to her face, and wept bitterly. Her slender form shook like a reed beneath the violence of her grief.

Her father gathered her to his bosom, and stroked her hair with a touch as tenderly soothing as a woman's.
CHAPTER XII.

Waiting for Death.

OT less astonished, not less painfully agitated than Kenneth was Arthur Grey.

Little had he dreamt of finding his boyhood's friend in the condemned man whom he had been requested to visit by a brother chaplain. He himself had accepted an army chaplaincy six months ago, and had only just come out to India.

"Kenneth!"

"Arthur!"

Then they stood with clasped hands, looking deep into each other's eyes with sad, yearning glances, while a great thrill of anguished convulsed each heart.

How long they stood thus they never knew. It seemed as if neither could loosen that hand-grip, as if neither could avert his eyes from the other's gaze.

It was Kenneth who spoke first.

"Dear old Arthur," he said, with a faint attempt at a smile. "You never thought to find me in such a place as this."

"Ken, dear old Ken!"

For a minute or two that was all Arthur could say; he was too deeply moved.

Presently, when both had recovered some measure of self-control, Kenneth told his friend his story.

"I can't go on any longer, Kenneth, after what justly, Arthur, you must think, I have done."

They were together. A lad who was in the wood near high words, and saw Scorton strike the first blow. He reported what he had seen, and a guard went out to the spot. They found poor Vincent's body. His injuries, as you know, were of the most horrible kind. It was a frightful crime, but if it had been committed at a time of peace, there might have been some faint hopes of pardon. As it is, his doom is sealed. No one could suggest a commutation of the death-sentence on a man who murdered his superior officer. It was the case with the General, I will lay everything before him, I will tell him who you are."

"Arthur, I forbid you to tell him that."

"Nay, Kenneth, you are wrong. If your real name and standing were known, they would hesitate to carry out the sentence. Do you know you are certain to be Sir Kenneth Scott if you live only a few weeks longer? Your cousin Linley is dying of consumption; the doctors have given him up, and both his little boys died six months ago. Let me, Kenneth, be sent."

"I will not."

"Kenneth, do you really feel that?" questioned Arthur Grey, tenderly. "I mean that God has forgiven you. Are you truly at peace with Him?"

"Yes, Arthur. I came at the eleventh hour, like the dying thief, but He did not pass me out."

"He casts none out, praise be to His name!" cried Arthur, solemnly, while a mist of tears stood in his kind eyes.

"Do you remember, Arthur, that last night at Oxford? Do you remember how you pleaded with me to be Christ's man, and to surrender my life into His hands?"

"Of course, I remember, dear, dear old Ken!"

"I have been in the House of the Potter ever since then. He has shown me my own weakness, has shown me how utterly impossible it is for any mere human vessel to bear the burden of others' weaknesses."

"Nevertheless, all is well," went on Kenneth, in a firm and cheerful voice. "My sins, which are many, are forgiven; my compassionate Redeemer has atoned for them all. I have grasped that great truth at last. I would I could have lived to serve Him; and yet I do not, I cannot."

"It is only too late."

"Arthur,.Contracts of India."

"What is it, Ken?"

"Somebody I love."

"And you would like to see her? Surely that can be permitted to you."

"No, no! I would not see her if I could. I would not pain her gentle heart. But you will take her a message from me."

"Ay, my poor Kenneth. I will do anything you ask."

"Well, then, you must go to Colonel Adair, and ask leave to see his daughter."

"My poor lad, is it her you love? Oh, what must you have had to bear in order to nurse a love like that after the House of the Potter without learning my lesson well at last? I can no longer do His will, but I am content to bear it. There is one thing that troubles me, Arthur."

"What is it, Ken?"

"Father—someone I love."

"And you would like to see her? Surely that can be permitted to you."

"No, no! I would not see her if I could. I would not pain her gentle heart. But you will take her a message from me."

"Ay, my poor Kenneth. I will do anything you ask."

"Well, then, you must go to Colonel Adair, and ask leave to see his daughter."

"My poor lad, is it her you love? Oh, what must you have had to bear in order to nurse a love like that after the House of the Potter without learning my lesson well at last? I can no longer do His will, but I am content to bear it. There is one thing that troubles me, Arthur."

"What must I say to her, Ken?" he asked, after a pause.

"Does she—does she know you love her?"

"I think—am almost sure she does. I lost control of myself once when she was like some dear, pitying angel by my side."

"DONT FIRE!"
"Don't fire!" he panted, waving his hand towards the soldiers, who stood in mute amaze. "The General's orders, Captain Vincent is alive!"

It was not until afterwards, not until he was a free man, that Kenneth Scott heard the whole strange story.

When Captain Vincent fell down that hillside, he was practically unhurt. He got up almost at once, and found he had fallen close against the dead body of an officer. The corpse was so mutilated, and the clothing so torn, that recognition was well-nigh impossible, but on examination Vincent knew by the ring on the finger, and other articles, that the dead man had been a lieutenant of his own regiment, who had been missing since a skirmish with the enemy two days ago. Doubtless he had then fallen a victim to them.

He took possession of the papers and valuables, and was hastening back to the camp to report his discovery, when he suddenly fell into an ambush and was taken prisoner. He effected his escape at last, but only just in time to learn that James Scotney was about to suffer death as his murderer.

To do him justice he was anxious and eager enough to put an end to so fatal a mistake.

It was not until a month later that Kenneth met Doris Adair.

Then he was Sir Kenneth, for his cousin Linley was dead.

While he had lain under sentence of death, nay, even in that moment when he had believed himself to be under his comrades' fire, he had been almost stoically calm, but when he was told that the man he was accused of slaying was alive and well, he fainted away, and even when he recovered from his swoon, was so ill that the doctor shook his head doubtfully, and expressed the fear that he had but been saved from one death to die by another.

Brain-fever had him in its terrible grip. For days he lay delirious, knowing no one, not even Arthur Grey, who watched by him with the tireless tenderness of a woman.

At length he was pronounced out of danger. Little by

CHAPTER XIII.

The Lesson Learned.

It was the hour of sunset, the hour when Kenneth Scott was doomed to die.

He stood erect with bandaged eyes, his face a little pale, for life is sweet, and it is hard to die when the strong, warm blood of youth is tingling in one's veins.

Arthur Grey stood near, his face was paler than his friend's, and his eyes were wet with tears.

The firing-party formed. The officer in command was just about to give the fatal order. Another moment, and Kenneth Scott would have been breathless clay.

But a musket shot rang out sharp and clear at the back of the firing-party. The officer turned his head, and saw a man on horseback, riding as if for dear life, and waving a handkerchief as he rode.

"There is a reprieve, after all!" thought Lieutenant Denison.

Kenneth could not see what was happening. He heard that single shot, and wondered, wondered why it was they were so long.

Arthur Grey rode forward to meet the messenger.

He was a young aide-de-camp. His horse was quivering and all flecked with foam; he himself was white with excitement.

"Well, sir?" questioned Lieutenant Denison, curiously.

The aide-de-camp flung himself off his horse. He was almost breathless.
little his strength came back, and then he was ordered away from the camp, where hitherto he had lain.

His romantic story was now known. He was a popular hero, almost an idol to the soldiers, whose comrades he had been. They had been wont to complain of his reserve, to call him grim and unsociable; they were little disposed to say this of him now, they made allowances for the trying circumstances in which he had been, and owned that, in his place, could not have borne his trials half so well.

In the early days of his convalescence Captain Vincent came to see him, and expressed his regret, chiefly, indeed, but not entirely, at what had taken place.

"I have been the cause of great pain to you. I hope you will forgive me, and forget it, if you can."

This was what he said, and as he said it he held out his hand.

Kenneth took it, and so there was amity between the two men. Perhaps both wondered a little at the hatred they had once felt for each other, as men are prone to wonder at such feelings when their violence has passed, and they stand looking back on things with clearer vision.

It was very soon after this that Kenneth went to see Doris Adair.

He was the bearer of a message from her father. He was shown into the parlour, and after a moment or two she came to him there.

As soon as he looked at her he saw she was much paler and thinner, and in her sweet eyes there was a look which told of weary days and nights spent in anxiety and grief.

But what she had suffered in the last few weeks only her own heart knew, but he who loved her could perhaps guess at it in part. They knew not what they said to each other in that first moment of meeting; their eyes met, and that mutual glance was so wondrously eloquent as to leave small room for words.

She trembled so much that he had to lead her to a couch. He seated himself beside her. He took her hand; he bent over her, and looked into her sweet face.

"Do you remember the last time we met?" he whispered.

Her cheeks flushed, her eyelids quivered. Remember! Would she ever forget it? Had he not then made her understand that he loved her? Had not her own heart cried out loudly that she loved him in return? She did not answer him in words—she could not, but her face showed him she remembered well.

He went on softly:

"Doris, you know I love you. Could you ever care for me?"

Then she must needs answer him. She did answer him in some manner, but it may be questioned whether even then she spoke a word.

It sufficed that he put his arms around her, that her whole body yielded to his embrace, and their lips met as their hearts bent heart to heart.

Presently he took out the little Bible she had given him.

"Doris, I was never an atheist. If anyone told you I was they told you that which was not true. But, dearest, I have wandered very far into the far country. I have thrown away many precious years. Someday I shall tell you all; now it is enough to say that this gift of yours has been the means of bringing me back to the Father's House."

They were married in England.

His health required a change of climate; and Colonel Adair, having been wounded in battle, was invalided home, so all three crossed the ocean together, and immediately upon their arrival in England Doris became Kenneth's wife.

They made no honeymoon tour. To them the rest of home was doubly sweet, and Kenneth took her at once to the beautiful old ancestral Mansor House in sunny Devonshire.

When she had been his wife two days, Doris told him one of the deep secrets of her heart.

They were sitting together in a shady nook in the garden, his arm encircling her waist, her fingers clasped close in his.

"Kenneth, you remember the day I first spoke to you?"

"Darling, can I ever forget it?"

"Did you—did you think it bold of me to speak to you as I did?"

"Bold! Oh, my angel-wife! my angel-love!"

And the look of tender reverence in his eyes was good to see.

"Because—because I don't mind telling you now, Kenneth. It cost me so great a struggle to do it. I was interested in you from the very first, and when Vincent said you were an atheist, that only interested me in you all the more. I did so long to say a word to you, and yet—and yet I was so fearfully afraid."

"Afraid of what, my dear one?"

"That you might think me bold or forward, that you might misunderstand my motives. I even feared—here she hung her sweet head like a flower, and sank her voice to a trembling whisper—that you might think I was in love with you."

"My darling, at that time I should have soon thought a star from heaven might fall into my bosom. The stars seemed not more far above me—no more pure."

She went on softly and sweetly with her confession.

"I was afraid of you, Kenneth: you looked so grand, so noble, and so stern. I trembled when I spoke to you. I was so great a coward that I had almost passed on without asking you to come to the mission room. But I prayed in my heart, 'Lord, if this be right for me to do, give me strength to do it.' And the strength was given. And then again, that day when I gave you the Bible. I was half afraid you would refuse to take it. On my knees I prayed for strength to do my duty. Oh, Kenneth, how richly God rewards our tiniest mite of service! How richly, how abundantly, and how promptly!"

"When I review the way through which He has led me, I am filled with wonder and adoring love," said Kenneth, in a low, solemn, deeply reverent tone. "Truly I have been as clay in the hand of the Potter. Blessed be His Name!"

(FINIS).

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All Communications respecting Thrilling Life Stories should be addressed to the Publishers, THRILLING STORIES' COMMITTEE, 28 New Brown Street, Manchester. Pasted for the Publishers by E. H. THOMSON & Son, Ltd., Portland Street, Manchester.

21 APRIL 1902
A Woman's 36 Years' Suffering Ended

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PLEASE bless my dear mamma, and make her quite well, for Jesu's sake.

"I say that every night, Nana, and mamma does not get better. Does Jesus hear, do you think, or is He too busy to listen?" and the child lifted a pair of big blue eyes to her nurse's face, scanning it wistfully.

She was a beautiful little creature, just eight years old, with deep, velvety eyes, that made one think of the petals of the purple pansy, a sweet, expressive face, that was surrounded with a wealth of golden hair.

"No, my dearie. The Lord Jesus is never too busy to listen to little girls," the woman said, and after undressing the little one she lifted her into her cot, "and He hears all that we ask Him. But it is time you were asleep, Miss Mollie. You must not talk any more to-night."

"But you are forgetting, Nana, I have not kissed mamma, and I never go to bed without."

"You must to-night, darling, for she is very tired. I believe she is asleep, and you would not like to disturb her, would you?"

"Oh, no," said the child, sighing wistfully. "But if she awakes, you must fetch me."

"Very well, I will promise you that. Now go to sleep, like a good girl."

She stooped to kiss the child, and a pair of warm, clinging arms were flung around her neck.

"Oh, Nana, I do love you!" she cried. "Good-night. Tell papa I send him another kiss."

Then Mollie tossed the golden curls from her brow, and laid her head obediently on the pillow.

"I have not kissed mamma, Nana, and I never go to bed without."

"But you must to-night, darling."

Little Mollie.
The woman lowered the gas and left the room, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

"Poor child!" she murmured. "Poor little lamb! She little knew, she little knows; its blessed ignorance for her, and she so fond of her mamma."

With this she went swiftly along the corridor to the opposite side of the house, and entered the chamber of death.

It was a beautiful room, furnished with all that love and wealth could suggest, and in the big bed, with its silken hangings hung back so that all the air might reach the sufferer, a woman lay dying.

She looked so young to die, scarcely more than a girl, and life held so much for her to make it worth while to wish to live.

Not a wish need remain ungratified. She had wealth, and rank, and beauty, and was the petted favourite of the brilliant circle in which she moved, and love had crowned her life, giving her husband and child.

Such a happy, joyous creature she had been, so shielded from trouble, so free from care, to her, life had been one long dream of happiness. And now she must leave it, for she was dying.

She read it in the grave faces of the doctors, in the tears of the servants who did her bidding, in the agony that loomed out of her husband's eyes, and her heart rose up an bitterness against it. It was asking too much. She could not yield herself without a struggle, and in the silence and loneliness of her own room the battle was fought and won. "He had given his dearest for his sake," she would not, could not keep back anguish that he asked.

Dawson went noiselessly into the sick-room, but her mistress heard her, and turned her head, smiling a faint sweet smile of welcome.

"Mollie," she whispered. "Where is Mollie? Bring her to me."

Her sorrowing husband leant over her, touching the soft hair with trembling fingers.

He was a tall, handsome man, several years older than his wife, and his dark hair was already streaked with silver threads. She had Mollie's golden locks, and Mollie's lovely, purple, velvety eyes.

"Darling," he said, tenderly, "don't excite yourself. Dr. Race was most particular about that. It is really dangerous for you to do so."

"I will be careful," she said. "I won't talk much, I promise."

So Mr. Vincent went away to the nursery, lifted Mollie out of her little white bed, brought her back with him, and laid her in her mother's arms.

"Mollie," she whispered, "I want to talk to you, darling, and I want you to remember all that I say, for I am going away from you. I am going to be with Jesus. You must stay and take care of papa, then some day Jesus will come for you both, and we shall all be happy. Do you understand me, darling?"

"Yes, oh, yes. But, oh, mamma, take me with you, don't leave me behind," and she burst into tears. "I can't stay without you, I can't indeed!"
“Hush, Mollie,” her father said, huskily. “If you cry you must go back to your bed.”

She stifled her sobs, and crept closer to her mother.

“I think my little daughter loves Jesus,” the sweet voice went on, “and she knows that He wants her to be His little friend, and try to do every day the things that please Him, just as He did for His Father when He lived on this earth. He knows it will not be easy sometimes, but, darling, He will always help you if you ask Him, and I want you to remember this. You can’t understand it now, but you will some day. Repeat it after me, and ask Nana to find it in your Bible to-morrow. It is not much to remember, only this:

“To keep Himself unspotted from the world.”

“I shall never forget, mamma,” she whispered, “no, never, and oh, I will be good, indeed I will.”

Her husband bent over her.

“Lilian, dear,” he said, in an anguished voice, “you are exhausting yourself. It is bad for you.”

“It is the last time,” she whispered. “It is Mollie’s good-bye. She is old enough to remember, and the world is full of temptation and sin. Ralph, take care of our little Mollie, take care of our little daughter.”

“Can you trust me, Lilian?” he asked, kissing the white, quivering lips.

“Perfectly,” she remarked. “Yes, I know you won’t disappoint me. I shall watch for you by the rivulet. Kiss me, darling.”

The child clasped her arms about her mother’s neck.

“Good-night,” she said. “Good-night. God keep you till—the morning.”

CHAPTER II.
Complications.

It was a delightful May morning, after a night of storm and rain.

The soft west wind whispered its messages to the trees, as it lifted their tender leaves in passing, then sweeping to where the flowers looked upwards to the sun, it shook them gently, carrying their fragrance away upon its restless wings.

The birds sang for very joy in the grand old elm-trees that bordered the long sloping lawn of Cranbrook House, and the little brook at its base rushed madly along, dashing itself over the waterfall, and away in the distance the purple hills, seen through a misty light, lifted their heads in majestic silence towards the deep sapphire of the early summer sky.
Mollie stood on the steps, a picture as fair as the morning itself, a little, frail creature, with hair that glistened in the sunlight like a crown of gold, and big, dreamy, purply, velvety eyes, that looked out upon the world half-wistfully, eyes that could dance with fun and mischief, and yet could brim over with tears as she listened to the sad story of distress, that touched her heart and roused her sympathy.

The small, delicately-cut mouth was firm and true, and the smile that ruffled over her face, had a sweet, rare beauty of its own.

Mollie's brother was as simple and unworldly as she had been as a child of eight, and those who knew and loved her, could not but think that the last words from the dying mother had taken deep root in the child's heart, and blossomed out richly in her bright, unselfish life.

The large cool hall into which they came, the crisp air from the hills, had touched her cheeks, bringing out a faint tinge of pink from their peculiar whiteness.

She stood dreamily drinking in the beauty of the landscape, when a step came swiftly across the hall, and a pleasant-faced, motherly-looking woman appeared in the doorway.

"Miss Mollie, my dear, I don't think you should stand there in the damp with no wrap on. I am afraid you will take cold."

"I am coming in, Dawson. Is papa down?"

"It is only ten minutes to nine, Miss Mollie; he is never down before the hour. The letters have come. James has taken them into the dining-room."

"I wonder if there are any for me?" the girl said. Then she laid her flowers down on the table, and tripped across the large cool hall into the handsomely-furnished dining-room.

"Another from Lady Clifton! Why, this is the third this week! What can she have to write about, and so frequently, too?" and Mollie, with a puzzled face, laid the daintily-scented missive down.

"Is it because they are old friends, and knew each other?" the woman asked. "In fact, my dear, I think the young man was married, I wonder."

Anyway, papa never mentions the letters to me, and does not even read them when I am there. I don't like the woman, I detest her. I wish she had stayed in Egypt for ever, for although she pretends to be so nice, and gushes over me, I instinctively know that she is not true. There is something about her that makes me feel nervous. I wish papa would sell our town house, and live here altogether, then we need not meet her so often."

Mollie did not look at the other letters. She left them lying there beside the table, and hurried away into the window with a little pucker on her brow.

Could it really be that Lady Clifton—but no, it was impossible—it was foolish ever to think of such a thing. Of course her father would never marry again after all these years, and Lady Clifton would be the last person in the world to make him, even if he were contemplating matrimony.

Mollie called up the vision of a tall, handsome woman, with a load voice and a very pronounced manner, who had swooped down upon them one evening at a reception."

So charmed to meet dear Mr. Vincent again after all these years. It is really delightful to be in England after being banished so long, but Pearl's health necessitated a long stay in Egypt," glancing at a girl the same age as Mollie, who was taken away some time since, and it seemed again now, so that I saw no reason for refusing my brother's invitation to spend the season at his London residence. A poor widow with a son and daughter to provide for, out of a very slender patrimony cannot afford to be independent," with a gracefull kink of her shoulders, "especially when my brother has been most generous in other ways."

Then she had suddenly become aware of Mollie's presence, had kissed her most gushingly, and hoped that she and Pearl would become great friends. "because we were much, and were great friends when we were girls," and she had favoured Mollie with her most bewitching smile.

But the acquaintance did not ripen into friendship.

There was something in a Lady Clifton that grated upon Mollie's sensitive spirit, and Pearl was no better.

The conversation usually consisted of the conquests she had made, the men she adored, the brilliant match she intended to make, and the price of each article her wardrobe contained; and when the brother, whose perfessions had been dinned into Mollie's ears, appeared, on the scene, prepared to be very agreeable to the little beauty, who was an heiress as well, and therefore a very desirable friend for the girl, Mollie's soul rose up in revolt, for it was soon apparent to all but Mr. Vincent what his intentions really were.

Then Mollie, who was a frail little creature, had been taken suddenly ill, and as soon as she was able to travel, the physician had ordered her to leave for a while her country home, among the Derbyshire hills, and there they had remained ever since.

Mr. Vincent was like Mollie, he revelled in the country; he loved the purple hills as much as she did, and was in the habit of urging him to visit the beautiful village of gabled. Dinner parties bored him to death; he hated receptions, and he would far rather sit quietly at home in his own library, surrounded by his books, deep in scientific investigations. But it was not right that Mollie should be left to the beauty of her country home, among the Derbyshire hills, and there they had remained ever since.

Mr. Vincent had been Mollie's godfather in the country; he had loved the purple hills as much as she did, and was in the habit of urging him to visit the beautiful village of gabled. Dinner parties bored him to death; he hated receptions, and he would far rather sit quietly at home in his own library, surrounded by his books, deep in scientific investigations. But it was not right that Mollie should be left to the beauty of her country home, among the Derbyshire hills, and there they had remained ever since.

There had been a little love-passage between them for some days. She was poor then, and a more eligible suitor had appeared on the scene in the figure of Lord Clifton, and Margaret Lane had gracefully dismissed the handsome young merchant, and married Lord Clifton instead.

So the marriage had turned out as might be expected—a miserable failure. Her husband had wasted his fortune in a few years, and had been glad to accept an appointment in Egypt, which he had held until his death, when his wife found that there was just sufficient saved from the loss of the fortune to educate her two children, and beginning in strict seclusion, and practising the strictest economy, she had done so. Her brother had supplemented her income by a few hundreds annually, which had been of no small importance.

Pearl's education, such as it was, was considered finished, but Cloud was studying for the bar. He was a constant anxiety to his mother, for he had inherited his father's character and tastes without his fortune.

Lady Clifton was not long in discovering that Mr. Vincent's family was not rich, and he was soon informed as to the invalid's condition, for Mollie had become as dear to her as a daughter," a remark that made the girl furious and shake her head angrily.

Mr. Vincent kept his promise. The invalid's condition was improved regularly, and by the time that Mollie had recovered, and was her own sweet self again, her father had decided that the best thing in the world for him to do was to ask Lady Clifton to take pity upon him and his poor little daughter. He needed a mistress for his household, the hard life which she led herself needed a mother's care, and who, he asked himself, could undertake it better than Lady Clifton? He had written her two days before, and the hard-laced mistress that Mollie brought the packet to Mollie's brow contained the answer to his proposal.

The silver-tongued time-piece chimed the hour of nine, the gong resounded through the house, and Mr. Vincent, punctual to the minute, entered the dining-room.

Mollie turned to meet him with her usual greeting, then broke out, "But really, dear, the letter that I received this morning brought me joy beyond expression, because of the attention of letters lying beside his plate. She saw him select Lady Clifton's first, but instead of transferring it to his pocket, he broke the seal and read it, then turned to his daughter with a smile.

"Well, my dear, the matter is decided, Lady Clifton has kindly promised to take you to the next 'drawing room.' Pearl is to be presented, and I think it will be a good arrangement for you to go together."

But, dear, I really don't want to be presented. I
They came as a rule from the large business houses, girls who were run down in health, and required a little nursing, which Dawson was always ready to give them; girls who needed a little nourishment—said in a very softsentimental manner—for their souls, and ere they left its friendly shelter had fallen in their hearts the tender, loving "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," and Who is the same yesterday and to-day, and for ever.

When Mollie was present, most cases had come to go, and whose salary was insufficient to provide the comforts so necessary when they were weak and ailing. To such as these the time spent at the house in Bel-gravia was a great boon, and many a girl looked back to the last visit as the greatest of her life. Mollie

Mollie went in and out among them with her gracious manner, her loving sympathy took their hearts by storm, and her beauty held them captive under her spell, and many an one who had entered the house, lonely, friendless, a mist clouded over all the hopes and efforts of her life for her souls, and ere they left its friendly shelter had fallen in their hearts the tender, loving "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," and Who is the same yesterday and to-day, and for ever.

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Two hours later, her visits all paid, she was climbing the hill that led up from the valley where the village nestled, with the empty basket on her arm and a restful expression on her bright, eager face.

Suddenly a tall, lithe figure in a cycling-suit came bounding down the hillsides. Mollie looked up quickly as she heard the footsteps, and a rich wave of colour flooded her face as she saw who it was.

In a few minutes he was by her side, had taken the basket from her hand, and was looking down into the girl's face, trying to get the drooping eyes to meet his own. But the sudden fit of shyness had seized Mollie, and it was a few seconds before she could recover herself.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he said, bending eagerly forward. "I came last night, but the train was delayed. The engine got off the metals, so of course, I was very late, or I should not have waited until this morning before I called. I came over early, but when I got to Cranbrook I found you were out. You had just started, so I had a chat with Mr. Vincent, and then came on to meet you."

"We return to London on Friday, so I have just time to say good-bye to a few of the old people. They feel very injured if I neglect that little duty," and Mollie looked up shyly, but there was something in her companion's eyes that made hers droop very quickly.

"I heard you were to attend the next drawing-room, so I concluded you would soon be in town," he said, slowly. "Lady Clifton was my informant. I happened to meet her yesterday, and as I very much wanted to see you, I came off post-haste."

"The fact is, Mollie, I am going to Africa with a research party. It was only decided yesterday, and we leave next week. I shall be away for about twelve months, and, dear, I could not go without a word from you. Mollie, you understand. Surely you know that I love you. You must have seen it, darling, and I could not leave you all these months without being sure—without knowing that I have not loved you in vain."

The golden head drooped lower, and the big, shady hat completely hid the sweet, flushed face. They had paused in their walk, sheltered by the overhanging trees, and Derrick Wilde's tall, handsome figure towered over the dainty little creature by his side.

"Mollie," he said, his voice trembling with earnest feeling, "tell me, my dear, can you love me, do you think? Can you promise me now that you will be my wife?"

Mollie's cheek flushed and paled, then flushed again. She stood for a moment trying to still the beating of her heart. Then, without a word, but stepping closer to his side, she slipped her fingers into his hand. He folded them in his strong, firm grasp, then bent and kissed her reverently.

"I wonder," she said, half-shyly, as they took their way homeward. "I wonder, Derrick, what will papa say?"

He looked down triumphantly into the sweet, upturned face.
"My darling, he knows, I gained his consent this morning before I came to meet you, and his promise also; I opened up to you to give me what I so much desired, that in twelve months I shall have my own, I might claim you for my bride. What have you to say to that?" he asked, bending towards her with his winning smile.

But Mollie, under the circumstances, preferred to say nothing, only favoured him with a half-shy look that spoke volumes for his future happiness.

Mr. Vincent was well satisfied as he watched them coming slowly up the long drive to the house. Mollie's flushed face, and Derrick's jubilant, satisfied manner were quite enough to know that matter had ended. He had been a good deal surprised at the young fellow's confession that morning, and a little afraid that he might be too sanguine about Mollie's feelings towards her. She was such a child that the thought of her already giving her heart away was a revelation to his father. But there was no reason to doubt it now, her happy face told its own story, and Mr. Vincent was heartily glad that her choice had been so completely in harmony with his own wishes.

Derrick was not rich, but he had splendid abilities, that were already bringing him prominently to the front, and which also gave promise of great things, in the future, and the elder man had not forgotten his own early struggles. He would inherit a very substantial fortune, and Mr. Vincent felt assured that when the girl was once launched upon the fashionable world there would be no lack of suitors for her hand.

It certainly had seemed to him after Derrick's visit that Mollie's affections were divided among them who would be most undesirable for his future son, and who would have wounded Mollie for her position and not for herself, and it was a great relief to him, to know that the matter was settled.

The two had grown up together, had played and quarrelled in the childhood days, and been used under the same governess until Derrick had been sent to a public school. Then they had met frequently in the holidays, and the old familiar friendship had been kept up. But there had come a time when the lad had felt a serious reluctance to leave her and return to his studies at Cambridge.

Some strange new feeling that he could not understand had taken possession of him; it was too vague to be defined, but he grew restless under its subtle power, and could not shake it off, and somehow it came to be in some strange, indescribable way, like a secret-faceted golden-haired girl, whose step was like music in his ear, and whose voice sent a thrill of delight through his strong, manly frame. When she was near he was satisfied and treatful, but when she was away, in the whole wide world there was no one so desirable or miserable as Derrick Wilde.

Poor Derrick, in the midst of his studies as he poured over his books preparing for his next exam, suddenly, without any warning, Mollie's sweet face would appear before him. It was useless to try to turn his mind.

He would fold his arms, lean back in his chair, and sink away into an enchanted world, to awake to the fact later on that it was only a dream, that the bliss had departed, until the familiar voice brought to his shoulder, and her form clapsed close to his breast, he was alone with a pile of books in front of him, his studies almost untouched, and a stiff exam, staring him in the face.

But the awakening, the empty arm, the loneliness, told him only too plainly that life without Mollie would be almost an impossibility.

How anxiously he had looked forward to their next meeting. It had been just before Mollie's illness, when Lady Clifton's son was laying siege to her, and she had been in anger as he had watched his rival. But Mollie had turned to him for protection more than once, and it had become the usual thing for him to station himself near to shield the girl from the unpleasant tormentor.

But that was sweet; and yet somehow a little different. There was a new shyness and reserve about her that only made her dearer to him, and it had been with great difficulty that he had refrained from owning his love before they had again been separated.

Then had come the pain and disappointment of her illness, but Derrick's mother, who was a near neighbour, had kept him well supplied with news, and the stately old lady had comforted herself, well pleased, when she had seen the dainty pink figure in Mollie's dress as she delivered her son's message.

He had gone to London on business, spending the night with some friends. Lady Clifton had called during his visit, and Mollie had been present. Derrick being mentioned, and Derrick had at once assumed the air of a shade. It was his fate, for if Lady Clifton was to chaperone little Mollie, it meant that Cloud would be much in evidence, and if Mollie were engaged, it would give her a certain protection, and prevent the unwelcome attentions which had been such a source of annoyance to her.

CHAPTER IV.

Pears.

"OTHER, have you heard the news?" Pearl cried one day, rushing into the library, where Lady Clifton was busy with pen, ink, and account-book.

"Has Mr. Vincent not told you that Mollie is engaged to Derrick Wilde? Won't Cloud be mad? He had made up his mind that he would have Mollie. He thought he could easily win her over. But I was not so sure, and I told him so, but he only laughed at me for my pains. He will find that I was right now, and Derrick has walked her off right under his nose.

"But I wish you would put things in a nice way," her mother said, angrily. "You are so intensely vulgar. Pearl. I hope you will behave yourself better than this after my marriage, or you may make things rather unpleasant for me. Mr. Vincent is a most fastidious man, and I am so anxious for you to make a good impression. You know how much depends upon your future—"

"Oh, yes, I quite understand," the girl said, her lip curling. "You want him to divide his money between the three of us. You want me, in a measure, to cut Mollie out, don't you? Very well, I will try; it certainly won't hurt her to lose a little, and I don't see why one girl should have all, and another one nothing. Your idea is certainly a good one, and I will do all I can to help you carry it out.

"I only ask you to do what any sensible mother would." Lady Clifton said, as she made a few entries in her book.

"But where did you get your news from, and are you sure that it is correct?"

"Quite, I heard it from Clare Wilde. It happened two days ago. You don't look as delighted as I should if I were about to marry a man with a grown-up daughter I should have thought you would have been glad.

"You forget that I had other plans for that girl, which are somewhat upset," her ladyship said, crossly. "But I don't despair even now. A dozen things may happen to prevent the union. He is going out to Central Africa, and ten chances to one if he ever comes back. He will take longer or something, and die most likely. It is very provoking that she should have become engaged. That fact will have to remain, however, but you may rest assured that I shall leave no stone unturned to prevent anything further. I almost wonder that Mr. Vincent did not consult me about the matter, and it certainly is rather strange that he has not mentioned it to me in his letter of this morning."

"They will be in town again to-morrow, so perhaps he thought he would tell you then," Pearl suggested. "I know Cloud will be upset, and he felt so sure of her."

"I am sure I don't know what he will do unless he should marry someone else. I have just heard from her, rather fretfully. "He is getting worse and worse." I cannot possibly meet his expenses. If he would only leave those dreadful billiards alone; they take so much of his money, for he is always losing. He is just like his father. He ruined our home. I hate to think of the man."

"Don't do so, there is no need. Think about Mr. Vincent; I am sure he is much nicer," Pearl suggested, helping herself to some grapes. "You will have a little peace now. There will be no need to worry over the dreadful bills coming in anyway, for you will have the
wherein to meet them, I suppose he is rich? How did you find out, mamma?"

Lady Clifton smiled sweetly.

"It only needed a little diplomacy. I can usually find out anything I particularly wish to know."

Then why not tell me why, ma'am. Dr. Vaughan is going to write to your lordship rather than delay with him about, and if he does not soon come to the point I shall turn my back upon him."

"It might be wise to do that at once. I think he has taken things too much for granted, and I have some expenses to meet before the end of the week."

She saw very pretty daughters, but not your style at all, and I know he adores you exceedingly. I certainly am gratified at the way you have kept some of your couriers at a distance, Dr. Vaughan, for instance. You know that he converses with my family in a clumsy young fellow enough. But they are horribly poor, and I am anxious to save you from what I have suffered."

"You need not fear, mamma. Love and a cottage is not my style at all. I prefer Lord Wyndham, although he is old and ugly. The jewels belonging to the family are magnificent, and worth a fortune. Then think of Rostrevor House; why, it's fit for a duchess!"

"There is no such thing as love in the arrangement: it is too vulgar for our station in life, we leave that to the lower orders. I want the wealth and the position, to say nothing of the title, and, indeed, without that, I cannot see the use of the other. I take him at his word. He wants a wife, a mistress for his household, and I can maintain the position with dignity. As we are satisfied, that is the principal thing, and as he turned away, swept out of the room, and didn't reply wildly to her own apartment."

The cynical smile faded utterly away as she turned the key in the lock. Her face grew white and strained as she paced the floor, pressing her hand to her brow.

"How dare she mention his name to me! No, she cried, passionately, as Arthur Vaughan, indeed, if I only knew, if I only knew that I love him, that I worship the ground he trod upon, that in all the whole wide world there is no one to compare with him, that I would willingly have a cottage home and the poorest life, if I could share it with him."

"His love would transform it into a palace, his presence would make a dainty morsel even of a crust. But I dare not, I dare not! To pay her debts, to pay my own, I must cast all that is precious to me aside, and marry a man that I hate, that I loathe, that I despise."

Then she laughed, and said to herself, "I am to think of these things; rather let me dwell upon the future, when I shall be the envy—or, rather, my possessions—of half the women in London. No matter what I suffer, no matter what wretchedness and misery and despair are mine, no one will be able to look me in the face!"

I know, if I could share it with him."

"Celestine, bring me a cup of strong tea," she said, as her maid appeared in answer to her ring. "Then darken my room, and remember I am not at home to visitors to-day. I have a severe headache, and am resting until the evening. Just tell mamma that I do not wish to be disturbed."

The maid obeyed her young mistress' orders, then noiselessly disappeared, and Pearle, unlacing her wonderful dark hair, threw herself on a couch, and began to plan out a line of action for herself for that evening.

The day began as a wild gentleman had gone off. Lord Wyndham and Arthur Vaughan were both expected, and the girl knew that they were sure to be present, and for that one evening she was determined to devote herself to the younger of the two men. It was a dangerous game to play. Her heart throbbed wildly as the words of that handsome face rose up before her. She almost felt, even then, the pressure of his arms in the dance; she saw the love-light in his eyes, and felt his hot, passionate kisses on her lips, and even as she thought thus she grew white and pale, and just as she saw him she knew what she loved. Supposing he asked her to be his wife, as he had tried to do before, would she be strong enough to refuse him? She shivered slightly, then drew herself up proudly, and a hard, defiant expression crept into her dear, brilliant eyes.

"I must be mad to think of it," she murmured. "I dare not marry him, that must suffice!"

"Is your head better?" Lady Clifton enquired, as the girl swept down the oak staircase, and stood in the hall. "You are looking your best to-night," she said, eyeing her critically; "in fact, Pearl, I do not remember ever having seen you look better, That dress becomes you wonderfully. There is nothing to beat Worth after all. Your taste in selecting your clothes is quite exceptional to-night. Shall Lord Wyndham never will let you leave to-night without speaking."

"I am learning a little of your wisdom, mamma."

Her ladyship smiled complacently. She had been a great beauty in her younger days, and much of it still remained. She was looking exceedingly handsome to-night, in black lace and diamonds that must have cost a fabulous sum.

Pearl had inherited all her mother's beauty. She was tall, and exceedingly graceful, with a beautifully-shaped head and shoulders. She had a wealth of dark hair, which contrasted well with her intensely white skin; large, dark eyes, that were by no means hazel, imparted to her face a certain look which almost made her look has only a lover, and she carried herself with all the dignity of a young princess.

To-night her beauty was, if anything, more brilliant than usual as she entered the hall-room, and a good many eyes had followed her with admiration. Lord Wyndham saw her in the least—she was used to admiration, and took it as her birthright. Her large, dark eyes swept coolly over the room in search of some one, with a glance of anxiety in their depths, and her heart gave a wild thump at the sight of the handsome young man with the four-cut features, coming sauntering carelessly towards her.

"I claim the first dance," he said, bending over her hand, "and four others."

"That is too many," she said, laughingly. "You must be counting three."

Then others came to her side, and soon all the dances were taken.

Pearl's heart throbbed, and her head swam as her partner led her out to the waltz. How sweet it was to feel his arms about her and her fingers clasped in his own, but sweeter still to listen to his voice as he bent tenderly towards her.

A florid-looking, middle-aged man, with a fair, pretty-looking girl on his arm, stood looking at the dancers, and catching sight of Pearl and her handsome partner, watched their movements with jealous eyes.

"So that's it, is it?" he muttered, angrily. "What a fool of a girl! I shall have to look out, or she'll have her slipping through my fingers. What a splendid-looking creature she is. But there, I can snap my fingers at him. He won't suit her ladyship; her banking account is not worth much," and he smiled grimly.

After a little while while he took his partner back to her chaperone, and went back to look for Pearl. He found her sitting by her mother, with two or three gentlemen in attendance.

She greeted him with a haughty bow, and turned to finish her conversation with her friends.

Presently the lady who was giving the ball, Lord Wyndham, for it was he, took the vacant seat by her side.

"How many dances have you reserved for me?" he asked, picking up her card.

She lowered her eyebrows.

"I was not aware that you had asked me to reserve any, she said, icily.

"Perhaps not, but you knew I should be here, and you might have done so. Let me see, there is one left, so I must be content with that, if I may take it."

She bowed, and then turned with a gracious smile to her next partner, who came hurrying up.

"The set is just beginning," he said, and Pearl rose, laid her hand on his arm, and swept away, leaving his lordship in a very bad frame of mind.

Lady Clifton glanced at his angry face, and moved towards him, and with a few well-chosen, carefully-chosen sentences in her caressing voice, she smoothed the clouds from his brow.
"Girls will be girls," she told him, "and really Pearl had so many admirers that it was no wonder if she were just the tiniest bit proud of her success. It was her first season," she went on, in her low, purring voice, "and she had already refused several eligible offers. It was of no use what she might suggest. Things were so different in her young days. Those matters were left for the parents to arrange; now, a girl could choose for herself, and her choice was not always a wise one. But what else could be expected from inexperience?"

"Young people had such different ways of looking at things, and one could not put old heads on young shoulders," and her ladyship sighed, and moved her fan languidly to and fro.

In the ballroom beyond Lord Wyndham caught a glimpse of Pearl. How brilliantly beautiful she was to-night. He watched her as she glided to and fro, her dark eyes flashing, her face wreathed with smiles. His eyes followed her every movement. He noticed every turn of the beautiful throat, and wondered how the diamonds would look on her white skin—the diamonds that had been in the family for generations.

He intended to marry, but he was in no hurry to do so. Pearl had bewitched him with her beauty; he had fluttered like a moth around a candle, and now as he saw her to-night, and noted the look in Dr. Vaughan's eyes as he bent towards her, the hot blood rushed to his brain, he caught his breath quickly, and vowed that he and none other should ever have the right to call her wife.

He arose from his seat, offered his arm to Lady Clifton, and they walked away together.

"I should be glad if you could make an appointment with me to-morrow morning. I have a very important matter which I wish to consult you about," he said, as they entered the supper-room.

"I shall be delighted to meet you. Will half-past twelve be too early for you?" she asked, graciously.

"No, I have no engagement at that time."

"Very well then, I shall expect you at that hour," and she smiled triumphantly to herself, feeling quite sure what it was he wished to consult her about. Pearl would soon be off her head. The next thing was to arrange about Claud; that she would do after her own wedding, for then Mollie would be under the same roof, and it would be the easiest thing in the world, with a little diplomacy, to arrange matters to her satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

A Declaration of Love.

"Come into the conservatory, it is cooler there. I prefer to sit this dance out, and I wish to talk to you. No I will listen to no objections," he said, in a low, clear voice, as Pearl began to protest. "I intend to have my way just this once," and drawing her arm firmly through his own, he led her through a small drawing-room into the conservatory.

"This is a magnificent place," he said, as they entered.

"It is the finest conservatory I have ever been into, and beautifully arranged. There is a most wonderful collec-
tation of foreign flowers and exotics; the aroma is exquisite, and it is a grand place for a chat. I have been here before. There are no end of cozy corners, like this one. Shall we have our coffee here?"

"If you wish," the girl said, taking a seat; and her companion drew a chair into a position where he could get a good view of the beautiful, high-bred face.

It really is delightful here, but we must not be absent long.

"She won't expect you until this dance is over, and surely you don't grudge me a few minutes to myself. I have tried before for this, but have never succeeded, and I made up my mind to-night as you entered the room, as you did yesterday—saw you look, Pearl, you can't deny that—I would speak to you, and that you should hear what I have to tell you."

She raised her hand to stem the torrent of words, but he caught it, pressing it passionately to his lips.

"You would not be here to-night, so I intend to tell you, although you must already know it, you must have seen it, you must have guessed it. It is—this—that I love you. Yes, I love you to distraction; I cannot live another day without the promise from your own sweet lips that you will be my wife."

He drew himself up, and stood with folded arms before her, watching the beautiful flush on her face and the weaving of her bosom, waiting for her answer, that seemed so long in coming.

"I have not been to Berlin for some weeks back. I have composed it for your sake but it is absolutely imperative for me to return. I must start to-morrow, and I have been haunted by the thought that some one might win you before I returned. Speak to me, darling," and Pearl felt his hot breath on her cheek, as he leaned towards her. "I will read it in your eyes, as I have done a thousand times of triumph. Now tell me you can't deny it. You do love me. Just speak that little word that will make you mine, absolutely mine."

The girl sat perfectly still. She might have been a beautiful statue, but her keen eyes noted the struggle that was going on beneath that calm exterior. Her eyes became larger, her lips tighten, and the slight shiver that ran through her body as she realized what he meant.

She saw that she dared not lift her trembling eyelids to meet the fire that was burning in his own; she saw that the haughty bearing was gone, a woman said, her lips sublimed into submission by the strength of a will far stronger than her own. She could not tell him an untruth, and the power to do anything else had melted away.

"You cannot deny it," he said, exultingly. "Pearl, you love me, you are mine," and without waiting for any answer poured into her ears the secrets she had been holding for months.

She caught her breath, and started to her feet, locking up at him with a half-frightened expression.

He wound his arms about her, and held her captive, bringing her face on a level with his lips.

"I could not bear to lose you, do," he said, passionately, "I have not heard it from your own lips yet."

"I am yours," she whispered.

"Say it once more," he said, hungry. "I can scarcely believe it is true."

"I am yours," she whispered.

"Now let us seal it," he said, taking possession of her lips again.

Then he unloosed his arms, and she stood before him, her face as marble.

"We must return to the ball-room," he said, "but just one word before we go. I shall be in Berlin for about six weeks. Our engagement is to be kept to ourselves until then, no one is to know anything about it. When I return, of course I can only ask Lady Clinton to obtain her consent, and then the fact can be publicly announced. Does this meet with your approval?" he asked, anxiously.

"Entirely," she said, with a feeling of relief.

God bless you," he continued. "Good-bye, my darling. I must leave you now."

He led her to a seat, bent over her hand for a moment, then vanished in the throng.

"Your treatment of Lord Wyndham has had the desired effect," Lady Clinton said, as they drove together in the carriage, while she wrote a letter to her cousin. "He has an appointment with me to-morrow morning at twelve-thirty, so you can guess what it is about."

Pearl's face blanched in the corner of the carriage.

"I am really too tired to guess to-night," she said, drawing her rich silk cloak closely about her, 'but I think I have a little idea. I shuddered him well. It is almost a pity he did not propose for Emmy Coombes; she would have made him a model wife, and it would have been an act of charity when one considers how many daughters she has to dispose of."

"He has far too much sense. A man with his tastes requires a brilliant woman, not a wife who has undergone a difficult taste in choosing you, and I am very glad. It is also a great relief to me to know that you are so ready to fall in with his wishes."

"I almost changed my mind to-night. He looked so vulgar, and I hate vulgarity. But there, one cannot expect to get everything in this world," and Pearl yawned.

She swept upstairs to her room, where Celestine was waiting with hot coffee.

"Take it away, and bring me some wine; I cannot take coffee to-night," she said.

Then, as she was walking away, she turned to the mirror, and stood for a few minutes surveying herself. Her dress was a soft clinging silk, of a delicate shade of rose-pink; it was cut low, exposing the beautiful neck, hanging from the shoulders in long, straight folds that trailed upon the floor, and trimmed with exquisite lace, looped up with clusters of damask roses, which suited well her rich, dark beauty. Pearls glistened at her throat and in the folds of her luxurious hair.

There had been no more beautiful woman in all that assembly than herself that night, and she was well aware of it.

She turned away with a smile, half-satisfied, half-scornful, flung off her silver robes, tossed the pearls carelessly on to the bed, drank the wine that Celestine had brought, then drove a fair mirror in her hair and began to look back upon what had transpired that evening.

"I have been a fool," she murmured, "a fool to trust myself with him, a fool to let him speak as he did, and to let him know that I cared for him when I did not. But I cannot help myself! I love him! Oh! how I love him, with all the intensity of my passionate nature; and yet I dare not, I dare not be his wife! It would mean poverty, and I hate it; I have seen enough of poor mamma's worries, and the people writing for money when she has had none for them. I simply could not endure it after my marriage. I blame myself for listening to him, but it was so sweet to feel his arms about me and his kisses on my lips. There was something in him that almost frightened me to-night, and made me compelled me against my wish to tell him that I loved him."

"I am glad he will be away for six weeks. That will give me breathing time, and before he returns I shall be engaged to Lord Wyndham. Most probably he will use the money when she has had none for them."

"Lord Wyndham might be a great deal worse than he is, and I have certainly clinched that matter to my satisfaction; but I would have given almost anything I posses to have kept Arthur Vaughan from saying what he has to-night, for it has placed me in a very awkward position."

CHAPTER VI.

SICK, AND YE VISITED ME.

OME alteration must be made. I positively cannot remain in this house if Mollie is still allowed to have her own way in this matter. The thing is impossible, and utterly ridiculous. Just fancy allowing a child of her age and inexperience to have these three or four girls in the house at a time, bringing all kinds of sickness into the place. And some of the servants have not developed; a small box before now; I shudder to think what might have happened to you both. I can plainly see how necessary it was for you to marry, in order that Mollie might have a mother to guide her. Poor child! she has had sadly too much of her own way. I can put up with a good many..."
of her peculiar ideas, but you really must put a stop to this for my sake, Ralph.

She leaned restlessly in his chair. He had been married just a month, and had only recently returned from his wedding trip, and was already beginning to know that his wife was not all he had either hoped or expected to find her.

"But surely this house is big enough for us all," he said, running his hand through his hair, a habit with him if he were anxious or agitated. If he was agitated, one that it is. Mollie has had her girls' club for over two years now, and the rooms have seldom ever been empty, and we have had no trouble with sickness in any way. These rooms are quite shut off from the other parts of the house, and the only servant that comes into contact with them is Dawson, and she acts of a kind mother's part towards them."

"Oh, of course, I understand it all sounds very good, and I know it is fashionable now to be philanthropic, but then there is Mollie's health to consider. I don't think she has enough strength for it. Even as it is, she is always worrying over something. She looked quite pale last night, and now that Pearl is away, it is quite natural that Cloud should want a little of her society. She does more than her share. He was a very pleasant, busy man, and something connected with that, I think.

"I must speak to the child," he said, gently. "I cannot have her worried over anything, that would be bad for her health, decidedly bad. Dawson can do the worrying, and Mollie can have the pleasure of seeing the girls get well and strong, and enjoy little fads in her own way, but I cannot see any reason why she should not be allowed to continue it. I will have a little chat with her presently, and tell her not to let it engross too much of her time and attention."

His wife elevated her eyebrows, but as he had taken up the paper it was lost upon him.

"Then you don't intend to do as I have suggested," she said, her voice quivering with suppressed passion.

"Yes, I do. Things have come to a pretty pass when the whim of a young married woman, and one likely to cause the greatest deal of annoyance and discomfort to the household, is put before the wishes of a newly-married wife. I call it disgraceful," and without deigning to look at her husband, she swept majestically out of the room.

Mr. Vincent dropped his paper, and sighed heavily as the room went quite still. For a moment he was a peacock, and hated a scene above all things. The thought of his wife and of his little, gentle, yielding daughter clashing, had never once entered his head. They two had lived so harmoniously together that it was a phase of life he certainly could not understand, and, manlike, he was pleased to deal with the matter himself.

"It is a comfort to think that Derrick will be back in less than twelve months, so that Mollie will not have so very long to put up with the new arrangements," he murmured, ruefully, to himself. "I suppose I shall have to act on that plan," he continued, "I suppose I shall have to take it, and leave Mollie! It will be hard on the child. She certainly always has had her own way, but then she asks so few favours, and this club has been such a pleasure to her, and the girls have been so benefited by it. Why should Cloud object to it?"

"Oh, dear! how difficult it is to live at peace with one's own household! I know Mollie dislikes Cloud, and I don't wonder at it, a lazy, good-for-nothing, empty-headed fellow, so I don't wonder that she makes the club an excuse to get out of his way; it shows her good sense any way. I will just talk to the child presently, and see what the matter is with it and anything to do. No one would engage her to work when she only looked fit for her bed. There had seemed nothing for her but the workhouse infirmary, and, oh, she hated the thought, when someone had found her out, and sent her to the house in Belgravia. She had been received at once, and one in trouble of need was ever refused admission there."

A month later no one would have recognised the happy, bright-faced woman; good food, rest and comfort, sympathy, tenderness, and love, had worked a complete miracle in her life. She was looking as she used to, and no longer complained. She had gone out into the world again to earn her bread, conscious that night and morning, morning and night, her name was mingled with the intercessions that ascended to the Throne. It was a tower of strength to her, a robe that enveloped her invisibly, making her strong to stand and strong to walk upright, a power in her life that she never had known before, and that even yet she did not understand."

She almost worshipped Mollie, and every little afternoon would find her in the cozy room, where their little patroness met them for a simple Bible talk, and to sing
some of the sweet hymns they had learned while they were yet children. At the close those who wished stayed for tea. They boiled their own kettle, cut their own bread-and-butter, and handed round the cake, waiting upon each other, while Dawson listened to their little troubles, and helped them with her motherly advice.

Millie was employed in one of the large wholesale houses in the city as a milliner, and had a tiny room in a quiet street at Islington. It was not far from her work, and she had known the landlady for some months before she had gone to live in the house.

There were several lodgers there, and the girl had made the acquaintance of one about her own age, who rented the tiny room next to her own on the same floor.

Millie had returned home early one evening to finish a baby's bonnet that she was making for a friend, and as she sat busily at her work, she heard the sound of long-drawn sobs coming from the other side of the wooden partition that divided the two rooms.

It was the girl she had met on the stairs, the girl with the big blue eyes and the white, pinched face, sobbing as if her heart would break. Millie worked on a little longer, scarcely knowing what to do, then, as the sobs grew deeper and louder, she put down her work, crept out on to the landing, and tapped gently at the door.

There was no answer.

She tapped again, then turned the handle and entered.

It was such a little box of a room, long and very narrow. At the foot of the bed stood a wash-stand and a chair, but was all the furniture it contained or could hold, and when the door was opened there was just room for Millie to stand between that and the wall.

The girl was lying on the little hard bed, with her face buried in the pillow, so that she was not aware that anyone had come into the room. Millie leaned forward and touched her gently.

"Don't cry," she said. "Do tell me what is the matter; if you will, perhaps I can help you."

She lifted her head, and her eyes were swollen with crying.

"No you can't," she said, sobbing again. "It's no use to tell you; no one can help me, at least, I know you can't. You had better go away and leave me in peace. I won't worry you with my troubles."

"You won't worry me," she said, gently. "I am working in my own room, and I can't bear to hear you cry like this. Come in and have a cup of tea. My kettle will boil in a minute. It will do your head good, and a cup of tea is a rare thing for cheering one up when run down I'll run off and pop the kettle on, and you come in as soon as you are ready."

A little later the two girls were sipping their tea together, and Millie was learning something of the girl's history.

Her father and mother were both dead; she had not...
relative in all the world that cared anything about her. She was a dress-maker by trade, but the long hours, with improper food, had told upon her delicate frame. She had lived in the same situation for a long time, and she was not adapted to the slack season time now; she could get no work, had spent all her money, and her landlord had given her notice to leave, for she already owed a fortnight’s rent, and for the past two days she had only had a little piece of dry bread.

"I feel so ill to-day. I cough and cough and can’t get any relief; I wish I could crawl into some corner, and lay down and die. But it seems so hard to die when you want to; and what am I going to do if I live I don’t know."

"And I see no use in it, for what is the use of all that we have gone through?—we all do. Now you rest while I work, and when this is finished I will do the letter and take it to the post."

But the letter was not written that evening, for, after one of the dreadful fits of coughing, when she took the bed it could be seen from her lips there was a bright crimson stain upon it.

"Don’t leave me," she pleaded, "please don’t leave me; I am so frightened. I thought I would like to die, but I don’t think I could now!"

The same evening Mollie sat with her, and, as soon as she could after her breakfast, she wrote a little note to Mollie, telling her all about the case, and sent a child with it, so that it might reach its destination quickly, and in less than two hours after Mollie was climbing the steep hill to find her lodging-house, with Dawsen behind her, laden with a basket of useful articles.

Poor child! Mollie said, leaning over her. "We must take her away from here; she must go back with us, Dawsen. We must disperse the money and take a ferry-boat; then we can make her a comfortable bed; she must not sit up.

The girl fixed her large, luminous eyes on Mollie’s lovely face.

"Am I really going back with you?" she asked, in a whisper, "Are you going to take me where Mollie has been, and shall I get well and strong, like she has?"

"I hope so," Mollie said, taking the thin, white hand in her own. "But you really ought not to speak a word; talking will make you cough again. Lie quite still and quiet; it is better for you."

CHAPTER VII.

A Visitor.

"WHAT was that you said, Claud?" and Mrs. Vincent leaned forward, gazing intently across the carriage window, but the horses were going too quickly for her to see what she wished.

"It looked to me like a cob, and someone being lifted out. Another of your good little stepdaughter’s pranks;" the carriage man said, carelessly leaning on the back of the cushions.

"How did you get on with the old boy this morning? I heard you at it as I passed the door."

Mrs. Vincent’s lips tightened.

"You can guess; I was as right as I saw was correct," she said, shrugging her shoulders, "but I shall give him no peace until I have gained my own way in the matter."

"It is not like you to give up anything. But seriously, mother, don’t you think you are going the wrong way to work to get any influence over Mollie. I have studied her a good deal lately, and I rather fancy I shall become a good little boy, go to church twice on a Sunday, that is, providing she will allow me, get up an interest in her club, and that sort of thing. I am anxious to make a good impression, and even now if I am careful I may be able to cut Derrick Wilds out. It won’t be my fault if I don’t, but you must help me, you know, and eighty thousand pounds with a pretty girl thrown in is not such a bad thing after all. How are the letters going on?" he asked, glancing at her from under the lids of his half-closed eyes.

She smiled slightly.

"I am looking after them, and I don’t give her more than I think good for her. I am getting quite a little pile in my end drawer.

"You would not keep them if you were. Hand them over to me. I will sample them, and then get rid of them. Why, he might find them—Vincent, I mean—then the game would be up."

"Do you suppose he will find them?" she asked, fixing her eyes on his face. "No, Claud, I shall destroy them when I think fit. They certainly will never get into your possession."

There was silence for a little while as the handsome equipage rolled on its way, then she touched her son’s arm, and said, "I have a good mind to take up your suggestion, and work upon an interest in that wretched club, especially if it will help you in any way. I really feel at present as if I will make a start as soon as we return, just take Mollie by surprise, and make her see what I mean. I am so horribly afraid of taking anything; it might have a disastrous effect upon me, and at my age one must study one’s personal appearance, you see."

If she had intended to surprise Mollie, she certainly succeeded, as, with the eyes of a cat, she watched her perfumes, she stepped into the easy room, where Mollie was sitting in a low chair, reading aloud an interesting story to the two girls who were on the floor at her feet, with their heads resting against her knees.

They started up as she entered, and Mollie, scarcely knowing what she said, followed their example, a look of dismay spreading over her features.

"Don’t let me disturb you," she cried. "You made such a promising picture, do stand in the doorway, with those two girls, that I almost wished I were artistic enough to transfer it to canvas."

Then she sank gracefully into the nearest chair, smiling at the two girls, and putting them at their ease at once.

They were very beautiful, and Mollie looked at her and ceased to dream of the gold and roses that was chosen for her for her wife. There was a charm and force about her that her step-daughter had never noticed or felt before.

I went to your room as I passed, as I thought you might be dressing, and I was anxious to see your last arrival. Claud saw her being lifted out of the cab this afternoon, and he is so concerned that he gave me no rest until I promised to come up and see how she is."

Mollie lifted her blue eyes with a puzzled expression to her step-mother’s face, and almost wondered if her bearing were playing her a trick, for this sudden interest in her affairs was certainly the last thing she expected to happen.

Mrs. Vincent smiled to herself, then she said her hand carelessly on the girl’s shoulder, as they paused for a moment at the door of the sick-room before adjourning as if I am afraid we have not taken much interest in your little problems, but, you see, it is something quite new and strange to us to come into contact with a good little thing like you, that I should say we have not understood each other. We must try to manage better for the future, and I don’t think I had better wait to see that poor girl now; it is time I was downstairs, but mind you take whatever grapes or wine you would like. I will give orders to that effect."

She listened to the swish of the silk skirts as her step-mother descended the stairs, then retraced her footsteps to her own room.

"I wish I could believe her," she said, wearily, "but I cannot, I instinctively distrust her. Oh, dear, how hard it is to be good nowadays! I seem to be getting her very suspicious. Perhaps it is because I am feeling depressed."

A few hot tears rushed to her eyes, but she dashed them away.

"I must be brave," she murmured. "I must be brave."

But, oh, if Derrick would only write. No letter now for two long weeks. I hoped against hope that I should
have one to-day, but the mail came in yesterday, so it is too late. He promised to write every week. I wonder how it is that he has not done so; perhaps he is ill," her face blanched at the thought, "and so far away. Oh, Derrick! Derrick! my darling!"

The sweet lips quivered.

"Why is it that love brings so much pain, I wonder? But there, I would rather have the pain and the knowledge of his love than no pain and no love; and I am quite sure that God will take care of him, and bring him safely back to me in his own time."

She fell on her knees by the bedside, and prayed in her simple, childish way, prayed until the troubled feeling had passed away, and she arose strengthened and comforted, realising more and more that, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

CHAPTER VIII

Revenge.

MARRIAGE has been arranged and is shortly to be concluded between Lord Wyndham and the Hon. Pearl Greylands, only daughter of the late Lord Clifton. Both the bride and bridegroom are well known in society, and the wedding will doubtless be one of the prettiest of that season.

Arthur Vaughan had contrived into the club, and as he picked up the paper, his eyes fell on the announcement.

He had been absent in Germany for over two months, and had just returned to London the evening before.

He read and re-read the paragraph, then tossed the paper down in disgust. He did not believe it for one moment; it was untrue, most probably it would be contradicted in their next issue. Pearl was his—his—his. He had been there the day that was calling at the house in Belgravia to plead his cause with Lady Clifton, and ask that their engagement might be publicly announced. The ring was reposing in his pocket; he had purchased it on his way to the club, and later on, that selfsame day, he hoped to place that brooch of proprietorship on her finger.

It was a daring thing to do to aspire to the hand of a peer's daughter. He had only a small income of £2,000 a year, and he could not afford to ...

It was the night before the wedding. Mollie sat in her room, with her little Bible opened in front of her, when there was a tap at the door, and without waiting for a reply, Pearl opened the door and walked in.

Her long, dark hair fell down over the folds of her white dressing-gown, and Mollie noticed, as she looked up at her, that her face was white and haggard.

"Mollie," she said, huskily, "talk to me for a little. I can't sleep, it is useless to go to bed; I feel almost as if I had seen enough of life."

She lay down on the floor, her face on the rug by Mollie's side, her hands thrown about her face, and Mollie, stooping down, opened the little Bible, and read: "And the Lord knew how hard it was for him to speak, and that it was not true, that it was not true, and that it was not true, and..."
"Yes, it is," she said, wearily, "I can't draw back now, but, oh, Mollie, that is not the worst. One can't suffer alone, I have ruined another man's life. Do you remember Dr. Vaughan? I promised to marry him once, but he is poor, and I hate poverty. Then Lord Wyndham came, and I accepted him afterwards. Dr. Vaughan was in Germany at the time. He came to see me after, and I shall never forget him—never! He swore he would be revenged. I saw him last night, our eyes met, and, oh, Mollie, be frightened me—he hated, the terrible hatred, he looked mad, mad! and I feel so horribly frightened. Supposing anything happens to-morrow, it will be my fault; I feel almost afraid to go to church."

"I don't suppose anything will happen," Mollie said, in her gentle way. "You are tired, and your nerves are unstrung. Sleep with me; you will feel better in the morning."

"You are a good little thing," Pearl said, with a sigh.

"I sometimes wish I had had a different mother; then I might have been better. Supposing, now, your circumstances were the same as mine are at present, what would you do?"

"I really don't know," Mollie said, poking the fire gravely, "but if I get into any trouble I just pray about it. I am worried now because Derrick does not write: I am afraid he is ill, and the blue eyes grew misty, "but I know God will take care of him."

"When did you get your last letter?" Pearl asked.

Nearly three weeks ago now, and it is so hard to be truthful about it, especially when I think he is ill.""

Pearl was about to make some remark, then paused quite suddenly, but Mrs. Vincent was rather surprised when her daughter entered her dressing-room the next morning, and demanded the letters that had been kept back. She refused to give them up at first, until Pearl announced her intention of going straight to Mr. Vincent, and with that pressure she succeeded.

"Four letters all at once—been delayed on the road somewhere, evidently." Pearl cried, tossing them into Mollie's lap. "Pray on, little woman, you get your answers."

The girl seized them with a cry of delight, asking no questions, only thinking that Pearl on her way had met the maid, and had brought them herself to give the extra pleasure. But Mrs. Vincent knew that now Pearl had become her step-daughter's champion, it would be a dangerous matter to abstract any more letters that came to the house addressed in Derrick Wilde's clear, firm handwriting.

* * * * *

Pearl was in bed, propped up with pillows.

A heavy mist had been hanging over the city all morning, but by two o'clock it had entirely disappeared, and a brilliant September sun shone down through the stained-glass windows of the fashionable church, and rested lovingly on the dark head of the beautiful bride. She held herself with a queenly dignity as she walked down the long aisle followed by her bridesmaids, but her face might have been carved in marble so cold and white and lifeless did it look. There was no smile of welcome as her bridesgroom moved a few steps to meet her, only a slight tremor of the red-lipped mouth, as they took their places at the altar.

But Mollie, sweet, golden-haired Mollie, looking, in her bridesmaid's dress of white liberty silk, like a guardian angel, watched her step-sister narrowly. She had caught a glimpse of a tall, handsome man as they stood in the porch, with a look of hatred on his face—
Little Mollie.

sye, and something worse than hatred, a something that had made Mollie's heart beat fast as she watched him, and sent a sickening sense of pain through her whole body, which had made her tremble so that she could scarcely stand.

He was in the church now, just a few seats behind, and the girl was wondering if her step-sister had seen him, for she conjectured rightly that it was Dr. Vaughan.

She scarcely heard the words of the solemn service. It seemed as if it would never end. She did not see the proud, satisfied look on the bridegroom's face as he drew the bride's arm through his own, and led the way to the vestry, but Claud's words aroused her to what was passing around her.

"Pearl is far more cool and collected than you are," he said, teasingly. "One might have imagined you were the bride, for you have been shaking all the time."

Presently the organ pealed out the opening strains of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March."

The people rushed to the door to catch a glimpse of the bride as she made her way slowly down the church, bending her stately head as she recognised her friends, when those who were watching her noticed that her face turned deathly white, and in a moment, before anyone had time to think or wonder what had occurred to cause it, a sudden awful cry of horror followed by the swift report of a revolver, echoed through the sacred building.

For a few moments the wildest confusion reigned, then the police had come to the rescue, and when order was restored it was found that a gentleman had confronted the bride with a revolver, that one of the bridesmaids had rushed forward and tried to knock it from his hand, but, unfortunately, it had exploded, and the contents had emptied themselves into his breast, killing him on the spot.

"Mollie, you must stay with me; I want so much help and so much teaching, I am like a little child just learning to walk. I do want to keep right and do the things that please Christ, but I have lived for the world so long, and I am so ignorant, you must stay and help me to be a better woman. Come to Switzerland with me, Lord Wyndham will be delighted, and, Mollie, I really begin to love him; he has been so good to me all through this dreadful time, and this morning when he came in I told him all about Arthur Vaughan. He was so kind, and has quite forgiven me.

Mollie laid her head tenderly on the thin white fingers on the counterpane.

Pearl was in bed, propped up with pillows. It was nearly two months since her wedding-day, and during most of that time she had hovered on the border-line between life and death. She had been carried from the church in a fainting condition, only to awake in a raving delirium, and for many days her life had been despaired of. Then the crisis had come, and when she awoke it was to see Mollie's bright, tender face beaming over her. It was Mollie that had soothed her in her wildest moments.

There had been one terrible never-to-be-forgotten night when it had dawned upon her that she might die, and it was Mollie who had turned her thoughts away from herself to the loving, seeking Saviour, who had given His life that she might have pardon, and Pearl had grasped the blessed truth, and peace had entered her troubled, storm-tossed soul.

It was little wonder, then, that she wished to keep her step-sister by her side; there was a bond between them that no one else understood. Mrs. Vincent was glad that it should be so, for she found a sick-room very trying for herself, and it was a great relief to her when Mollie announced her intention of accompanying them to Switzerland.

Eight months later, when Derrick returned from Africa, they were still there, and he went to join them. Pearl had quite recovered from her illness, and there was a wonderful change in her life, and Mollie was still the same sweet, unspoiled girl that he had wooed and won among the Derbyshire hills.

A month later they stood in the self-same spot, looking up together at the purple hills that towered high above their heads. The sunlight shone through the trees, and flashed its golden beams into the river at their feet. Mollie stood perfectly still, a far-away look in her deep blue eyes.

Derrick leant towards her, kissing the rings of hair that fell on the breast, white brow.

"What is it, darling?" he asked. "Of what are you thinking?"

She turned towards him, nestling her face against his arm.

"I was thinking," she said, her face fair and flushing, "I was thinking, Derrick, how happy we are, and how sweet it has been in the waiting-time to know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

" Amen! " he said, reverently. " May we never forget it, darling. Little wife, you must help me to climb, even as you have helped Pearl."

"I will," she cried, "indeed I will," and she kept her promise.

(The End).

Note: This is a high-class and very helpful story by Keith Richmond.

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“SMITTED OF GOD.”

By KEITH RICHMOND.

CHAPTER I.

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"Is anyone at home?" he asked.

She was rather tall and slight, with dark, expressive brown eyes, and her hair was drawn loosely back from an open, intelligent forehead.

"It's nice to get home, Greta," were Nigel's first words. "It's been dreadfully hot and oppressive in town today."

"I'm sure it has," was the reply, spoken in a tone of sympathy, "for even here, where we always get a breeze if there is one, the heat has been almost overpowering. Stay home and have some tea and strawberries, and you will feel better."

The two were soon seated at a little table in the pleasant morning-room of Sandycliffe. The French windows were thrown open, and the view of the green meadows in the valley below, with the distant Mersey...
winding like a silver thread, dispersed all thoughts of the dusty streets and the busy 'Change.

Nigel and Greta Buchanan were brother and sister; two other brothers—Gordon and Hedley—completed the family.

Six years before our story opens their father, Stuart Buchanan, had died, and Nigel, then only twenty-six, was left with the responsibilities of an old-established business, and the charge of his sister and two young brothers, their mother having died some three years previously.

Members of the Presbyterian Church, Mr. and Mrs. Buchanan had brought up their children with a love and reverence for the Bible that unfortunately is but seldom seen to-day. Very early in life Nigel had taken the Word of God to be the rule of his actions, and though the burden of responsibility seemed sometimes too heavy to be borne, he had proved again and again that:

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,... though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."

Like the children of Judah, who prevailed "because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers," so Nigel

Buchanan, relying on his father's God, prevailed, and well discharged his trust.

The welfare of his brothers and sister had been his first care, and next to that the sustaining of the good name which the shipping firm of Buchanan Brothers had always had on the Manchester Exchange.

His labour, perseverance, and self-denial had not been in vain. The confidence business men had in Stuart Buchanan was worthily transferred to his son, and the house still took its place among the first in the city.

"A boy's will is the wind's will," and Nigel had had many an aching brow and many a restless night over his young brother's defiance of his authority. But that was passed, and Gordon had been heard to say, "There's not a better fellow in the world than our Nigel."

Gordon was now a partner in the firm, and it was Hedley who was the cause of anxiety and the subject of conversation this July evening.

"Next week is it he comes home?" Nigel asked, after a few moments' moody silence. "I don't know what to do with him unless he has sobered down and made up his mind as to what he intends to be."

"He is a dear, loving laddie," replied his sister, "but I do wish he was less heedless and wilful. However, dear, don't let us be anxious over much; we can only keep on praying for him, and trust to be rightly guided as to what is best to do. I came across a new hymn the other day; I think it is in the later edition of Moody and Sankey. Two lines of it have been such a help to me—"

'I'll strive to do the best I can,
And leave the rest with Thee.'
"If we could only always live up to this, how much happier we should be."

"You are right, dear; but when one is tired and overwrought, the little whispers come loudest, and often take one unawares."

"You would like Hedley to be in the business, would you not, Nigel?"

"I thought it, if he would only promise to settle down, and if he and Gordon could agree. I have been thinking it would be a good thing for him to go to Algiers. I have no doubt I could arrange for Mr. Abdurrahman to take him for a year or so. He would then get a knowledge of our shipping business, and be able to study Arabic. It would be of immense advantage to us in Manchester."

"But it would be a long way for him to go, would it not?" questioned Greta, "and there would be few English come to see them."

"She had been as a mother to her little brother, had, and perhaps spoilt him, and she could not bear to think of him uncared for and unhappy in a foreign land."

"Oh, as to that," replied her brother, "of course, it is a long way, but travelling is made so easy nowadays, that to go to Algiers is scarcely more fatiguing than a journey to London would be sixty or seventy years ago. Mr. Abdurrahman, I am sure, would look after him, and Algiers is not such an uncivilised place as you imagine, Greta."

"Well, Nigel, you have the boy's interest as much at heart as I have."

Greta had the utmost confidence in her brother's judgment. Though only five years her senior, he had always seemed much older. His wishes had been regarded almost in the light of a parent's.

"Suppose we leave it this way," said Nigel, after a moment's pause, "Nothing shall be said to Hedley for a week or two; he shall have a free time of enjoyment, and we shall then have an opportunity of judging whether he is improved, and can better decide what to do about the future."

And so the subject was dropped for the time.

"Now, Greta, let us go for a stroll," said Nigel; "it is a shame to be in the house this lovely evening."

Greta agreed, and while she went for her hat a visitor was announced.

"Good-evening, Dr. Dewar, I'm very glad to see you," was Nigel's greeting, as a tall young fellow, bearing the unmistakable mark of the medical profession, entered the room.

"Thank you. I scarcely expected to find you in this lovely evening."

"Well, were we just going for a stroll," replied Nigel; "will you join us? Ah, here comes Greta. Greta, this is Dr. Dewar, whom you have heard me speak. My sister, Dr. Dewar."

With a graceful bow, and speaking with an accent that betrayed his native birth, the visitor expressed the pleasure he had in making Miss Buchanan's acquaintance.

"I'm sure you must feel lonely sometimes among so many strangers," said Greta. "My brother has often said how sorry he felt for you. You'll join us in our walk, Dr. Dewar?"

"Thank you, I shall be most happy," said the young M.D., as he followed Greta through the open French window.

"Look," said Nigel, pointing with his stick across the low-lying country, "who would think we were only a few miles from the noisy, smoky city?"

"No one would. I had no idea you had such a pleasant view. There is actually not a chimney to mar the scene. I was told before coming to Manchester that in every prospect round, the brick poplars of Lancashire were the most conspicuous landmarks."

"I'm afraid there was much truth in that information, for I believe this south side of the city is the only side that is free from these blots on the landscape which have so troubled old Ruskin's ire."

The garden of Sandycliffe was laid in tiers. A broad terrace ran along the front of the house; some few steps led down to the ornamental grounds, where beds of every device were cut, and all the flowers of the season shed their fragrance and beauty.

Descending more steps was the well-kept tennis-lawn and rose garden, while on the further side of the slope were the strawberry-beds, kitchen garden, and orchard. From the terrace and to the village of Didsbury, you could see the medow which bordered the banks of the Mersey.

"You have a charming place here, Mr. Buchanan," said Dr. Dewar, as, having reached the third level, he turned round and looked back at the house.

"Yes, I think it very pretty," said Nigel, "and it just now looks its best."

Pretty, indeed, did the old house look. It was a long, rather low building, with most of its lower windows opening on to the terrace.

It was built and it terminated in a conservatory, which opened off from a spacious hall, whilst at the other were the kitchen premises. There were no doors on this side of the house, only the garden and the meadows, all modes of egress were at the front, which was in point of fact, in back of the building.

The stuccoed walls of Sandycliffe were covered with many varieties of creepers. One part which in autumn glowed with the rich crimson of the Virginian creeper was now of the brightest green, while from another pale cream Gloire de Dijon roses hung their tired heads, weighted with their abundant fragrance.

The western sun was lingering on the old house, as if loth to leave so congenial a spot. It had caught the windows with its loving touch, and had cast a rosy glow on every leaf and lawn.

As the trio continued their walk birds trilled a Te Deum to the departing day, while a corncrake in a distant field gave out its unmusical cry.

Donald Dewar never forgot that evening's stroll. He had found his friend in a strait; to the village of Didsbury, and getting a practice together was slow, uphill work. Often his thoughts would go back to his home in "Auld Reekie and the 'banks and braes' of his native land.

Nigel and Gordon Buchanan were the first friends he had made, having Scottish blood in their veins, that friendship was specially welcome to the stranded M.D. To-night, in their congenial company, he began to think for the first time that it might be possible to live in Didsbury—and be happy.

They had strolled a considerable distance, when a loud barking caused them to look back.

"There's Gordon and Ross," said Greta, as a young fellow in flannels was seen coming leisurely toward them.

He was engaged in throwing stones, apparently as much for his own amusement as for that of his dog, which barked furiously when barked on by a pretended throw.

"Here, Ross, Ross," cried Nigel; but Ross was very happy, and declined to obey.

"Dewar, Dewar, dew," the dog added, however, brought the beautiful sable collie to Mr. Buchanan's feet, where prayers and caresses were lavished upon him, enough to turn even a collie's head.

It took a much longer time for his master to follow, and as he strolled up to the group, he looked the personification of laziness. He was a pleasant-looking young fellow, with brown hair, grey-blue eyes, and a slight moustache, that with all his carelessness would not grow to the proportions Mr. Gordon Buchanan thought due to him.

"As a spectator of the dog's exercise on the grass, and allowed his dog to bark round and round over him to his heart's content, until, tired of such one-sided fun, Ross, panting and breathless, finally lay down with his paws across his master's breast.

"Was Madge success at tennis," asked Dr. Dewar, when Gordon, having recovered his perpendicular, descended to greet the guest, offering profuse apologies for his wild discourtesy.

"Oh, tennis was off; it was far too hot to play," replied the gentleman of the flannels.

"Didn't you play at all?" asked Greta. "Did no one play?"

"Well, Madge did, and Nigel too, but the older.

"My dear sister, one question at a time, please. Did I not play at all?" Certainly. Did no one play? Certainly. 'Was Madge there?' No, Madge was not there. Is there any other information I can oblige you with, sister?"

It was hopeless getting any sensible conversation out of Gordon. He was one of those young fellows who seem..."
CHAPTER II.

Hedley.

“YOUTH is hot and bold, Age is weak and cold, Youth is wild, and age is tame, Youth, I do adore thee.”

—Shakespeare.

A FEW days later a cab with two battered-looking trunks on the top drew up at the door of Handyclyffe, and a young fellow sprang out.

“Is anyone at home?” he asked of the housemaid, who opened the door.

“No, Master Hedley. Miss Buchanan did not expect you so soon, I think.”

“That’s nice—how—’vye-do! Well, give me some dinner—anyway, Mary, for I am awfully hungry.”

While dinner was in preparation, Hedley inspected the garden and conservatory, not forgetting to visit his old playmate Ross, whose demonstrations of welcome were somewhat overwhelming.

Fair, and not very tall, is this representative of the Buchanan family. He has a colour and completion a girl might envy, and fair, wavy brown hair, most becoming when most untidy, which is fortunate, considering that it is seldom otherwise. This finished-school young gentleman is eighteen, though, to judge by his smooth, boyish face, and still more boyish accent, you would take him for sixteen.

He was still occupied in refreshing the inner man when his sister returned.

“Well, Hedley, you have stolen a march on me this time!” said Miss Buchanan, as the young fellow, jumping up from the table, lovingly greeted her.

“I thought I would take you by surprise,” he said.

“A lot of the other fellows were coming my way, so we all came together.”

A few days after Greta and her young brother were playing tennis. Greta was in good form, having had almost daily practice. Hedley would have been more at home with a bat or a croose, and found it impossible to return her low, swift ball in its “round.” Too, were mostly “faults,” so that after a “love set,” he threw down his raquet in disgust, declaring it a “fothy game, and only fit for girls.”

A walk to Northenden by the river was a preferred alternative, in which Ross was a delighted participant. Hedley’s good humour soon returned, and Greta took the opportunity of probing him as to his ideas for the future.

“Well, you’ve said good-bye to Rossall, Hedley?”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

“Are you sorry?”

“I don’t know. For some things I am; we had a jolly time there.”

“Have you made up your mind what you would like to be?” questioned his sister.

“No, I can’t say I have. I know what I won’t be. I expect Nigel will want me to go into the office, and sit on a high stool, and drive a quill all my days, and that’s just what I don’t. I’ll go to sea first.”

Hedley spoke excitedly, and emphasised his last remark by switching off with his stick the head of an unoffending thistle.

These very expressive sentiments were enough for Greta, and she hastened to turn the conversation, the subject of which was evidently a sore point with her young brother. Hedley had scarcely been home a fortnight before he began to find time hanging heavy on his hands. Inaction was intolerable to him, and Setan soon found mischief for his idle hands to do.

One day Gordon called home from business early, having arranged to join a friend in a bicycle run. On going to the disused stables, where his machine was kept, he found it gone, and on inquiry learned that “Master Hedley” had taken it. This was too much for even Gordon’s good nature.

“The cheeky young dog!” he exclaimed; “he shall taste my stick for this!”

But Hedley took care to keep out of his brother’s way for some time, and only his voice betrayed his whereabouts, as he sang his schoolboy song:

“Let others be proud of their schools endowed
With the wealth of a by-gone day,
For Eton is fair, and Harrow is rare,
And Winchester old and grey.
But I know a school by the salt sea pool,
And some can never see
So give me the dear old school, my lads,
Oh, it’s Rossall School for me!”

And Gordon kept being continually annoyed by Hedley making free use of his belongings.

The climax came when Ross was missing for several days; no one seemed to know when he had gone or how. At last his disappearance was traced to Hedley, who had hitherto kept quiet on the matter. He had taken him out for a walk, and Ross had ridden after a horse and trap—a weakness of his—and somehow Hedley had missed him. This explanation by no means satisfied Ross’s master, and not even the reappearance of the dog, after nearly a week’s absence, spared Hedley the thrashing his brother gave him.

It was quite time Nigel interfered, and that night he took his young brother’s arm.

“Hedley,” he said, sternly, “when do you intend to settle down, and to give up these childish ways?”

“Time enough when I begin to get bald,” he said, glancing up at his brother’s head.

Mr. Buchanan was a little irritable.

“You know, Hedley,” he said, “this kind of thing cannot go on, and the sooner you have something to do, and realise that you are verging on manhood, the better. Have you made up your mind what you would like to be?”

“No; but I know what I won’t be. I’m not going in to a stuffy office all day, and drive a quill.”

“Whose command is it that you should drive a quill? Certainly not mine! I left you to choose your own career. Since, however, you don’t seem able to make a choice, listen, and I will tell you of a plan I have. I think you are sufficiently interested in our firm to desire its success, and would advance its interests in any way that was congenial to yourself. Is not that so?”

“Very, Nigel of course I would,” replied Hedley, brightening up under his brother’s tone of consideration and sympathy.

Nigel then unfolded the plan he had proposed to Greta.

“Oh, Nigel, you are a brick! That would be immense,” cried Hedley, seemingly giving his brother time to finish.

“When can I go?”

“In a hurry, as usual, Hedley. However, I am glad you like my proposal; I will write to Mr. Abdurahman as soon as possible. I will also write to the Presbyterian minister stationed at Aigiers, for I would like you to join yourself at once to the church there. Remember you are a boy of many prayers; strive to fulfil the hope father and mother had for you. Put God first in everything, and you will find other things will right themselves. And not keep out of mischief; remember you are eighteen, not eight.”

Hedley winced under his brother’s sarcasm.

“If I will try to be different, Nigel,” he said, “and I won’t annoy Gordon again.”

He was an odd mixture this boy-man—tender-hearted, loving, childish almost in some things, impetuous, but of a strong will and firm determination; a boy that would be led but not driven.

He kept his word to his brother, and was so subdued, and yet, withal, so bright and loving, that he won himself round the hearts of his brothers and sister. Even Gordon found pleasure in his company, and attributed his altered behaviour to the “judicious castigation” he had given him.

Whatever the cause, it seemed as if the boy had scanned the future, and the shadow of that future rested on his last days in old England.
CHAPTER III.
In Algiers.

"O, wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
O, wha can prudence think upon
And sic in love as I am!"
—Burns.

SEA-SICK passengers uttered groans of satisfaction and thankfulness when the "Agia Sofia," from Liverpool, passed through the Straits of Gibraltar and entered the calm blue waters of the Mediterranean.

Most of the passengers soon found their way on to the deck, and Hedley Buchanan was one of the first to sight the picturesque town of Algiers. Its appearance of a succession of dazzling white steps or terraces rising from the water, with the bright green slopes of the Sahel Hills as a background, warrants the Arab comparison of the town to a diamond set in an emerald frame.

Hedley was most struck with the variety of costumes worn by the people, representing as they did so many races, all mingling together on the quay to watch the approaching vessel. French soldiers and officers, Zouaves and Turcos, with their smart uniforms; the Jew, with dark-coloured turban, jacket and sash, blue stockings and shoes; the Moor in smartly-embroidered jacket, full, short trousers, and white stockings; bare-legged Arabs, wrapped in their white burnous; negroes from the Soudan, Spaniards, and Maltese, all jostled one another on the busy quay.

As a contrast to all these, there stood at some distance from the crowd a young lady in deep mourning, with two children beside her—a boy in a sailor suit, and a little girl in white frock and coloured sash.

They were evidently English, and attracted as Hedley was by the gaily-dressed foreigners, his eyes rested with greater interest still on the plainly-dressed girl and her young companions.

He was wondering if he should ever get to know this English girl, when a turbaned Moor touched him on the shoulder, saying in French, he thought he was the gentleman he had come to meet—Mr. Hedley Buchanan.

Hedley's French, when it came to conversation, was of the kind one is accustomed to meet with in those who have learnt the language in English schools, but he managed to own to his name, and was soon on his way to Mr. Abderrahman's home in the Rue de la Kasba.

Plain and without decoration outside, the interior of the Moorish dwelling looked elegant and picturesque. The court round which it was built was paved with marble, and had an arcade all round formed by pillars and arches, supporting an upper gallery, and from this gallery the most private apartments of the house led off.

All strange though it was, Hedley soon settled down to

Gretha mourned with almost a mother's love for the bright, young life cut off in its hopefulest days.
SMITTEN

OF GOD.

his new life; the novelty suited him, and the language he
had come to study was learned, if not by a "royal road," at
least by an easy one. Hearing it spoken constantly, he
soon picked up familiar words and sentences, and the
applying of the laws of grammar, and learning the "why's"
and "wherefore's" came afterwards.

He had been more than three weeks with Ben Abdurrah-
man Brothers when one evening, while sauntering through
the Place du Government, he saw again the girl he had
noticed on the quay the day of his arrival. She was stand-
ing near a fountain, surrounded by numerous race rats
and was watching the crowd of loungers of every grade
and race, who, like himself, were listening to the band play-
ing in the square. She had the same two children with her,
and as Hedley continued to watch them, he concluded she
was the "Willy."*  
The sight of the English girl brought thoughts of his
own sister, and when the party left the fountain and turned
into the Rue Bab-Azoun, Hedley followed at a distance,
turning to see where the object of his interest resided.

On to the Rue Tizly, past the pretty little English church,
and through the gate in the direction of the Mus-
tapha Road he continued to follow. Some little distance
outside the town the party turned up a steep lane into the
Chemin des Aqueducs, where they disappeared within a
very few minutes.

Upon the gate Hedley was careful to read the name, Dar-
en-Nador, and as he retraced his steps back to the town,
he determined to know more about these English visitors.

Happily, fortune favoured him, for the next day he heard
them being addressed in English by their two youngest
brothers, directors of a messenger service, and he
prompted a messenger to deliver a parcel to "Mrs. Ellerby, Dar-
en-Nador, the square white house in the Chemin des Aqu-
duces."*  

"Are they an English family," Hedley asked.

"I have no idea," he replied, and had between French and Arabic,
Mustapha managed to acquaint Hedley with a few facts
concerning the Ellerby family. They had been staying
some weeks at L'Olive, in Mustapha Superior, but had
 lately left and taken the furnished villa Dar-en-Nador. Mr.
Ellerby had come for his health, being almost a con-
tinued invalid; his wife and two children were with him.

So much Hedley learned, but nothing was said of any
other member of the family, and the young lady in mourning
was still a mystery.

One afternoon he and the younger Abdurrahman set off
for El Bizar, a village about three miles distant from the
town. When they had gone some little distance, they
turned down a picturesque Roman road, very steep and
narrow, of which there are several in the neighbourhood.
So difficult of descent are these roads, that only mules and
donkeys can, with safety, be taken along them.

Conversation had as usual been laboured, and for some
moments neither had spoken, when suddenly Mustapha
became most voluble, though not a word was said by
Hedley that indicated the nature of his companion;
however, so soon showed the cause of the excite-
ment.

At some little distance in front of them was the girl
Hedley had seen on the quay, with her two companions,
all evidently in great excitement.

Crossing the Roman steps, Hedley and Mustapha soon
reached the spot, and found that he high cactus hedge on
one side had been blown down, and stretched across the
narrow road, completely obstructing the way.

Addressing the lady in English, Madame Selkissie Kings-
ley, the Abdurrahman introduced his friend, and together
they soon removed so much of the cactus as would allow
them to pass.

As they were all going the same way, they continued
their walk together.

The two children soon made friends with Hedley, who
was delighted to speak in his mother-tongue.

"I am glad you came up just at that minute," said
Edith, the younger child, a veritable little chatter-box,
"for Miss Kingsley had just said we should have to go
round the Musapha Road, and it's such an awful long
way. You live in England, don't you?" she asked.

"Yes, I am a little English girl," responded Hedley.

"Yes, we live at Westbury, but father's so often ill that
we came here to see if it would do him any good. It's
very pretty here, but we don't like it as well as England.
Do you, Willie?" said the little girl, turning to her brother.

"I like the ships and seeing all the foreign people,
but the said Willie, but there are no boys to play with, so I'd
rather be in England."

When they reached the gate of Dar-en-Nador there was
a shake of the hand and a farewell bow, and then
Hedley's acquaintance with Miss Kingsley ended for that
day.

That meeting, however, was the beginning of many.
Hedley frequently joined the trio in their daily walks, and
so little was he removed from the schoolboy that a camp
with the children was a thing to look forward to.

Thus it happened that between himself and Susie
Kingsley a friendship sprang up, which made life sweeter
and brighter for the two aliens.

"How long do you expect to remain in Algiers, Mr.
Buchanan?" asked Miss Kingsley, one day as they
were strolling along the quay, waiting for the incoming of
the English boat.

"About two years, I think, though I may take a turn
home in the meantime. Mr. Abdurrahman has never been
to England, and he wants me to pilot him over. To see
where he is one of his happy dreams. I suppose you will
return to England with the Ellerby's? Is your home very
far from theirs?"

For some seconds there was no reply from the girl at
the end, then from quivering lips came the words,

"Then no, I am not going back, either."

"Pardon me," said Hedley, in tones of regret and
sympathy. "I fear I have caused painful memories by my
thoughtless question," and he glanced at her dress of
dark mourning.

"Oh, it is all right, thank you," she replied, recovering
herself. Then, as if determined to complete the effort,
she went on: "I am an orphan, Mr. Buchanan. My
mother diedii when I was a little girl. I was an only
child, and became my father's pet and companion. When
ill-health compelled him to resign his position in the army,
we settled down in a quiet little country town in England.

"But the English climate was too severe, and we had
with winter abroad. Last year we came here, and stayed at
the Hotel Algeirci. Our summers were among the snow.

"It was a little cold, but the English weather that Christmas was exceptionally severe. I re-
member on Christmas morning one of the Arab servants
running into the house in an excited state, with his bands
full of snow. He said he had found it on the ground,
behind the house, and had picked it up in a heap. He
had snow before. Torrents of rain fell for weeks, and the
houses here, not being built for warmth, my father soon
became rapidly worse. Many invalids who had come here
seeking health also succumbed to that terrible cold. My
father lived to see the sun shine again, and then he,
looked, and I was left alone."

"The Ellerbys, who were staying at the Olivaige at the
same time, were most kind. My father's pension and
with him, and I had only a very small income, an income
not sufficient to maintain my position as a companion to
this, she offered me the position of governess and com-
ppanion to Willie and Edith, and I have been with them
ever since."

"Thank you for telling me your story, Miss Kingsley," said
Hedley, very near finished. "Sympathy in words is not
easy to give, but believe me when I say how sorry
I am for you."

"Don't you think God is very kind, Mr. Buchanan? I
sometimes wonder if there is a God at all. I am so afraid
for my sister, who has taken such a charge to these
things, and therefore ought not to answer. You see I've
lived in an irresponsible sort of life, and have never had
any trouble. But I know what my sister would say.

"What would she say?"

She would tell us that all troubles that are set of our
own bringing on, are blessings in disguise, if we only take
them the right way. She would say to those that love
God all things will work together for good. And she
CHAPTER IV.
Opposite Opinions on Love and Lovers.

"The vain coquette each suit disdains, And glorifies in lover's pains."

COME, Greta you needn't pretend you don't know what brings Dr. Dewar here almost every evening.

"He is my brother's friend, Madge."

"Of course, dear, and that is a very convenient arrangement. And so you think there is no other attraction? There now, you should always blush, you know."

The confidential information, Greta! Well, for my part, I think 'Mrs. Donald Dewar' would sound very nice, and a merry laugh from Madge Stevens increased her friend's discouragement.

The two girls were sitting in the conservatory of Santules—Greta called it her summer parlour. It was furnished with wicker table and chairs; a canary trilled and carolled in its gilded cage among the blossoms, a trailing passion-flower made a bower above their heads, and hot air was fragrant with peculiar difference. Madge Stevens was a contrast to Greta, both in appearance and character. She had somewhat irregular features, but a good complexion and plenty of colour atoned for this deficiency.

Her fair hair was done in a fearless and wonderful manner, and she adopted an always fashionable and rather loud style of dress. She was an only child, and spoilt; her bringing up was mainly responsible for the failings which almost completely obscured her better qualities. Having had all her own way at home, and every wish gratified, she expected to have the same from her friends, while her love of admiration made her thoughtless and indifferent as to whose feelings she sacrificed in order to gain the attention she considered due her.

The contrast, there had always been for others, and her position in her home had given her a steedness of character which many girls lack.

"And you mean to say that if Dr. Dewar proposes it will be the first offer you have had? Well, I can't understand it, Greta. I'm sure when there was ever head and heart in love with you, and you can't deny that Archie Lambert paid you a lot of attention. Why I'm three years younger than you, Greta, and I've had three proposals already, and mean to have a lot more before I am done. A colour, and Madge struck an attitude, and smiled complacently."

"Well," replied Greta, "I can't understand how a girl can lead a man on to propose to her, meaning all the time to refuse him. I think it's down right wicked."

"But you never can tell what they mean; every man pays more or less attention to a girl, and what's the use of snubbing him for fear he is going to propose, when possibly he has no such intention!"

"There's attention and attention," said Greta, "and you needn't flatter me, Madge. When a girl discovers that a man's attentions have intention in them, then she ought to settle with herself whether she really cares for him, and if she does not, it is very easy to discourage further advances. If girls did this, men would have more respect for those they often hear complaint to their ears.

"Perhaps you're right, Greta. But I'm afraid it's my nature to flirt, and, after all, I don't believe the men feel it as much as you think."

The arrival of visitors and afternoon tea at this moment put an end to the conversation, so Madge hastened to drain Greta's thoughts with regard to Dr. Dewar.

She had noticed that his attentions had been more studied, and chance words and looks had told her he sought to be more than "her brother's friend."

It was time she settled with herself what she should do. Would she accept the change of boy to man? or must she avoid the society, and give him to understand she could never be other than a friend to him? She had not hesitated once about the "red-headed curate," and Archie Lambert had come into her life at a time when duty forbade thoughts of any other home than that of her brothers.

Circumstances were different now; Hedley was grown up, and did not need her care, and Nigel and Gordon could manage very well, even if they did not marry. Looking back, the question of whether she cared for Dr. Dewar answered itself. She remembered once during the spring she had been visiting some friends; how, on the evening of her return, she had listened for his step, and how disappointed she had been when he did not come. And the next day, when in the tram, she had seen him walking on the road with Madge Stevens, how her heart stuck as she felt as if a cloud had come between her and the sun.

So Greta made her decision, and that evening she gave her usual cordial greeting to her brothers' friend. But she could not prevent a certain self-consciousness, an unusual shyness, which, in the eyes of Donald Dewar, only made her the more attractive.

In a dress of plain, cream-coloured sapphire, with a dark crimson rose fastened in her brooch and a heightened colour in her cheeks, the young doctor thought his partner at tennis had never looked more charming.

A stroll through the meadows followed the game, and while Madge put on all her bewitching airs for Nigel Buchanan's benefit, Greta was more unconsciously but more effectually laying siege to the heart of Donald Dewar.

It was the end of June, and hay-makers were busy in the field, making the most of the lingering light.

Some of the fields were cleared, while in others heaps of the sweet-scented grass lay waiting the farmer's waggon.

By the way, Miss Buchanan, asked Dr. Dewar, presently, "What is the opinion of the Albigensians?"

"Oh, very nicely, I think. He seems to be becoming quite attached to the place, and writes rapturously of the Bois de Boulogne and the Jardin d'Essai."

"I believe they are very lovely; indeed, all the surroun-" changing the subject, "I was a very nice young lady, you see he has only been there about eight months."

"Will he remain long?"

"I scarcely know, Mr. Abdurrahman, the elder, talks of visiting England in the autumn. If he does he will bring Hedley with him as interpreter, and it is not quite settled whether he will return. I shall be glad to see the dear ladde again. Letters are, after all, very unsatisfactory, and Hedley was always a bad correspondent."

No wonder Hedley spoke rapturously of the Jardin d'Essai, when he described his first visit there to his friend. "It was him that summer evening, the object of their conversation was strolling about among the magnolias in that lovely garden at Algiers—and in his strolling Hedley was not alone."
CHAPTER V.
The Old, Old Story.

"O sweet Love, a thousand wiles thou hast,

To win a maiden's heart, a thing soon done:

For nature framed all women to be won."

- FAIRFAX.

ALGIERS, with its beautiful surroundings, was no doubt, to some degree, responsible for the growing attachment between Hedley Buchanan and Susie Kingsley. Meetings and walks when with her pupils, were followed by planned meetings when her services were not required.

The two were strolling one evening through the Jardin d'Essai, a garden so cool and so fair, where the planes and palms, eucalyptus and acacias, all flourished in tropical luxuriance. The air was filled with an intoxicating fragrance, and its feathered denizens were singing or twittering in the leafy boughs.

What wonder that such romantic scenes called forth expressions of love.

Hedley was no part player. He had not studied the latest hand-book on "How best to court." He only knew that his heart had gone out to the lonely girl, who was bravely trying to do her best, the girl who had "no home." He longed to stand by her side and fight the worst battle that might come. Heedless and impulsive still, he argued not the wisdom of his longing, but let his love hold sway.

They had walked some moments in silence, for a spell was on them both. Then Hedley's arm stole round the girl's waist. Not being repulsed, he became emboldened.

"Susie, do you love me?" he asked, in doubting, boyish tones.

For answer the girl put her head into his, and looked into his face with eyes that should have satisfied the most ardent lover.

But Hedley was not content.

"Tell me, dear, do you love me? I want to hear you say it."

Then the words came low and soft:

"Yes, Hedley, I do."

And the magnolias and acacias rustled their leaves in sympathy, and the little birds twittered and sang, for they knew all about it, and life was one long blissful delight.

In a hurry as always, Hedley was impatient of a long engagement. May, at the latest, was to be the wedding month, and this was March. With the thoughtlessness of youth, past and future were nothing to him, with the present alone he had to do.

He had refrained from mentioning Miss Kingsley in any of his home letters; he knew his engagement would be objected to, his marriage absolutely forbidden. So he would go his own way, enjoy the pleasure of the present, and let the future take care of itself.

"O what a tangled web we weave,

When first we practise to deceive."

How little Hedley knew the sorrow and trouble he was weaving for those he loved best in the world.  

"It does not matter about them knowing," he had said to Susie; "you cannot explain things properly in a letter. And you see, dear, if I go to England with Mr. Abdurrahman in the autumn, I can tell them all about it. Nigel will be angry, but he will get over that, and he can't unmarry us."

"What will your sister say?" Susie had asked.
SMITTEN OF GOD.

"Oh, Grete; she's such a dear old thing; she'll say nothing. She'll want to see you, and love you."

So with this she had to content herself. For herself she had no guardian she needed consult, and wisely or unwisely she yielded to Hedley's pleadings, and promised to become his wife at the end of two months' engagement.

When Mrs. Ellerby was told, that lady took upon herself, as a mother and as a wife, the task of urging further acquiescence before the irrevocable step was taken. But when she found Susie had fully made up her mind, and rather resented interference, she withdrew her advice, and left the twain to follow their own sweet wills.

Mrs. Sexton, who kept this Ellerby's farm, had always been friendly and kind to the girl, who had made her orphan under her roof. She was a thoroughly worthy woman, one who could be saint or sinner as occasion required. She had no scruples about helping forward the marriage of the young people, but rather relished the idea of having a bigger finger in the pie. So it was arranged that Susie should place herself under Mrs. Sexton's chaperonage, and the wedding would take place from the Ellerby's.

Hedley had a liberal allowance from his brother, and this, with the small salary he received from Abdurrahman Brothers, to whom he acted as English correspondent, he considered would be sufficient to begin his housekeeping on.

A pretty little one-storied cottage on the El Bier Road was chosen as their future home. It stood on a hill with its belly and kind to the girl, who had made her orphan under her roof. She was a thoroughly worthy woman, one who could be saint or sinner as occasion required. She had no scruples about helping forward the marriage of the young people, but rather relished the idea of having a bigger finger in the pie. So it was arranged that Susie should place herself under Mrs. Sexton's chaperonage, and the wedding would take place from the Ellerby's.

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The next letter was from London. In it Hedley wrote:

"Mr. A. is now the dumb animal, and I, well, I'm a very big I now, for don't I talk, nineteen to the dozen isn't it. We expect to leave here for Manchester to-morrow. I am a bit of a dreary man first intercourse with Nigel. However, all disagreements get over somehow, and whatever comes we are all in each other, dear, are we not?

By-bye, sweetheart mine,

"Yours till the end,"

"HEDLEY."

"Yours till the end!" Fateful words. How lightly Hedley penned them, and how little he thought they were his last, his last words of love to the girl who bore his name, and who wepted and waited for his coming in that far-off land.

CHAPTER VI.

Suspicious Death in a London Express.

"Long did his wife, Seeking her babe, her only one, look out The way he went at parting—but he came not!"

R. ABDURRAHMAN was as generous to Hedley in London as he had been in Paris. Being his first visit to the English capital, he was desirous of seeing all he could, and without his English-speaking companion he would have got on badly. St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the Tower, Hyde Park, and the thronged thoroughfares of Regent Street, Cheapside, and Ludgate Hill, all excited the wonder and admiration of the Moor.

A week had been spent in sight-seeing, when they packed up their luggage, in preparation for their northward journey.

Taking tickets for the Manchester express, they were soon en route for their last place of visit.

They were alone in a first-class carriage, and had left St. Peter's for a few minutes. When they re-entered, the Moor suddenly complained of a pain in his side. It became worse rather than better, and he turned white and faint. Taking a flask of brandy from his pocket, Mr. Abdurrahman forced some of its contents between Hedley's lips. It failed to have any effect, and the Moor became almost frantic with fear.

The train was whisking on at the rate of fifty miles an hour, he knew nothing about communication cords. What could he do? Would the train never stop?

At last it reached Leicester, and before it entered the station Mr. Abdurrahman had opened the carriage door, and was wildly gesticulating to anyone whose attention he could attract.

A porter was the first to notice him, and jumping on the carriage board, required the cause of the excitement. His symptoms were all on the side of their deed countryman, and he looked with aversion and distrust on the unknown foreigner.

Though no word was intelligible, the language of expression is a world language, and Mr. Abdurrahman knew by the faces round him that he was suspected.

The position was a most painful and unhappy one. He had all the hot blood of his race, and was naturally greatly excited. He threw himself on his knees, and clasping his hands in an agony of despair, wildly gabbled his strange tongue. All this increased suspicion, and when an officer laid hands on him he used his Arab strength in resistance, and had to be forcibly taken away by the representatives of the law.

The only papers found on the dead body related to Algiers; the luggage had gone on in the train, and there seemed no means of identification.

The authorities were much perplexed, and the next day was passed by with no nearer clue to the mystery.

At length Mr. Abdurrahman so far calmed down as to recollect that the address of Buchanan Bros., Manchester, might be the means of helping him out of his awkward position.

Hedley had not told his brother what day they would arrive in Manchester, as their movements were uncertain, consequently no anxiety was felt at their non-arrival.

But when a telegram was handed in at the office of Buchanan Bros., bearing the Leicester post-mark, and Nigel read the ominous words, "Come at once, I, Leicester Police Station," he turned sick with uneasiness. His first thought was that Hedley had got himself into some sort of scrape, and had found himself in the hands of the police.

But wishing to alarm his sister, he sent word to her that he was going to Leicester on business, and might stay the night.

"What in the world has the boy been up to?" Nigel questioned to himself, as the train sped on its way. He never doubted that the telegram was somehow connected with his brother, and was annoyed that his return home should be marked by some disgraceful action.

"It bodes ill for the future," he thought. "It is just what I said. He'll never do any good; he always gives us some cause for anxiety.

Thus crediting Hedley with many possible sins, he never guessed even at the shadow of the truth.

Terrible was the shock when, on reaching the police-station, he was told the real facts. The officers believed that a young stranger, who was so soon to have brightened their home with his merry boyishness, and whom they had so cruelly been wronging in thought—dead. It could not be—could not be—and Nigel bowed his head in bitter anguish.

He was too much stunned at first to reflect. He had not only when he had told his mother that the Arab might in some way be responsible for his brother's death, that Mr. Buchanan roused himself.

He sought at once to free Mr. Abdurrahman from suspicion, and though the mystery was inexplicable, he refused to believe the Moor guilty.

Before taking his sad burden home, it was necessary to satisfy the police authorities. Summoning an Arabic interpreter from Manchester, the true facts of the case were made known; an inquest was held, the verdict given, "Death from natural causes," and the mishandled foreigner was free.

And so the journey to Manchester, so sadly broken, continued; and instead of mirth and happy reunion at Sandysfield, there was gloom and deepest sorrow in Great Matthew's lonely village. That was the home of a mother's love for the bright young life cut off in its most hopeful days; and Nigel was filled with remorse for his unjust judgment of his brother.

Alas! how often our hopes are full of wishings and regrets for the loving words we did not say, the thoughtful acts we did not do, the kind attentions we might have shown. Oh, the heavy burden of these undone things!

"Why do we grudge our sweets so to the living, Who, God knows, find at best too much of gall, And then, with generous, open hands, kneel, giving Unto the dead but all?"

"What do the dead care for the tender token, The love, the praise, the floral offerings?"

But palpitating, living hearts are broken;

For want of just these things.

Most of all was Greta troubled as to whether her beloved brother was ready for that call that had come so
suddenly and unexpectedly to him. How she wished she could say, "In sure and certain hope." But she could not. Before Hedley left home he had treated lightly all serious subjects, and had talked when his brother or sister commenced what he chose to call "preaching." Nigel and Greta had not "preached," believing rather in example, but on occasion when conversation had turned on high and holy things, Hedley had apparently been heedless and callous. So now the sister could but hope, and leave the future of her brother in the hands of his Maker.

He had telegraphed to his brother the sad news of Hedley's death, and Mr. Mustapha took upon himself to call on Mrs. Ellerby, with whom Susie was staying, and get her to break the sad news to the already almost broken-hearted wife. Gently and lovingly as she acted her part, the tidings came with a terrible shock, and it was many days before the young wife realised that she was indeed a widow.

Mrs. Ellerby was a Christian, and had learnt sympathy through suffering. She knew that grief must have its time, and that even those who dearly love the Lord Jesus cannot, in the first bitter hour of an overwhelming sorrow, say "Thy will be done." So she waited till the anguish had worn itself out, only lovingly and with a mother's hand attending to the needs of the stricken girl.

And she had her reward. One day long after, as Susie lay weak and prostrate, watching her kind friend re-arranging flowers, and putting

She wandered backwards and forwards.

Amid all the grief and sorrow at Sandycliffe, she, who was chief mourner was suffering suspense and cruel anguish, unthought of and unknown, in a foreign land.

When day after day went by and no letter came, poor Susie was almost beside herself with fear and disappointment. One hour she was weeping bitterly, feeling sure something had happened; the next, with the perversity of human nature, she was blaming her husband for neglect. Oh, the agony and suspense of the lonely, waiting wife.

Mr. Abdurrahman was not aware that Hedley's marriage had been kept secret from his friends, and as conversa-
Crowds of people, in every variety and picturesque-ness of costume, were gathered on the quay at Algiers, to watch the outward-bound boat for France.

The "Agia Sofia" was quite at home in the blue Mediterranean waters, and was dancing, as it glided, upon its sunny waves. Every now and again she strained her timbers and urged at her oars, as if captivated by an injustice and freedom of spirit.

As she passed away, the gangway was removed, and like a thing of life and beauty, she glided from her moorings, steadily and free, heedless of the beauty she was leaving behind.

The shores of the bay were dotted here and there with white villages; French villas and Moorish palaces appearing in the midst of the richest and most luxuriant verdure, some placed high up on the slopes of the hills, others standing on the water's edge.

A young lady in widow's weeds, and holding in her arms a tiny atom of humanity represented by a big white shawl, stood at the side of the vessel, watching the receding shores; and it was only when Algiers was left far behind that she sought a warm and sheltered seat.

Susie Buchanan—for it was she—had come forth from trial and suffering, and almost death, to a new life and new interest.

For a time she had been helplessly, hopelessly crushed; but her brave, independent spirit and self-reliant nature came to her aid, and over and above all was the glad, new experience and the hills, and the memorable event that was right to her baby. But she knew her husband's fear of Nigel, and this fear had been imparted to her. She dreaded to go direct to him and tell him her story, for she felt sure he would doubt the truth of it.

"Never," she said to herself, "shall my husband's relations know of my existence, or of the existence of my child, until I am assured both will receive a welcome. Blame shall never, on my account, be cast on my husband's name. I will go among his people as a stranger, and let what reception would be given to Hedley's wife and child.

She was a fairly good linguist, already she knew German and French, and had a slight knowledge of Arabic, having, for her sake, in amusement joined her husband in his studies. She determined to gain a precise knowledge of this language, go to England, and, as foreign correspondent or translator, find employment with some Manchester firm—Buchanan Bros. she hoped.

Readers may smile at her plans; perhaps they savoured of the quixotic, but the end and means of them was not unworthy. With a zeal and perseverance born of purpose, Susie soon became sufficiently master of Arabic to bid farewell to Algiers, and go forth to test the success of her plans.

Now, as she sat on the deck of the "Agia Sofia," she could not keep her thoughts from straying back into the past.

Hedley had been a passenger on board that same boat, scarcely two years ago; and now she was making the return voyage, the widowed mother of his child.

She recalled the fair young English stranger, as she had first seen him, crossing the gangway; she remembered the meeting in the lane, and the fallen cactus bridge. She had still the sight before her of the evident love in the Jardin d'Essai; her marriage, the home, and the happy months of wedded life—she went over it all again. Into a few short months it seemed as if the happiness of a life-time had been pressed, and into as short a time life's sorrows. Algiers had been the scene of both, and Susie felt she must ever love the place, though with a love that would be filled with pain.

With this last backward glance there came floating through her brain the words of a hymn she had heard Mrs. Ellerby sing and play.

"O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace, the joy, I sought so long,
The blossom of my primrose morning.

I tried the broken promises, Lord,
But all the waters failed!
E'en as I stooped to drink they'd fled,
And mocked me as I waited.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me;
There's love, and life, and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee."

A restless little cry roused Mrs. Hedley Buchanan from her prolonged reverence, and forthwith she began to bestow her undivided attention upon the contents of the big white shawl, that link of love that bound the past and present.

She had had a fancy for calling her child after Hedley:
SMITTEN

OF GOD.

ingenious thought had feminised the word, and "Edlea" became baby's name.

She was a nice little fair-haired thing, and though only a few months old, merriness and good temper seemed her characteristics.

The voyage to England passed pleasantly enough; the passengers were interested in the young widow, and Edlea was a great hit as a baby. The incident of introduction. She proved a capital little sailor, and when most of the ladies were ill, Susie, who was quite at home on the water, would sit on deck, while baby curled and laughed at the splashing waves.

It was a bright day in June when at last they crossed the Mersey bar, and the "Agia Sofia" disgorged her seasick passengers at the Liverpool landing-stage.

Susie felt very lonely as she left the friendly shelter of the ship, and stood alone amid the hurrying crowd at the boat-landing.

But this was only the beginning of a daily and hourly struggle with such feelings, and to give way now would show small promise of a successful fight.

So pulling herself together, mentally and physically, she sought out a train for Manchester, and in less than two hours she found herself comfortably settled in a hotel in that city.

As she sat watching her sleeping baby she could scarcely realise that she had accomplished so much of her plan, and that she was indeed very near those from whom she had sought to escape love and sympathy.

Excitement drove sleep far away, but faith in her plan kept her spirits high, and she felt no weariness when, the next morning, having made all necessary inquiries, she made her way to the Central Station, and took a ticket for Didsbury.

Very strange she felt, and not a little sad, when, with Edlea in her arms, she walked through the village so often described by Hedley—past the Wesleyan Chapel and College, and round by the old Church. It all seemed so familiar, and when she came to Sandycroft she knew it at once. There it was, the back of the house only visible, the broad gravel way smoothly brushed, and the garden plots with the evergreen shrubs by the side of the way.

By going down the lane Susie hoped to get a view of the front of the house, but it was only a glimpse she got through the trees. She wandered backwards and forwards, wondering if Greta were at home, and what she would say if she knew Hedley's wife and child were outside.

She would be kind to her, and love her—Hedley had said so; but Mr. Buchanan—he would not, she was sure. He would probably disbelieve her story, or if he believed it, would pour reproach and blame on her and on her daughter. She had very hard thoughts of Nigel, and wondered him greatly.

All remained still and silent at the house, and at last she turned away.

Passing again through the village, she was attracted by a broad, open road, and turning down, had not gone far before she espied, through a window of a small house, a card bearing the word, "Apartments."

This was just what she sought. Knocking at the door, she interrogated the landlady and viewed the rooms. They were not quite what she liked; "lodging house" was written on everything, and being on the high road, there were more outside than of the inside.

Promising to write if she decided to take them, she went further. She had walked some distance without seeing any more signs of apartments to let, when, turning down an avenue of new and attractive-looking houses, she noticed two of the tell-tale cards.

An unitid woman, with several children clinging to her skirts, decided her against the first, and feeling weary and discouraged, there was little hope in the pull she gave the bell to the second house.

A very clean, elderly woman opened the door, the sight of whom was refreshing.

After hearing her visitor's business, she asked her to sit down, and began talking to the baby, finally taking it in her own strong arms. Susie did hope she might come to terms with this comfortable old body.

"Is this the room you have to let?" she asked, looking round at the pretty, modern furniture.

"You'll. You see, there's only me and my master, and as we had a bit of money left us a back we thought we'd take one of these houses and get a lodger. It would be a bit of company for me, my master said, when he was out doing his gardening, and help us to put by something for a rainy day. We're only just about ready for company, as you may say. My man put the card in the window yesterday, and you're the first that's called. Aye, but that's the smart thing, wasn't it? Bless me! It's smiling at me as if it had known me all along."

Susie found it easy to arrange matters with the motherly woman, and settled to take possession the same evening.

A cup of tea, which Mrs. Britton insisted on her having, sealed the compact, and with a brightened heart Susie returned to the city.

CHAPTER VIII.

Susie's Success.

"So tired, so tired, my heart said, I,
To fold me close, and kiss me warm,
Till each quick breath ends in a sigh
Of happy languor. No, alone,
We lean upon his grave-yard stane,
Uncurbed, uncurbed, my heart and I."

—E. B. Browning.

T
t the houses in Palm Avenue were small, having but a few rooms, and a small kitchen, but they were built in the modern and pretty Queen Anne style, stained glass in the windows, and all the new improvements inside the house.

To avoid the possibility of discovery, Susie decided to engage one of them herself, and take back her maiden name, so to her landlady and the neighbours she was known as Mrs. Kingsley.

She had been nearly a week in her new home, and was beginning to feel quite settled; now her thoughts turned to seeking some employment by which to eke out her scanty income.

Possessing herself of the two Manchester papers, she diligently searched through the advertisement columns. Everything that anyone could possibly want seemed to be there—excepting what she sought.

At last, one morning, in the middle of a long list of "Clerks, Assistants, etc., Wanted," in the "Guardian," she read:

EFFICIENT CORRESPONDENT WANTED, for Shipping House; French, German, Arabic; state full particulars.—Address R S9, at the printers.

"I wonder if it is Buchanan Bros.?" she was at once her thought. "I do hope it is.

Wasting two or three sheets of paper on her careful answer, she impatiently waited the result.

"This must be for you, ma'am," said Mrs. Britton, two days later, as she came into the room with a letter in her hand.

"Why can't people put things properly? I'd like to know, and not write 'Mr.' when it's 'Mrs.,' just as if the postman knew by indirection who the letters was for?"

"Well, the letter is addressed 'Mr. S. Kingsley,'" replied the landlady, which was the advertisement which was addressed to Mr. S. Kingsley. At first she, too, was mystified, but on opening it she found it was a reply to her application.

Messrs. Entwistle and Son would like to have an interview with Mr. S. Kingsley, the advertisement which he answered—so the letter ran.

Susie indulged in a merry laugh at the thought of having taken in some of Manchester's sharp business men. She had only signed herself "S. Kingsley," and her answering being of the kind in which it is difficult to distinguish sex, accounted for the mistake.

She was a little disappointed that it was not Buchanan Bros., after all, that wanted a correspondent; and the thought that when Messrs. Entwistle and Son were un-deceived, and found that S. Kingsley was only a woman, they would not require her services, somewhat damped her spirits.
But Susie thrust back these gloomy thoughts of doubt and distrust. Had she not prayed to be led in this matter? Ever since that memorable day at Mrs. Ellerby's, when peace had taken the place of unrest, and when in place of utter weakness had come a strength born of trust in One who has said, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee"—ever since that wonderful change she had sought in all her ways to acknowledge God. So far she felt her path had been directed, and saying over to herself those soul-sustaining words of Newton's—"His love in time past forbids me to think He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink,"

Susie prepared for her interview with Messrs. Entwistle. "Will you take care of baby, Mrs. Britton?" she asked, going into the kitchen. "I'm going into the town, but I aou't expect I shall be very long."

"Yes, indeed, will I; she's just the best baby I ever clapped eyes on. She'll sit and watch me, and talk to her dolly there, and never be no trouble at all."

So Susie took train for the city, and presented herself with considerable trepidation at the office of the shipping firm. Mr. Entwistle himself interviewed her, and was not a little astonished to find "S. Kingsley" was not a Samuel or a Stephen.

However, many things were in the applicant's favour. Mr. Entwistle believed that some work can be done as well by a woman as a man, and when efficiently performed, should be regarded as equal in money value. Then, correspondents who knew Arabic were scarce, only two others had replied to the advertisement, and of these neither understood German. Finally it was settled that Mrs. Kingsley should have the situation. She was to spend each morning at the office, and take home what further correspondence had to be done. All was very satisfactory, and with a thankful heart Susie returned to her baby.

She had much to encourage her, but so far she saw little prospect of accomplishing the direct object of her plans.

Once, when visiting the outside of Sandycliffe, she had seen a young man go through the gates. Her heart stood still as she caught sight of his face. For a moment it seemed as if Hedley had come back from the grave. She knew it must be Gordon; her heart went out to him in sisterly affection, and she seemed to feel that through him she might accomplish her end.

Though she had been twice to a neighbouring cemetery, she had failed to find her husband's grave; it seemed almost a vain search amid that silent multitude.
One Sunday afternoon she came across it accidentally. It was a rough-hewn marble cross on a granite rock, and here the inscription:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
HEDLEY,
THIRD SON OF STUART AND MARY BUCHANAN.

"In the Midst of Life we are in Death."

That lettered cross seemed to Susie the symbol of that heavy cross which must be her life-long burden. Leaning against the stone, she sobbed as if her heart would break. "O God," she cried, "help me to bear my cross, help me to be patient and trustful. Guide me in the accomplishment of my purpose, that my baby may be loved and made welcome in her father's home. For baby's sake, O God, help me."

Then sobbing again, she pressed Edith to her bosom, wailing in her anguish: "Oh, baby, baby, what shall we do without him?"

As she turned away from the grave, and slowly walked towards the cemetery gate, a lady in mourning passed her. To Susie there seemed something familiar in her appearance.

"I'm sure I've seen her somewhere," she thought. "Where can it have been?"

Then it flashed across her mind that it was Greta Buchanan. Unlike Hedley, for she was dark, while he was fair, there was still a strong family likeness. Susie felt sure she was not mistaken, and sitting on a seat, she watched. Presently she saw the lady stoop over Hedley's grave, and pull up the blades of grass that had grown between the stones, then put fresh flowers into a tin cross.

She was convinced now that it was Hedley's sister, and.walking until she passed again, she followed her out of the cemetery, and down Barlow Moor Road.

"I am sure I shall get to know her sometime, I feel I shall," she said to herself, "and for Hedley's sake she will love his wife and child."

Creta often visited her loved brother's grave, on a Sunday afternoon. On the evening of this particular day, as she sat at tea with her brothers, thinking of her visit to the cemetery, and of the promising young life cut off in the heyday of youth, her sad thoughts found expression in words.

"What a great deal of trouble there is in the world, of which we know nothing. This afternoon I saw some children putting flowers on a newly-made grave, and sobbing as if their little hearts would break. One of them was too young to understand the trouble, but cried because the others did. When the elder ones had put their tokens of love on the fresh and the baby-child placed beside the more beautiful flowers a bunch of daisies and buttercups, drooping and faded from the tight grasp of the hot little hands." I learned afterwards that it was a mother's grave. Then, as I was leaving the cemetery, I saw a young widow with her baby, and oh, how sad she looked!"

Corden, who was averse to depressing conversation, and wished to change the subject, remarked:

"Oh, by the way, Britton tells me the lodger they have got is a young widow with a child. I didn't think it was a very good spot for them to sink the money they had left in house and furniture. I told Britton so, but he said his mistress had made her mind up, and it was best always to let women have their own way, they lived longer. They hadn't to walk long for their lodger, any way, and they seem rarely set up with her."

So the lives so closely united, yet so mysteriously separated, were beginning to touch. Susie, all unconscious of the interest taken in her by those who so ardently wished to know, trusted and waited. For baby's sake she had suffered and waited and supplicated; so far her prayers had been wonderfully answered, more than she could have asked or thought had been granted her. Somehow, sometime, she knew the desire of her heart would be satisfied, and the door of Sandychute, her husband's home, flung open in welcome to herself and child. Ah, had she but known how!

TO BE CONTINUED.

Ready on Friday next, April 18th, our No. 355 Thrilling Life Story (sequent to this present number) By KEITH RICHMOND, entitled:

TEMPTATION'S HOUR.

NOTICE TO OUR READERS THE WORLD OVER.

From numerous letters received, we are sorry to find that many of our readers are unable to secure from their booksellers' the BACK NUMBERS of our THRILLING LIFE STORIES and SELECT STORIES, or, in other words, the REMAINING PARTS to STORIES which THEY ALREADY HAVE READ, and are desirous of completing.

TO REMEDY THIS, please note: We will send to any reader ANY PARTICULAR STORY WHICH HE requires (providing such stories are in stock) POST FREE on receipt of Penny Stamp for EACH number required. If any person finds a difficulty in being supplied each week with our current story please write us at once.

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"MUFFLED MARRIAGE BELLS."
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MOTHER

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SEWING MACHINE CO. (35 Dept.) 32 & 33 BROOKE STREET Holborn, LONDON, E.C.

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Ayer's PEPPORENTE, 10/-; Neave's Curative Syrup, 1/-.
CHAPTER I.
Five All.

"The mother of the sweetest little maid
That ever crowed for kisses."

Who's the lady in black, playing with your sister, Miss Entwistle? By jingo! but she plays well. Wasn't that a splendid serve?"

"Oh, that's Mrs. Kingsley. She's father's foreign correspondent, and we're all so interested in her. She's a widow, and has a dear little baby-girl. See! that's it in the perambulator Maggie's wheeling."

"She looks young to be a widow. Is she English? She seems to have rather a foreign style."

"Yes, she's English, but she's lived abroad a great deal. Her husband died after they'd only been married a few months. Was it not sad? She only came to England after his death."

"I think they've finished the game, Miss Entwistle. Come and introduce me, and let us make up a set. Oh, here comes Fred; he'll do the business."

A young fellow in a brilliant blazer strode across the lawn to where Gordon Buchanan and Connie Entwistle were sitting. He was the son and heir of the house, and a chum of Gordon's, whom he now greeted with an affectionate clap on the back.

"*" For first part of this Story see our No. 354, "SMITTEN OF GOD."
"Hallo, old fellow! glad to see you. You're just in time for the next set. Come along, Connie," he said, turning to his sister. "You must join this game," and taking an arm of each, Fred Entwistle hurried them across to the tennis court.

It was early summer. Winter had passed, and spring, and Susie Buchanan—or Kingsley, as we must call her, was still with the shipping firm of Entwistle and Son. The senior partner had taken a great interest in his foreign correspondent, and having made an opportunity to introduce her to his daughters, they, in turn, showed their sympathy for the young widow by inviting her to the house. She was now a frequent visitor to Oakleigh, and between her and Connie Entwistle, who was only two years her junior, a mutual liking had sprung up.

She was looking towards the shady tree where her baby was waving its tiny hands to her, when Mr. Fred Entwistle's voice startled her.

"Mrs. Kingsley, allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Gordon Buchanan."

Poor Susie! she never knew how she got through that introduction.

She had seen a stranger come into the garden, but was too far off and too much occupied with the game to notice that it was Hedley's brother.

"Thank you, I think I won't play in this set," was her reply, when Fred Entwistle asked her to be his partner.

"Oh, but you must—no, I mean we'd like you to, unless you really are too tired."

"Thank you, I am rather tired, and I must go to baby; your sister will be weary of wheeling her about." Thankful to escape, Susie joined her baby's volunteer nurse, and while the next game was being played she had time to calm down, and plan how best to behave to her husband's brother.

The striking likeness between them had already won Gordon a warm place in her heart, and tears filled her eyes as the resemblance brought back the memory of her bright young lover.

At any rate she would do her best to win Gordon's regard, and then some day perhaps she would disclose her secret, and he would help her to make it known to Nigel and Greta.

So earnest was she in her purpose, and so eager for her baby's sake to win her way with her husband's people, that she never realised she might be adopting a dangerous course.

"Maggie, you're too good to baby. She's getting a spoilt little girl," said Mrs. Kingsley, looking lovingly on her child.

But Mr. Entwistle's youngest daughter refused to own to weariness of perambulation, and if Edlea was being spoilt, it was a mode of treatment she evidently enjoyed; for now, in answer to her mother's remark, she chatted and crowed as it to say: "I know I'm being spoilt, but I like it."

She was now fifteen months old, and had grown a big, bonnie girl. Certainly there was great danger of her being spoilt, without assistance from her mother. Mrs. Britton, whom she called "Grandma," meaning "Grandma," possessed all the characteristics of the proverbial and real grandma; while at Oakleigh all took part in the spoiling process.

"Mrs. Kingsley, we've suffered an ignominious defeat. You must come and avenge us, or Gordon Buchanan will be too conceited for anything."

The speaker was Fred Entwistle, who, at the finish of the game, had come to seek Mrs. Kingsley's service.

"Leave baby with me, Mrs. Kingsley; I know she'll be good, and I shall never be tired of having her," said Maggie, who was a quiet, fair-haired girl of fifteen.

So the set was made up, Mrs. Kingsley and Fred Entwistle against Connie and Gordon Buchanan. Susie had her first "serve," but she was nervous and made fault after fault. "Fifteen love; thirty love," called the opposite side in triumphant tones.

Mr. Entwistle was an excellent player, and though...
MEDGE dived at once into her subject.
She was barely eighteen, this second Miss Entwistle, and was still—

"Standing with reluctant feet
Where the brook and river meet—
Womanhood and childhood meet."

Very reluctant feet Mabel's; she didn't want to be grown up, and chafed at the thought of having to be proper.

"Well done our Mabel!" said her brother, putting her on the back. "Your prolonged top-notes are worthy of our tabby."

However, the top-notes reached the ears for which they were intended, and presently Maggie and her little charge joined the party under the lady's chestnut.

As the carriage was wheeled into the circle, Edies's bright eyes turned first on one and then on another of the group, finally resting on Gordon Buchanan.

"I say, Gordon, you've struck the lady's fancy," said Fred, "but let me warn you, she's an artful devourer. You'll be the object of her devotion only until a fresh young man turns up."

"You're giving my baby a very bad character, Mr. Fred," said Mrs. Kingsley, endeavouring to speak as naturally as she could. "But I'm afraid it's the true one."

Baby continued to crow and caper, and make such eyes at Gordon that, in spite of his declared dislike to babies, he was compelled to make some sort of advance to the queen of the perambulator.

"I think you will have to introduce me to your daughter, Mrs. Kingsley," he said, getting up from his seat, and going towards Ediea, who showed her delight by endeavouring to get out of her carriage.

"You're in for it now, Buchanan; you'll have to nurse her herself," said Fred, who rejoiced at his friend's dilemma.

Much remittance and banter followed at Gordon's expense, but he was too good-natured to be offended. Wheeling the carriage close to where he had been sitting, he drew out his watch and various other articles of attraction, and baby was content.

"What do you call her, Mrs. Kingsley?" he asked.

"Ediea," was the reply, spoken in a half-hesitating tone.

Gordon looked up questioningly, thinking his ears had deceived him.

"Ediea," repeated Mrs. Kingsley, with a conscious flush, which was either unobserved or beyond interpretation.

Gordon was silent; the name so like his dead brother's struck him as being strange.

"How do you spell it?" he asked, presently.

Susie told him, and he seemed satisfied. Then the conversation turned on other subjects, and the renewal of the it was left to a future occasion.

CHAPTER II.

Doing the Square.

"Fashion, a word which knaves and fools may use,
Their knavery and folly to excuse."

—Churchill.

A FEW mornings after the game at tennis, Gordon, who had been reading his paper on the terrace, strolled down to where Britton, the old gardener, was busy planting out geraniums.

"I say, you'll have to buy some good plants here, Britton. That deep red one is especially fine," he remarked.

"You're a good judge, Mr. Gordon. That there red 'un is about the best of the lot, and that's saying a good deal, for I never see finer plants."

"By the way, what did you say was the name of the lady who lodges at your house?" asked Gordon, in a would-be careless tone.

"Kingsley, sir—Mrs. Kingsley."

"I think you said she had a child?"

"Yes, sir; the sweetest little girl you ever clapped eyes on."

"Oh, yes," he answered, indifferently, desiring no further information.

"Well, I'm glad you've had such success with your geraniums. I must bring Buchanan to see them."

And as if to carry out his purpose, Gordon returned to the house.

Gordon was by no means a sentimental young man. A favourite with most, he was one of those young fellows who, endowed with good looks and winning manners, never condescended to vulgar and heartless flattery. He said the right things because he could, not that he was expected to; he lived up to his favourite motto, "Familiarity breeds contempt," and there was always a line—irresistible, but surely there—beyond which he would not go, and over which his friends feared to step.

He had reached the age of twenty-five, and could still "coolly and categorically" not having "fallen a wound."

Among his lady acquaintances he had frequently proved the truth of his proverb, for while "distance" had "latent enchantment" to many a view, closer acquaintance had bred—at least not contempt—at any rate disinclination for any stronger ties than that of fashion.

Something in Mrs. Kingsley had specially attracted him. Goodness was written on her face, and one had not to be long in her company to find out that the law of God was the rule of her actions. Gordon had no claim to be religious, but the blood of Scottish Covenanters was in his veins, and a good woman attracted him, as the frivolous, empty-headed girls he so often met, with all their arts, never would.

While Mrs. Kingsley was occupying Gordon's thoughts, he, for very different reasons, was often in her.

Britton, who repeatedly had the nurse, was long-winded, when hopes have nearly died, desire has been satisfied, satisfaction in a way one could hardly have dared to expect, and what had once seemed almost impossible of attainment has come to pass in an easy and natural manner.

This was with Susie.

As the evenings were still sometimes chilly, Susie would often take baby into the kitchen, and warm her little feet at the fire before putting her to bed. She was thus occupied the night after Gordon's interview with Britton, when the gardener came in. She did not move, for the old man loved to have a game with the little child, and Ediea loved no less to be jumped and tossed in the big, strong arms.

My young master was asking after you to-day, ma'am," he ventured confidentially in his high-bred favourite chair by the fire.

"Indeed, Mr. Britton, how should he know about me?"

"Maybe he's seen you at church, ma'am. He's a very nice young man is our Mr. Gordon."

And presently the old gardener's tone of recommendation was obscured by astonishment at the name.

"Whom did you say?" she asked.

"Mr. Gordon, ma'am—Mr. Gordon Buchanan. I've worked for his brother six years come Michaelmas."

Surely Britton was gardener to someone in Diebury, but she had never happened to hear the name of his master before.

Finding he had an attentive listener, Britton launched forth into the history of the Buchanan family. It was hard work for Susie to sit and bear him tell of "Master Hedley," of his boyish mischief, and of his leaving home, and yet she felt as if she must hear all. When he began to dwell upon the sad events of his return, Susie could bear it no longer.

"You may be surprised, abruptly, "you must go to bed."

"Why, you're almost asleep now, my pet. And hurrying upstairs, she found relief in a flood of tears."

The following Sunday, as she was leaving church, she was surprised to see Gordon Buchanan standing near the porch, waiting for his hat, he came towards her.

"Good morning, Mrs. Kingsley," he said, with his pleasant smile. "I thought I saw you in church. Do you often come here?"

"Yes, I like this church, and it is just a nice walk from Palfrey Place."

"I like the place, too," said Gordon, "My brother and sister go to the Parish Church, but I like this better. There's more going on, and things are more up-to-date. Do you know the rector?"

"Yes; he has called twice, and was most kind. He seems to look well after his congregation."

"Yes," she said, and he is continually devising some fresh plan to draw the people together. This summer he is starting a cricket club for the boys, and a tennis club.
period was coming, and for not her plans succeeding beyond all she could have asked or thought.

The specific for heart-trouble is, first and chiefly, trust in God, and, secondly, work—earnest, healthy, regular work, and plenty of it; and no medicine more promising than the doctor's drugs is a measure of success. The first two specifics Susie had sought to possess, and now the third had come her way. Many times during the day she had tempted to give all up, but for her child's sake she had resisted, and bravely persevered. There is something so delightful in giving one's self up to die of a broken heart! There is something so grand in endurance, in patient waiting, in steadfast trust.

"The star of the unconquered will,
It rises in my breast.
Serene and resolve, and still,
And calm and self-possessed,
One may say this humbly and truthfully, and in the strength of One Who is the source and spring of all calmness and stillness and resolution, to be as firm as the gaze of that vast, unchangeable gaze.

So on Tuesday morning Miss Stevens and Gordon might have been seen "doing the square," together, Madge sitting on the loge by the side of so handsome a cavalier. It was Miss Stevens herself who introduced the subject of the new club.

"You're just the one I wanted to see, Mr. Gordon," she said, effectually, "I've put your name down for the tennis; you said you would join, you know, and we're having the first game on Saturday. You'll be sure to come, won't you?"

Madge spoke quickly, and in tones high enough to be heard by the passers-by, whose notice she succeeded in attracting in a humorous manner; once a loud case—was kept specially for the square, where Manchester's philanthropy disports itself.

"Yes, I said I would join, and I will try to be down on Saturday," replied Gordon, in quiet tones, meant to be improving. He strongly objected to have public attention called to himself in this way, and hastened to get through his business and escape. His companion, however, on whom reproach was lost, chatted on, and unwittingly helped him to gain his end.

"Do you know anyone who would be likely to join?"

"I have seen many of them, and we're having seventeen members now, but we thought we ought to have at least thirty."

"There are one or two fellows I think would join," replied the diplomatist Gordon, "and there's a lady who has, I believe, recently come to the church, who would probably be interested in such a thing."

"Oh, I'll call and see her; where does she live?"

immediately replied the energetic secretary.

Name and address having been given, Gordon left Miss Stevens to continue her pretence of shopping. The following afternoon, as Miss Britton sat writing in her tiny sitting-room, made pretty and artistic with art muslin and daintily-arranged grasses, Mrs. Birtton entered in a visitor—Miss Stevens. Susie had forgotten for the moment her conversation with Gordon, and was surprised by the presence. The stylish caller could be. She was not known, however, for after the customary greetings, Madge dined at once into her subject.

"I am seeking members for our new tennis club, Mrs. Kingsley, and Mr. Gordon Buchanan thought you might join. May I enter your name?"

"Susie, thinking it would afford her many opportunities of becoming better acquainted with her brother-in-law, was ready with her answer.

"Thank you," she replied, "I shall be very glad to become a member. I shall know no one, but I suppose that will be all the better."

"Oh, yes," replied Miss Stevens, "I will introduce you, and you'll find most of the people very nice. The club opens on Saturday, May we hope to see you?"

"I'll call there, I will try to come," said Susie.

"Then I'll look out for you," replied her visitor. "Good-bye."

CHAPTER III.

Down by the River.

"Kindness by secret sympathy is tied,
For noble souls in nature are allied."

DREYER.

The opening day of the new tennis club was as regards weather, all the members could wish, and a gayer sight was not to be seen on the banks of the Mersey. Ladies in bright attire, and gentlemen in flannels and blazers, strolled about on the grass near the courts, while sin, and oak, and ash formed a picturesque and refreshing background.

The presence of the rector, who opened the club, in no way lessened the hilarity of the young people; his geniality won him the goodwill of all. Religion was to Mr. Buchanan no gloomy thing. He believed that the followers of Christ should "rejoice in the Lord always," and enjoy to the full, recreations which our conscience tells us Christ would approve.

Miss Stevens kept her promise to Mrs. Kingsley, introducing her to several others, having done what she considered her duty, she flitted off to the more congenial spirits, and but once again during the afternoon beamed on Susie, and "hoped she was enjoying herself."

It was to Gordon Buchanan that Susie's thanks were due for the pleasure of the day. He introduced her to those he thought would be of kindred tastes; and though he showed her no pronounced attention, and only played twice in the same set with her, he was always somewhere near when she was beginning to feel lonely.

Two, with strawberries and cream, was served under the trees, the ladies having undertaken to provide this luxury. More games followed, and it was not until nine o'clock that the party prepared to separate.

As Susie and two other players were leaving the court, Gordon and the curate joined them.

"Which way are you ladies going?" enquired Gordon.

"Into the Palestone Road," was the answer.

"Won't you come round by the river? It's much pleasanter," he asked. "You have not seen our peculiar stream, Mrs. Kingsley," he added,turning to Susie.

"Only in the distance. It looks pretty."

"Ah! the enchantment dissolves on a nearer view. I would advise you, if you wish to keep your present impression, to go round by the road," remarked Mr. Lucas, the curate, in the tones of one suffering from the clerical affection which has been described as a "steeple in the throat."

"Nonsense, Lucas," replied Gordon, "you don't expect to find Rhine and Arno turning Lancashire cotton mills! The Mersey's not half bad, considering the past it passes in the world."

"Oh, if the ladies desire it, I am quite willing. I have seen it too often for my feelings to receive any shock."

So the river bank was decided on.

The path was narrow, and Mr. Lucas, as escort to the two Miss Farrers, led the way, Gordon and Susie following.

"Now, Mrs. Kingsley, isn't this preferable to the road?" asked Gordon.

"indeed it is. The water is not very clear, but it looks cool, and the trees dipping down to the brink make it quite picturesque."

"What do you think of our club and the people?" asked Gordon.

"Oh, I enjoyed the tennis very much, and I like the people, they seem so sociable."

"Yes, most of them are. Some are stuck-up and
How strange it seemed to Susie to be standing at the door of her husband's home, with his brother.

"How strange it seemed to Susie to be standing at the door of HER husband's home, with HIS brother.

...
"He died a year-and-a-half ago," answered Gordon, not noticing the abruptness of his companion's question. "He had been abroad for twelve months, and was coming home on a visit, when he was taken ill on his journey, from London, and died in the train. It was a sad ending to a bright young life. I would give something to have him back again. We didn't hit it very well, and the fault was mostly mine."

Gordon had a tender, affectionate nature, which, being somewhat ashamed of, he generally managed to conceal. Now unconsciously he was showing his real self to this new friend. As he recalled his quarrels with his younger brother, and felt how differently he would have acted had he known that brother's life was so soon to be cut off, his feelings were very sore, and many buttercups lost their heads from the lashing of his racquet before Gordon was calm again.

For the moment he was utterly oblivious of his companion; then, as he regained his self-command and turned towards her, to his surprise he found her in tears.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Kingsley," he said, in deep concern. "I ought not to have told you this. I forgot that you, too, had had recent trouble," and he glanced at her mourning dress.

"Indeed, Mr. Buchanan," Susie managed to say, "it is I who should apologize for being so weak."

"Good-bye. May the future be brighter for you than the past has been."
They had just come in sight of the road which crosses the river, and as they neared it they saw the curate and his companions awaiting them on the bridge. By mutual but silent consent all traces of agitation were left on the river bank, and no young fellow ever talked more nonsense than did Mr. Gordon Buchanan during the next fifteen minutes.

CHAPTER IV.

The Motto and the Candle.

"Oh, fatal Love! Thy wraith is nightshade all,
With gloomy cypress wave, thy kiss is bitter gall,
Oh, fatal Love!"

That night Gordon felt an intense contempt for himself, and addressed himself in a more moderate language.

"Well, Gordon Buchanan, you are a ass," he said, as he paced the floor of his bedroom.

"Whos Mrs. Kingsley, that you should show yourself up to her? A woman you've not known many weeks. Hang it all! what a fool she'll think me!"

As the young man continued his pacing, and his denunciation of himself, he vowed for the future to keep away from one who seemed to have a power over him which he did not comprehend.

So the following day he avoided all chance of meeting Mrs. Kingsley by attending the Didsbury Parish Church in the morning, and going to Fallowfield with Fred Entwistle at night.

For two whole evenings he abstained from going near the tennis club, and congratulated himself on the strength of his will. The third evening, however, found him on the courts.

"Why should I stay away?" he had said to himself, severely.

"Am I a man, or a personification of weakness? I'll go, and play the fool no more!"

So he went, and divided his attention between the entrance gate and the game, with the result that he lost more sets than he won. Had he only known, the lady for whom he watched was at that moment playing at the very house to which he had been invited, but had declined to go for reasons of his own.

"Come up and have some tennis," Fred Entwistle had said that morning.

"Thanks! I think I ought to go to the club. I've not been there since Saturday," he had replied.

Somewhere that night Gordon found the game slow, and left earlier than usual.

"You're not off, Buchanan?" called one of the players, as Gordon put on his coat.

"Yes, I'm off, and so is tennis," said Gordon. "I'm in bad form to-night!"

"Why, what's wrong, old man?" asked his friend as he joined him.

"Nothing, thanks, but I feel as flat as a bottle of stale pop!"

Flat and limp Gordon Buchanan looked as he dawdled along the road towards home. Just as he reached the turning into the high road, he suddenly stiffened up, and walked as if the whole world belonged to him.

Coming down on the opposite side was a lady in a white blouse, who, on seeing him, at once crossed over.

"Good evening, Mr. Buchanan!"

"Ah," said Mrs. Kingsley. "Gordon, I need not repeat, trying to be cool and distant, but succeeding very badly.

"You'll be sorry to hear Mr. Fred Entwistle has sprained his ankle," said Mrs. Kingsley. "I've just returned from spending the evening at Oakleigh."

"Indeed! I'm sorry to hear that. How did it happen?" he asked, as he turned back with you to Palm Avenue, for I have a message for our gardener."

His spontaneous ingenuity astonished himself. Vows and good intentions had gone to the winds.

"He was jumping a fence to get one of the balls," explained Mrs. Kingsley. "in answer to Gordon's question, and his foot must have twisted on a tree stump. I hope it won't be very serious, but it seemed to give him a good deal of pain at the time."

"Poor old Fred! I must lock him up to-morrow. And so you have been playing tennis at Oakleigh, Mrs. Kingsley, and neglecting your club!"

"Not neglecting, Mr. Buchanan. I did not vow and declare I would play nowhere else."

"They were just turning into Palm Avenue."

"And they did," said Gordon. "I think you lodge with the Brittons."

"Yes, I have lived with them since I came to England."

"And you live at Palm Avenue?"

"Yes, my brother thinks a lot of Britton. He is a good gardener, and so trustworthy."

Having reached the house, Mrs. Britton came in response to the ring, and was somewhat astonished to see Mrs. Kingsley's companion.

"Is your husband in, Mrs. Britton?" he asked.

"Yes, if you're in time."

"No, thanks; I'll just have a word with him here."

"Oh, come in, Mr. Buchanan," urged Susie.

Just then Britton, hearing a strange voice, came himself to the door.

"Why, Mr. Gordon, this is a honour! Aye, but you must come in at a bit," said the old man, his bearing face testifying to the sincerity of his welcome.

Thus entreated, Gordon went into the comfortably heated, with its shining tiles and spotted hearth, and sat down by the garden fire, and gazed at the brazier which he had intended to have a definite message for the gardener.

Fred Entwistle's accident did not prove so serious as was at first expected, but it kept him at home for more than a week, during which time he was what his sisters called "down." Mrs. Entwistle thought it intolerable to him, and the least pain unbearable.

Not being very fond of reading, he wanted amusing continually, and it was a great relief to his sisters when a friend came in to sit with him. Gordon went many times, and generally succeeded in couching his friend into good humour.

The Sunday but one after the accident, Susie walked over to Oakleigh, taking Ediea with her. It was the first day Fred had been allowed out, and all the family were waiting in the garden for him. As usual, Ediea was the centre of attraction. To the invalid she was as a new plaything, and in his semi-crippled condition he enjoyed having her little plump arms round his neck, and her little fat hands stroking his face, and patting his hair. But when Gordon Buchanan appeared, baby forsake her first love, and greeted her new friend with loud demonstrations of delight.

As the big blue eyes of the little child looked fearlessly into his, Gordon was struck with a familiar something in her expression.

Where had he seen such a look? Who was the child like?

For days afterwards the baby's face haunted him, but he did not even ask for an answer to his questioning thoughts. A rather unusual nervousness and depression seemed to be putting him down to earth, and changing him from the clubbable, cool, and athletic, to a nervous, self-pitying man.

He had foretold a rainy summer, but the early days of May and June had promised a denial to the prophecy. Now, however, the weather broke, and dull, wet weeks dampened the spirits of all but the most persistently cheerful. Even Susie saw little of Gordon Buchanan those days, but so encouraged was she, by the successful working of her plan, that the final attainment of her hopes seemed assured.

The more she saw of Gordon the better she liked him, and the more sure she felt of his future help and sympathy.

Looking upon him as one whom she hoped soon to greet as a dear brother, she was completely blind to the fact that, not knowing what she knew, Gordon was entertaining feelings and hopes in regard to her which could never be realised, and would only bring him pain and disappointment when the truth became known.

Never dreaming of any such possibility, Susie persisted in her endeavors to please him, bringing about a result that added happiness to her own cross, and shedding the life of one whom she loved with a sister's affection.

So the sorrow, born of Hedley's thoughtless selfishness,
which had left his wife and child friendless and alone, was being passed on in further trouble to the innocent.

CHAPTER V.

"Mid the Christmas Snow.

"Joy so seldom weaves a chain
Like this to-night, that oh! 'tis pain
To break its links so soon."

SUMMER had passed, and autumn also. Greta Buchanan was now the wife of Dr. Donald Dewar, and her home was a pretty ivy-covered villa not ten minutes' walk from Sandycliffe. A housekeeper presided over the home of her brothers, but it was long before Greta could give up the reins of government there, and

Both Miss Buchanan and the doctor were well known and liked in the village, and many of those congregated had entered the church from real interest, though many more had come from mere curiosity.

Susie was among the former, for except for the chance meeting in the cemetery, she had not yet seen Greta. Very sweet and beautiful Susie thought she looked, in her ivory satin dress and orange blossom; and Dr. Dewar never looked so proud and handsome as when he stood by the side of his stately bride.

"I can't stay at home and keep meeting her," he said. "I shall go right away, Greta."

"I shall go right away, Greta."

"I can't stay at home and keep meeting her," he said. "I shall go right away, Greta."

Sandycliffe saw almost as much of its former mistress as did Dunedin Villa.

Susie had learnt from Gordon the day and hour of his sister's marriage, so she stole in with the crowd that always thronged to see a pretty wedding.

She could not help contrasting him with the easy-going, handsome Gordon, to whom care seemed only a fabulous monster.

While she pondered, the words of the beautiful hymn broke upon her ears:
The voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest wedding day,
The primal marriage blessing,
It hath not pass'd away.

"O spread Thy pure song o'er them,
Let no ill power find place.
When earth to Thine allowness
The bellowed path they trace.

To cast their crowns before Thee
In perfect sacrifice,
Tell in the home of gladness
With Christ's own Bride they rise!"

Then the solemn words were spoken "Until death we do part" the organ boomed out the grand old march, the bells clanged in the high tower, and while bride and bridegroom ran the gauntlet of rice and old shoes, the bride of only a few months, and now a widow, slept quietly away, and hurrying home, lived over again that memorable day begun in the English Church at Algiers, and ended among the magnolias in the beautiful gardens of the Oliva.

"Sorrow's crown of suffering" was Susie's then. Remembering her own happy day, how grey and drear seemed all the present and future. A well-known writer has said "The severity of a wound is never felt till its immediate effects have passed away." There is first an instinctive effort at resistance, mingled with the hard, stern joy all brave spirits feel in every kind of strife; then follows a dead sensation of superstition, the dull, as it were, before the storm; afterwards comes a dark, strange interval, then the smarting gash, the piercing agony which wrings those most severely who clothe their teeth and scorn to wince or cry aloud beneath the torture.

Gretta had been a wife more than three months and the brothers, having sworn to see her absence from their home, missed her more and more.

"Gordon, I think I shall sell this place," Nigel said, one night as they sat together before retiring to rest.

"Why what's wrong?" asked the brother.

"Everything's wrong. The servants are continually falling out and giving notice, and Mrs. Smith doesn't seem as if she could manage them at all. And what's the use of two bachelor fellows living in a big place like this? If I don't sell it I must get married," said Nigel, speaking as if he meant it.

"Good for you, Buchanan!" exclaimed Gordon, tilting his chair to a dangerous angle, and laughing as if the idea was a huge joke. "Then I'll follow your excellent example, and we'll have a double-barrelled affair—it will save servants."

But Nigel was not joking. He was worried to death, and getting married seemed the only way out of his difficulties. Meals were seldom ready in time, the warming water was brought up half-cold, shirts were often missed, buttons, and in a hundred ways his sister's absence was felt. The management of the servants had always been left to Gretta, and although the housekeeper now was supposed to superintend such matters, she was continually appealing to Nigel to interfere, for the old servants resented the rule of a stranger, and were constantly in a state of insubordination.

Gordon's conversation with his brother made him thoughtful. "If Nigel brings a wife to Sandyclif, I must clear out, so I may as well do it first as last," he thought. "I believe Susie Kingsley cares for me. I declare I'll know my fate before I'm many days older."

Gordon had frequently spoken of Mrs. Kingsley to his brother and sister when he first became acquainted with her, but as he became conscious that she was of more than ordinary interest to him, he had ceased to mention her name.

Someone has said, "A man never appears to such disadvantage as in the presence of the woman he loves."

Certainly this was the case with Nigel. Susie, whom he had been able to be free and natural with Gordon, thus perhaps appearing to greater advantage than other ladies of his acquaintance with deeper designs.

However it was, Gordon was caught in the meshes of a love net, all the stronger for being a strange and new experience.

It was Christmas Eve. The earth was robed in wintry whiteness, and as the moon shone on the untrodden snow it shone also on a group of carol-singers as they gathered about the rectory door.

"Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel."

Their voices rang out on the clear, frosty air, and massed a lonely farm-house, and many a distant cottage caught the echo of the Christmas-visit.

They were evidently expected at the rectory, for presently the door opened and the rector himself appeared, and by-and-by the whole party were gathering themselves with hot coffee and mince pies in the rector's dining-room.

"Now eat and drink all you can, for you've cold work before you," said the rector. "Mr. Lucas, how do you expect to be fit for duty to-morrow?"

"I have hopes that my rector will not be very hard on me; the under-shepherd must needs keep the sheep from straying," was the curate's most clerical reply.

It was indeed the curate who had proposed this carol-singing as a means of raising money for a new harmonium for the mission-room in connection with the church. The idea had been taken up heartily by the young people, in many cases more for the fun they meant to get out of it than from the real desire to see the mission-room was supplied, and by the night of that day all those who had consecrated their voices to God's service.

"Take my voice, and let me sing,
Ever, only, for my King."

was the prayer of many. Among these was Susie Kingsley.

Madge Stevens, who sang an indifferent soprano, was one of the party, and Gordon Buchanan, with his tenor voice, was indispensable.

All the houses of the wealthy members of the church were visited, then at Gordon's request they went to Sandycliffs.

How strange it seemed to Susie to be standing at the door of her husband's home, and actually along with her brother, and yet never to have crossed the threshold or to be known as Hedley's wife.

The humiliates must have been sleeping very soundly, or have been too comfortable to disturb themselves, for the singers had used their voices considerably before they succeeded in rousing them.

The verse sung fortissimo,

"But back the wondrous music,
Falls from the opening sky;
Valley and hill everything sparkles with light,
Glory to God on high!
Glory to God it rings again,
Peace on the earth! good-will to men."

caused a window to be thrown open, and a man's voice called out:

"Why can't you let a fellow sleep, and awake him at reasonable hours?"

It was Nigel. He had heard of the carol-singing, but had not expected to be favoured with a visit.

Wrapping half-a-sovereign in a piece of paper, he threw it among the group.

Thanks, awfully. Is that to go into the next street called Gordon's?"

"Yes; good-night," answered back the gentleman in the robe de chambre, as he shut down the window.

Sandycliffs was the last place of call, and after gathering round the curate, who was treasurer, and counting their spoils, the singers dispersed to their various homes. Nigel himself to see Susie to her lodgings, having determined that that night should decide his fate.

It was an ideal winter night, and though the moon had hidden herself behind some wandering clouds, the white snow which lay on everything sparkled with light. Midnight silence reigned in the village, and Gordon
He still spoke in very bitter tones, as if he hated the thing he called himself.

But Gordon seemed turned to stone. His face was white and his lips set.

"Could this be true? And had this woman—his brother's wife—been drawing him on, wilfully deceiving him? It could not be; yet from her own lips had come the confession."

At last, guessing his thoughts, Susie went on:

"Gordon—as a brother, I may call you, may I not?—you will think I have been acting the hypocrite, and been wilfully deceiving you; in one sense I have, but, God knows, not in another. I wanted to win a brother's love from you, and meant to win a place in all your hearts for Hedley's child before I ventured to make myself known.

"Doubtful wisdom, you will probably say. Possibly it was, but my motives were pure, and my child's good my aim. Had I known the wrong I was doing you, I had died rather. Forgive me, Gordon! I have been blind, wickedly blind; the burning desire I had to see my child righted obscured all other thoughts."

When she had finished Gordon said, in a voice hoarse with suppressed feeling:

"I wish you had trusted me with your secret before: it would have spared us both much pain. Instead of a brother's love you have won from me the love which a man has for the woman he would make his wife. But I will not blame you."

"Good-night, Susie," he said, as they reached Palm Avenue. "You may trust me to do what I can towards righting you and your child. Good-bye, may the future be brighter for you than the past has been."

So with a pressure of the hand they parted, never to meet again for long, long years, and another thread of a tangled web was snipped in twain.
CHAPTER VI.
An Attack on the Cars.

"A kindly deed for another's need,
Brings a blessing, and God's good speed."

NE night in the summer of '87, as the cars were speeding across the States from Chicago to Denver, a sudden stop on the loneliest part of the track roused the sleeping passengers, and filled them with a nameless terror.

"A case of chaff!" explained one and another, as they peered round the curtains of their uncomfortable shelf-beds.

They had not long to wonder, however, for masked and armed men had boarded the cars, and every passenger's life and property were at their mercy.

Taken at so great a disadvantage the travellers had little chance. Leaping from their shelves in the darkness, they seized the first article they could lay hands on, and used it as a weapon of defence, while shouts and scuffling were heard on all sides. But the odds were against them, and while some of the marauders kept the passengers at bay, others were rifting the luggage, and before they left the cars the men had possessed themselves of all money and jewellery. No lives were taken, but two of the occupants of one car were seriously injured, one it seemed with little hope of recovery. He was a man of about forty. A deep wound was in his temple, and his hair and shirt brown beard were matted with blood.

"Conductor, is there no doctor on the cars?" called out a much younger man, who was bending over the unconscious form, vainly endeavouring to staunch the blood, "the fellow is going to death!"

Fortunately a doctor was found, and the wound was dressed as well as circumstances would allow. But the jolting of the cars was fearful, and all day and night the man moaned in pain. His companion, who did not look more than twenty-four or five, tended him anxiously, and it seemed to him as if Denver would never be reached.

Thanks to a splendid constitution and the care of his friend, before they arrived at their destination the wounded man had recovered consciousness, and was able to give instructions to the nasal himself and his luggage, and in a short time the two friends were lodged in a comfortable boarding-hotel in the City of Denver.

"Who's under obligations now, Will, I'll like to know?" asked the wounded man, as lying comfortable on a couch and watching the movements of his young friend.

"Oh, I've a lot of things; nothing else would have looked after you if I hadn't been there."

"Would they, though? I'm not so sure of that; I'm glad I wasn't left to their tender mercies. Anyway, I can't make out how you were spared; you'll have to stay here. What luckily fellows those chaps were! I've one satisfaction. I gave two of them a taste of my fist, and in a manner they won't soon forget."

And the memory of the dead was as a sweet melodic to the recumbent man.

Looking at the older man there is something familiar in his appearance. In spite of the short brown beard, and the grave look which tells that care is no longer a fabled monster, those expressive eyes and that pleasant smile can only belong to Gordon Buchanan.

Fifteen years have passed since he left his home in Manchester. His love for Susie had been strong and deep, and that memorable Christmas when his hopes had been quenched and his life shadowed, he had gone to his sister and told her the tangled story.

"I can't stay at home and keep meeting her," he had said; "I shall go right away, Greta. I'll tell Nigel I'm going to take a holiday, and you can tell him what you like when I'm gone."

He had kept his sister's promise that Susie and her child should be loved and cared for, he had packed up and gone off the following day.

For eight years he had knocked about the States, never settling long in one place, and having the ups and downs of the gilded weeks and the blacker ones. But fortunately, and "ups" were mostly his lot. His good looks and pleasant manners won him friends wherever he went. He was now a well-to-do, well respected business man in Denver, having for nearly seven years made this city his home.

The one and only mill in the place, of which he was managing director, had been built under his supervision, and the tall chimney belched forth its black smoke to the spoil of the beautiful white stone buildings, and the violation of the hitherto unpolluted air. But such is the world's greed, and such the spirit of competition that pure air and bright clean buildings are matters of small importance.

Gordon had been visiting Chicago, that modern Sodom, where it is said a man's life can be had for a dollar. While there he had rescued his present companion from the numerous land-sharks that are always ready to pounce upon young English greenhorns.

Gordon had been in their clutches once, and he had a feeling, and when he came across his young countryman, mule of his all, with despair and desperation written on his face, he took him under his protection.

"Buchanan, I've had enough of this," said the young fellow a few weeks after their arrival in Denver. "You can't shatter the invalid any longer, and I'm not going to live on you another day."

He was no sponger, this fair young Englishman; he possessed the national characteristics to a large degree. Grateful to his friend for his timely sympathy and aid, and glad to have been of some use to him, now that his help was no longer needed, his independence revoluted against living on a stranger's generosity.

All right, men, all right, but you're in a mighty hurry. Where are you going? and what are you going to do? if such questions are not too impertinent," added Gordon, in a half-joking tone.

He had no intention of letting this young fellow slip back into temptation if he could help it, and he knew his object would be frustrated if he approached too near his pride.

"Oh, I don't know. I'll go on a ranch," was the reply to Gordon's question.

"Well, if you're not particular, I wish you'd come and help me at the mill. I want a fellow I can depend on, and you're just the chap," said Gordon.

"Oh, am I? How do you know? You just say that because you want to keep me here. How do you know but what I shall rob you of your money in bitter tones. Wrong done by him and him in Chicago were still fresh in his memory, and he felt this stranger had no right to trust him.

"Well, of course, I don't know, but I'll chance it," replied Gordon. "You're not the right sort of face for a villain, Will—even when you're in the blues," he added, trying to shuff away his friend's despondent mood. "Well, what do you say?"

"Why, I'll come if you really want me to, but take care you don't lose your bargain. You know nothing about a mill. And if you hand the lot of your safety picked some money, you'll get paid for trusting a stranger."

He still spoke in very bitter tones, as if he hated and abhorred the thing he called himself.

All right, old man, I'll risk it," said Gordon. "But come along out, the fresh air from the mountains will soon put you in better humour, and I want to show you the Chamberlain Observatory."

CHAPTER VII.
A Madman's Blow.

"Oh, that men should put an enemy in their mouth, to steal away their brains."—Shakespeare.

WILL had been twelve months with Gordon in Denver, taking an active interest in all the workings of the mill. Lucrative and constant employment for mind and body drove away melancholy thoughts and Gordon Buchanan had never had reason to regret his kindly deed, nor the trust he had placed in his stranger.

Though thrown so much together, the young fellow told Will he was not on the best of terms. But Gordon did not press him. "It would come in time," he said, and one evening it came.

They had gone together to spend a week-end at Colorado Springs, and while gazing on some of the most magnificent scenery in the world, Nature's God touched all that was
best and noblest in Will's proud heart, and awakened in him tender thoughts that had been well-nigh stifled for ever.

"Buchanan," he said, as they returned home, "why have you never asked about my 'come from'?

"Because it wasn't my business, and I expected if you wanted me to know you would tell me."

"Well, I do want you to know, for I must go back to my home. If my mother is not breaking her heart for me it is not my fault. I'm her only son, and she is a widow. I left home against her will, though when she saw I was determined to go, she sent me away with everything a fellow could want. With the letters of introduction I had I soon got a good situation in New York, and as long as I was doing well I wrote home regularly. But when I threw up my place with big ideas of bettering myself, I ceased to write. Of course, I went from bad to worse, and may be dead now for all my mother knows."

"That's bad news, Will," said his companion. "A mother's a fellow's best friend, though he seldom finds it out till he loses her. I have often wished my mother had lived, though if she had I dare say I should have valued her no more than other fellows do."

Tailing of home turned Gordon's thoughts to the home-land which he had not seen for fifteen years, and a great longing to return came over him.

After a considerable pause he said:

"I'll tell you what, Will. Suppose we cross the herring-pond together? You've set me longing to see my own people again. I'm a wealthy man, and there's no reason why I should end my days in Denver. I'll chuck up, and go with you. What do you say, old man?"

The very thought of turning his face homewards caused the exile's blood to flow faster, and a vigorous slap on the back of his companion aided the prompt reply:

"Say! Why I guess it will be elegant, if you really mean it."

"Of course, I mean it, mean every word of it."

"Dead sure?"

"Dead sure; here's my hand."

So it was all settled, and the talk for days and weeks was of nothing but of going home.

One night as Gordon was retiring to rest a strange thing happened. He had been thinking out plans for his return, and wondering how he should find those he had left behind in the old country, whether they would know him, and if he should find them much altered, when suddenly, as it seemed, a dark curtain was drawn in front of him, and a voice behind the curtain said:

"You will see your friends, but you have much to suffer first!"

Gordon was not superstitious, and tried to believe that his imagination had played him a trick, but he could not throw off the strange feeling that had come over him, or forget the words that had come so clear and distinct.

"What can it mean?" he asked himself. "I am strong and well. I have plenty of money; we are going to sail in one of the best liners afloat."

And being utterly unable to account for the mysterious visitation, he divested himself of the affair, and in much business almost forgot the incident.

So the weeks went by; they were to sail in August and this was July. One evening when Will came home Gordon noticed he walked with an unsteady step, but he made no remark. A few days later as they were leaving the mill, the young fellow asked Gordon if he could advance him a few dollars.

"Certainly, old man," said Gordon. "I'll go back and get them for you now," and returning together, Gordon opened the safe and took out five or six dollars.
TEMPTATION'S HOUR.

"Will that be enough?" he asked.

"I might as well have the two," was the reply.

Counting out that number, Gordon handed them to him, and nothing further was said. But Gordon was troubled; he felt things were going wrong with his friend, and he instinct quite know how to find, out the secret of the mischief.

It was becoming a regular thing now for Will to come home the worse for drink. He would let himself in with his latch-key, and Gordon would hear him stumbling up the stairs in the early hours of the morning. At last, at the risk of giving offence, Gordon felt he must speak to his companion. How best to do it without losing his influence over him was the question.

One morning, when the stumbling the night before had been more than usual, he called him. They were sitting at breakfast. Will's face had been changing the last few weeks; his eyes now lacked their customary brightness, his hand shook as he passed his cup, and there was a general shoddiness about his every movement.

"You brought home more than you could carry last night, Will. didn't you?" he began.

"What do you mean?" was the sudden reply.

"You know what I mean, Will," said Gordon, gravely.

"What if I do? And what if I do get a glass or two over the mahogany? It's my own business."

"Yes, in one sense, I suppose it is, but in another it is mine, too. I can't see you go to the dogs, Will, without saying a word. It doesn't take long for a decent fellow to lose his self-respect, and once that's gone it's generally all over with him."

"Oh, well, don't preach. You can take a glass yourself, you know, Buchanan."

"Of course I can. I'm no bigoted teetotaler; but there's a difference between taking a glass or two and going over the line."

"Is there? I don't see much."

"Well, I do. Now, the other evening I was at a friend's supper, and was asked what I would have to drink. There were beer, whisky and wine, Burgundy, and other wines. The hostess said, 'Well, I'll have a pint of beer.'"

"Well, I had it, and was pressed to have more. 'No, thank you,' I replied. 'I've had sufficient.' No, Will, you cannot say you ever saw me the worse for drink since you have known me."

Gordon spoke as one well satisfied with himself; he honestly believed he had set his friend an excellent example in the matter of temperance.

"No, I don't think I ever did see you the worse for what you took, but how do you know you'll always be able to stop when you've had enough?"

"Of course I shall; it's just a question of will."

"And how's a fellow to know when he's had enough? I've seen you take three or four glasses. I take the same and stumble upstairs, and I'm drunk. What about? Who's fault is it then that you can carry more than I can?"

Gordon Buchanan had never thought of the matter in this light, and even now refused to see the question from Will's standpoint. But the hang-dog look he saw creeping over his friend reminded him of how he had first seen him in Chicago, pistol in hand, prepared to put an end to himself and his misery.

Breakfast was over, and as they rose from the table, Gordon put his hand on Will's shoulder.

"Will," he said, affectionately, "don't disappoint me, pull yourself together, and be the man you might be, the man you know you've got to be. Let's stop nonsense; we've had enough, stop at two; it only needs a bit of effort and self-control. Let me present a good-looking son to your mother next month. You know drinking doesn't improve a fellow's personal appearance, Will," he added, playfully.

"Well, I will try, Buchanan," replied Will, astonished by his friend's affectionate manner, "but, you see, I haven't got your strong will, and I can't refuse when a fellow asks me. What a baby! I should look if I said, 'No, I've had enough, I'm going to give up.'"

"Yes, and I went to every glass till, as I can stand, half the house had to be bailed out again. It was for months when I first came here, and felt it was my only chance, but when I saw you take your glass like a man, I determined to do the same."

The subject was not alluded to again, though Gordon noticed with pain that his friend now avoided him as much as possible.

But ten days later Will again asked for money, and Gordon, anxious beyond everything to stop his friend's downward career, sought to discover where Will was spending his leisure time. After many cautious enquiries he heard of a second-rate club, of which he was told Will was a member, and his suspicions were confirmed; he thought Gordon could find out little or nothing about the place, even its whereabouts was only discovered after some difficulty.

To go down and present himself would, Gordon knew, be regarded by Will as unjustifiable interference, while to speak to him of the club would lead him to think he had been acting the part of spy. Gordon was troubled, and did not know what to do for the best.

One Wednesday, he always remembered it was Wednesday—at the close of his day's work he sat in his lounge chair, deeply engrossed in Mr. Humphrey Ward's latest work. The scene of the story was laid in his native town of Manchester, and absorbed as he was in the struggles of the ambitious David, he was suddenly conscious of a strange presence in the room, a something which made itself felt by the pressure of the air around him.

"What can it mean?" he asked himself, as he looked round the empty apartment, and the answer to his question seemed to come at once:

"Will!"

For some time now his evenings had been spent alone; this evening was only one of many such. He had talked about the book Which he had talked about the book which he had talked about the book which he had talked about the book which... But the uncomfortable feeling remained, the air seemed to press round him on every side. Could Will be in danger and need him? or is it difficultly:

Finding it impossible to settle down, and with the thought of his friend uppermost in his mind, he put on his coat and went out. He had never seen the club of which Will was a member, but he knew the direction in which it lay, and almost involuntarily his footsteps turned that way.

He reached it without difficulty as if he had been guided and without a thought of the wisdom of his action. Impelled it seemed by an unseen power, he entered the building. Noisy voices led him to a small room at the bottom of a long passage, far enough from the front pines. Mastering his shock at the uproar increased, swears and blasphemous language met his ear, uttered in a tone painfully familiar. As he entered the room his quick eye detected his friend and companion in a drunken frenzy, surrounded by the most odious meaning it had ever been Gordon's chance to look upon.

"Of course, I'm an honourable man! Will was shouting, "I'll pay every cent. Gosh! won't I? Where's that pen?"

A man much more sober than the rest dipped a pen in the ink and handed it to him, along with a piece of paper on which Gordon could easily read the words:

I promise to pay

No one had observed Gordon's entrance, and in a twinkling he had got behind Will, snatched the pen from his shaking hand, broken it across his knee, and crumpled the paper under his heel.

Turning round in astonished anger, Will recognised Gordon.

"Sneaking spy!" he hissed. And with an unexpected blow, the blow of a temporary maniac, he fell his friend to the ground.

"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red... at the mouth it is pleasant, and strong like an adder."

CHAPTER VIII.

Homeward Bound.

"By the brave things thought or spoken,
By the true deeds simply done;
By the mean things crushed and conquered,
And the bloodless battles won;
By the days when the load was heavy,
Yet the heart grew strong to bear,
By the book of the angel's record,
We measure the passing year.
HEN Gordon recovered consciousness he was in his lodgings, and a doctor was bending over him.

“What has happened?” he asked, and putting his hand to his aching head, he felt the tell-tale bandages.

“You've had a nasty fall, friend, that's all,” said the doctor, “but you'll soon be all right.”

Gradually the whole occurrence came back to him.

“Oh, yes, I remember, but where's Will? He struck me, did he not?”

“Yes, I believe he did, the young blackguard; but he's disappeared, and a good thing, too.”

“He's not a blackguard, doctor. He didn't know what was causing a wound in the same place where he had been hurt in the cars on his journey from Chicago.

As he lay on his bed hour after hour, with nothing to do but think, he wondered about his friend, about their arranged journey to England, and what it would all end in; but he seemed incapable of prolonged thought, drowsiness overcame him, and his plan forging ended in sleep. It was the very best thing for him, and on the doctor's next visit he found his patient far better than he expected.

The doctor had taken considerable trouble to ascertain what had become of Will Ellerby, and in answer to Gordon's eager questions, he told him all he had learned.

The sight of his friend, bleeding as it seemed to death, had sobered the young fellow. He had seen to the careful conveying of Gordon to his lodgings, then giving his watch and chain and all that he had of any value to the man to whom he owed money, he had left the place.

“'And did those hell-fiends make him sign that paper?'”

“No; I think the sight of you frightened them, and they cleared off.”

“I suppose I bled like a pig?”

“Well, the gash was pretty deep, but you're getting over it fine; you'll soon be on your legs again.”

“That's good, for I must find Will. You see we sail for England in a fortnight.”

But the end of the fortnight only found Gordon beginning to move about, and as he was determined not to return home until he had made every effort to trace his
friend, he exchanged his ticket, and made arrangements to leave a month later.

That month was spent in a never-ending search. Everything that man could do or thought device was done, but all to no purpose, and with a sad heart Gordon went on board the "Vancouver" to make the journey home—alone.

His heart was heavy, his thoughts were burning into his soul, the scar on his brow felt to him to be the brand of Cain. For had he not led a younger and a weaker brother to spiritual destruction, if not destroyed him body and soul? The conversation they had on the subject of drink all came back to him, and Will's humble words:

"I will try, Buchanan, but you see I have not got your strong will, and I can't refuse when a fellow asks me to take a drink. I ought to stop at a glass, and I can't do it."

"Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.

"It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth... or is made weak.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

"For even Christ pleased not Himself."

As Gordon paced and re-paced the deck, the responsibility of his life and actions towards others faced him as it had never done before.

"What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other?" has said a great writer, and Gordon felt he had made life harder, perhaps for many, certainly for one, and that one a man he loved as a brother.

The days of conversion are not over. When men and women, aided by the search-light of God's love, come to see a habit or a sin, they never saw it before, and turning their backs on the past, resolve to abstain from what they then see to be evil, a change or a conversion has taken place, which from higher to higher may lead them to the crucified and risen Saviour.

"Who died that we might be forgiven, Who died to make us good, That we might go at last to Heaven, Saved by His precious blood."

On that bright September day, with the dancing waves of the broad Atlantic glistening in the sunshine, Gordon turned his back on moderate drinking, and resolved that no one should ever again be led into temptation by seeing him take his glass.

And what about poor Will? Had he left him behind to his fate? No, that were beneath Gordon's noble nature. Will's mother was expecting them, the passage to England was taken, and Gordon felt he had best go as arranged, but the search for Will continued. He had engaged the services of a private detective, friends in Chicago and New York had promised to look out in certain likely quarters, and each would at once communicate any tidings.

Holding himself responsible for this young brother, and doing all in his power to discover him, Gordon never dreamed, even in his most despondent moods, under what tragic circumstances they would once more come face to face.

(TO BE CONTINUED).

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"Oh, Edith, has he not come?" were the mother's anxious words.

CHAPTER I.
A Bitter Disappointment.

"'Tis sweet to turn from our roving path, And find a fireside blessing."
The Death Trap.

No wonder Mrs. Ellerby was restless, for this was to be a very red-letter day in her life, a day when she should rejoice, and say: "My son was dead and is alive again, he is found for me!"

Her husband had died in a foreign land, and with her young son and daughter she came to live in a little country village in Yorkshire, not far from the home of her childhood. Weary with the busi-ness and excitement of travel, and worn out with nursing and anxiety, she was thrown into a sudden and sickening old age life. Yet she forgot that her children could not share her feelings. They had reached the age when a certain amount of excitement is necessary to development, and when superabund-

and energy must find an outlet somewhere and somehow. Mrs. Ellerby, at once, found no scene for his ambitions in the quiet little village of Skirlington. Life flowed slowly in a dull round of monotony, one day passing much the same as another. The advent of a stranger walking through its irregular street formed gossip for the proverbial nine days, and unless something occurred to divert the channel of its thoughts, for even longer.

The daily visits to Hull, twelve miles away, where Bill Ellerby drew a pen in an accountant's office in High Street, only showed up village life to greater disadvantage.

The docks and the splendid shipping in the seaport town were a fascination to him. All his spare time was spent wandering about the wharves and出cutting quays, or chatting with the sailors, who drew considerably on their imagination when telling him of the countries they had visited far over the seas. With an air of superior knowledge he would treat his mother and sister, shut up in the sleepy village, to stories of the Dardanelles and the Black Sea, painted up from the foreign sailors who crowded the docks.

His mother listened with a sore heart, and when she saw that her boy would never settle, she gave consent to his going home, and, with the help of friends, obtained him a being in a New York shipping house.

So he left the shelter of his mother's home, to find he knew not what. But six years are but as yesterday to a mother's love, and today, as Mrs. Ellerby puts the many small touches, and strays and rearranges the flowers that are to greet the home-comer, her heart seems to say to all around—"Smile a lovely welcome on my boy!"

From the window to the porch, and from the porch to the garden gate, and then back to the window, she paces, eager to catch the first glimpse of Bobbie's earring as he turns the corner of the village street.

As Edith expected, she was in plenty of time at the station, and the postman, as a woman, was a strong objection to the expenses of the railway over the country meadows, and when the engine came into sight Bobbie's ears became erect, and there was nothing for it but to turn the phaeton round, and Edith to stand by her pony and read. With his back to his fears, Bobbie's courage increased, but Edith's anticipations were behind her, and only by straining her neck could she see the passengers that alighted from the train. It was now a sun-burned farmer, who exchanged a pleasant "Good-day" as he passed her, and out-of-date vehicles, or chattels from the village, well loaded with spools from Hull market; and again a young girl returning home with her school-books slung in a strap. There was a word of greeting from all, but Edith, absorbed in her own affairs to-day, was no more of her.

It was the market train, and there were a good many passengers, but Edith scanned in vain for her brother. One stranger there was, dark, tall, and bearded.

He had some luggage, and was evidently looking as if he expected to meet someone. But apparently there was no one. At length he went to the station-master, and after a few minutes' conversation, came down the sloping path and crossed the road to where Edith was standing.

"Have I the pleasure of speaking to Miss Ellerby?" he asked, raising his hat.

"I am Miss Ellerby," said Edith, too surprised for further remark.

Then putting out his hand, the stranger introduced himself.

"I am Gordon Buchanan, your brother's friend; and, therefore, I hope, yours, Miss Ellerby."

"But I don't understand," replied Edith.

"Did you not get my letter?" enquired Gordon, anxiously.

"Only the one that told us you and Willie were sailing from New York in August; and then the telegram came—say you would arrive in Hull about four o'clock. We could not understand why we did not hear again, and mother has been so anxious all these weeks. But where is Willie, Mr. Buchanan? Has he stayed in Hull?"

There was doubt and fear in Edith's eager tones, for the explanation of the stranger was far from reassuring.

"I am sorry to tell you, Miss Ellerby, that your brother has not returned from America with me. "Do not be alarmed," he added, seeing Edith paling at his words.

"I have no reason to believe but that your brother is alive and well. He left me some weeks ago, without my knowing where he was going, and though I have done everything I could to find out his whereabouts, up to the present time I have not been successful. I wrote something of this in a letter which must have miscarried. In that letter I stated that I was coming direct to your mother, to ease her mind, and tell her particulars I could not well put on paper. I am exceedingly sorry you have not received my letter. I hope your mother will not look upon my coming as an intrusion?"

"Oh, no, indeed she will not. In Willie's letter he said he had asked you to come home with him; he wanted to have you to mother and me. He told us what a friend you had been to him, Mr. Buchanan. We were both glad to have the opportunity of meeting you. It is very good of you coming now to us, though I don't yet quite understand about Willie. But let us go home, for we are anxiously waiting. They will send up your luggage from the station if you tell them to, and neither Bobbie nor the carriage are equal to the load."

Having given the necessary instructions, Gordon took his seat beside Edith, and presently they were bowling along the country road at Bobbie's usual pace, a steady ten miles an hour, the steady, unerring, jog-trot. There was a crispness in the air, a tinge of russet brown leaves lying in heaps by the hedgerows, the sun was beginning to sink in a glow of crimson glory, and as the returned exile looked around on the autumn beauty, there was gratitude in his heart, to the God who had brought him safely through perils by land and by sea, and spared him to see his native land once more.

"Now round red rocks stand russet stacks above; Homeward from gleaning in the stubby wheat; High overhead the harsh rick saileth slow, And the sunbeams have acres of golden glow. And as the sunset saddens in the west, Funeral mist comes creeping down the dale, And widowed autumn weeps behind her veil."

The mist was gathering round the pony phaeton and its occupants as they neared the village with its red-tiled cottages and cobbled pavements. Conspicuous at the corner where four roads met were the white-washed walls and swinging sign of the Black Bull, and further on in the middle of the principal thoroughfare was the Welcome Inn—acceptable grating with hospitable intent. Two other houses, Gordon afterwards learned, "Licensed to sell intoxicating liquors," supplied the supposed needs of this sweet little English village, whose population num-

bered less than four hundred. Shame on our English laws, you imbeciles on the throne, for allowing—"

At sight of the swinging sign, Gordon's thoughts turned to the scene in that secret club-house in Denver, and his last sight of his friend, as he stood with his raised glass and flushed face, surrounded by those debouchings.

"I am concerned about your mother, Miss Ellerby," said Gordon. "I am, when I think how much the village, and we were once more in the open country. How shall we beat the news to her? Will the sight of me alone be too much for her?"

"I fear it might," answered Edith, hesitating.

"Indeed, however we break the news, it will be a great shock, she had been so well on Wilie's mind, and Mr. Buchanan, I think I will go on first. She will then think you have missed the train; and I will gradually explain matters to her. You might come to the house about a little while. If you are sure you don't mind, she..."
add it. It seemed so strange a way to welcome this new friend.

"Not in the least," replied Gordon. "I would spare your mother all possible pain."

Edith pointed out the house with her whip, then leaving Gordon on the high road, she continued her drive, putting on an unconcerned air in order to disarm her mother's fears.

When they had first decided to leave America together, Will had persuaded Gordon to go home with him for a short time before proceeding to Manchester. A few days or weeks were of little moment to Gordon Buchanan, who had no mother's anxiety to allay, and he had agreed to his friend's proposal.

After Will's disappearance, and when every effort had been made to trace him, and Gordon had been compelled to return to England alone, he had written to Mrs. Ellerby, stating that it was probable his son would not be able to return with him after all, but that he (Gordon) would come to Skirlington and explain matters. He thought this was the kindest and best plan, so packing up Will's belongings with his own, he prepared for his journey. But the letter he had so carefully written never reached Mrs. Ellerby.

Will's letters home had been full of praise of his friend, and Mrs. Ellerby felt she could not too warmly welcome him, but it was for her long-lost son she waited and longed.

"Oh, Edith, has he not come?" were the mother's anxious words as her daughter drove up to the door alone.

"No, mother dear; but his friend, Mr. Buchanan, was at the station, and is coming on here. He says Willie has been detained in America," and Edith spoke in a manchusian manner, with no trace of anxiety in her tone.

"Edith," and the mother looked full in her daughter's face, "do you believe he is coming home?"

"Edith, are you sure he is coming home?"

She uttered the last words with great effort, while her hand was pressed against her heart to still the pain, but she felt she must know the worst.

"Indeed, mother darling, I am telling you the truth.

The last time Mr. Buchanan saw Willie was in good health, and eagerly looking forward to coming home. But when Mrs. Ellerby, he had been driven to come back."

"I am afraid he was led astray, and lost his way, and money difficulties, and did not like to come back," explained Gordon, giving part of the truth. "He was a general favourite, and trusted everybody. But do not trouble too much, dear Mrs. Ellerby. I do not think you will go very far wrong; he has too good a heart. I have arranged with a friend to try and find out where he is, and to let me know at once if he hears anything. I love Will as a brother, and if you will let me, I will be to you as a son until I can restore your own boy to you again."

Mrs. Ellerby sat motionless; for the moment she was stunned. The sudden turn from the excitement of expectancy to this dull uncertainty was almost more than she could bear.

But she knew on whom she could cast her burden. Many had been her trials and tribulations, yet was her faith not shaken; her confidence in God was still strong and unwavering.

Only with this confidence can any of us hope to meet and brave successfully the sorrows and conflicts that come to us all.

No mother pleaded more earnestly for her wandering boy's return than did Mrs. Ellerby that night, when she bowed her knees in thankfulness for all past mercies, and prayed in trust for all that were to come.

"Still will we trust, though earth seem dark and dreary,
And the heart faint beneath his chastening rod,
Though rough and steep our pathway, worn and weary,
Still will we trust in God."
Rs. Ellery begged Gordon to stay a week or two at Woodside Cottage; his presence seemed to give her strength and hope, and made the return of her boy seem a nearer and more certain thing; and she never tired of hearing how well he was. After a visit of a week, he was discharged. Within a few days, the sight of the road was enough to make her think of Gordon, and feel the loss of his presence.

Mrs. Ellery readily agreed to the proposal, and before the freshness of the morning had passed, the two were seated in the phaeton, en route for the sea. The wooded road past the Rise Woods, whose dark, impenetrable shades seldom saw the light of the sun; through the picturesque village or Suggleshorne, with its ivy-covered hall and church, and its well-worn streets, and the old oak on the Cliffe Hill, where the lassies used to sit and look out to sea, and the beggars' cottage, where the beggar's hand was always ready for food. It was a delightful drive, for the weather was perfect, and Bobbie jogged along as if she knew pleasure was the only business on hand.

Arrived at Hornsea, comfortable stabling was found for the pony, and as Mrs. Ellery had friends to call on, Gordon and Edith proceeded alone to the shore.

Edith had forgotten how "awfully old" Mr. Buchanan was; their efforts to cheer Mrs. Ellery, and keep from her anything that would add to her anxiety, had drawn them, all three, into the path of trouble and the hardships of life.

For fifteen years Gordon had had little of ladies' society; circumstances and his own desire had thrown him mostly among men. His deep feeling for Susan had shut out all thought of other love. Now thrown so close together, with society constantly about him, he had undergone a reaction, and in dreamy moments he again saw love and home in the distant somewhere.

The sea was bright and sunny, and the little waves danced at their feet on the sandy shore. For some time they communed on themselves Gordon's instruction in the art of shining pebbles; then tiring of this, they left the beach and climbed the cliffs.

"Those cliffs don't look very safe," remarked Gordon, as, walking along the narrow footpath, he noticed how the soil had fallen away in many places, leaving only an overhanging ledge. "No, they are very unsafe in places," replied Edith; "the sea is rapidly encroaching on this coast. At Runcorn, a few miles further north, the foundations of the entire village gave way once, and every cottage but one was overwhelmed. At Gibraltar, as far as we can tell, the cliff is going away, and the drowned bells are said to ring always before a storm. But the most curious story is one that the very old people here tell. A large mound, known as the Goblin Hill, existed for years on a promontory somewhere near this coast. A Saxon warrior was supposed to be buried beneath it, and it was quite mysterious. One night, a woman, returning home late from a neighbouring farm, saw a spectral skeleton standing on the mound, clothed in a vestment of gold that shone like the sun. The next day the mound had disappeared, no trace of it being left. She related the story to the woman, who had seen the spectre; and her husband suddenly became quite rich. No one knew why. It was rumoured that a silversmith in Hull had bought from a man in the East Riding a curious casket of pure gold. The owner of the land on which had been the burial mound made inquiries, and the husband confessed that after hearing the wife's story, he had gone the next morning, and finding that the cliff had given way, and the Goblin Hill disappeared, he had dug among the fallen earth, and there found a complete skeleton, wearing a casket of pure gold embossed with ornaments. He had secretly buried the skeleton, and appropriated the gold."

"A most interesting story, and, allow me to say, very well told, Miss Ellery," said Gordon. "It seems to have been a common custom in many countries to inter warrior chieftains within sound of the sea. Homer mentions it, and we read how the Saxon Beowulf commanded that he should be thus buried, and that the sea-sailors may afterwards call the Beowulf's Burrow."

"I think we had better return, for fear mother might be looking for us," said Edith, after they had gone some distance. "So they retraced their steps, still talking of the many traces Saxon and Dane have left on the Yorkshire coast."

They had almost reached the point from which they started, when Gordon, forgetting the insecurity of the cliffs, turned to look; he felt a sudden feeling of the still giving way beneath his feet, he jumped back, and the wind seized him, and in doing so his foot caught the edge of a stall, and on trying to regain his balance, found he was unable to stand.

"Mr. Buchanan, I'm afraid you've hurt yourself," exclaimed Edith, who had been further away from the edge of the cliff, and she hurried down to Gordon's assistance.

"Oh, it's only a bit of a sprain, I expect. I dare say it will be all right directly."

Edith could see that Gordon was faint, and suffering great pain. Quickly unfastening his boot, she ran, and dipping her handkerchief in the sea, she bathed his foot.

The pain got a little easier, but Gordon was unable to walk on, and Edith, now felt that something must be done. They were far from the town, and there was no
chance of getting any vehicle where they were. Gordon himself was the first to solve the problem.

"Now, Miss Ellerby," he said, "what are you going to do with me? If it had been you instead of me, I should have played my part as the hero of the story, and carried you. I am afraid you are scarcely equal to such a task, nor is such gallantry demanded of you; but it is unfortunate that we have found our positions.

"I think I had better go and tell another; then we will bring the carriage for you." And leave me all alone? That would be too cruel. Besides, how are you going to get Bobbie to plough his way through this sand? I am afraid he would shy to some purpose. No, I think I have a better plan. Do you remember that workman’s barrow we saw on the cliff? If those young fellows who are amusing themselves yonder will come and lend a hand, and wheel me to the cottage at the bottom of the cliff, we might then get a cab and drive to the nearest doctor.

"Hi! young fellow!" he cried out, as one of the youths passed, "come and help a chap, will you? I’ve sprained my ankle, and can’t stir."

The pompous something was quite ready for a fresh diversion, and acting on Gordon’s suggestion, went off for the barrow.

"I’m spoiling your day, Miss Ellerby," said Gordon, as both stood by him, troubled and helpless. "I’m awfully sorry.

He did not expect or wish for Edith’s agreement to his assertion, for eyes and tone plainly asked for a sympathetic denial.

"Indeed, Mr. Buchanan, you are not; but it is spoilt for you, and I am so sorry. Is the pain very bad? Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes, Edie," he said, calling her for the first time by her Christian name; "you can keep on being sorry for me. That will help to lessen the pain."

Not what Gordon said, but the way he said it, made Edith’s eyes drop, and the colour suffuse her cheeks; and when he took her hand and held it a moment, there followed—

"One touch of fire,
And all the rest was mystery."

She felt as if something had gone from her, and yet as if something had come to her, in Gordon through the heavy sand, but he made light of the pain it caused, and laughed over the narrow escapes from an upset.

After what appeared a careful examination, the doctor pronounced the ankle to be put out, and having reset it, he received his fee, and dismissed his patient, telling him nothing more was needed but rest and care.

While Gordon was at the doctor’s, Edith had gone to acquaint her mother with the accident. Back to Skirlaugh drove the picnic party, Gordon, in spite of his injured foot, there’s no, really good for greater spirits. The luncheon-basket, which had hitherto been unthought of, afforded a pleasant pastime, and the mid-day meal was eaten to the music of Bobbie’s jog-trot.

"Ah, they give their faith too oft To the careless wooster.
Maidens’ hearts are always soft: Would that men’s were true!"

CHAPTER III.
A Fruitless Search.

"The waves of suffering either submerge and overwhelm the soul, or beat it as on swelling sides to the shores of a higher life."

"I’m sure there’s something wrong with this foot of mine. It strikes me that country doctor is a fraud, and knows nothing about his business," said Gordon, a few days after the accident.

"Isn’t there another doctor here I could get?"

"Indeed, sir, Gordon; but we can send for one from there," replied Mrs. Ellerby.

"I wish you would, please. My ankle doesn’t feel a bit right, somehow.

The Hull doctor came, and, to the surprise and dismay of all, announced that the small leg-bone was broken, and that after it was set, the leg would have to be encased in plaster of Paris, and it would be some weeks before Gordon would walk again.

"I can’t say ‘No, no,’ it is an ancient Chinese proverb, the truth of which Gordon Buchanan experienced during the many weeks he lay a prisoner at Woodside.

His imprisonment, however, had not been unhappy; indeed, as he bumbled about on his crutches he felt it had been good for him to be afflicted. The influence of consistent Christian character is never lost, and as one has said, "He whose sermon is his life can never preach too long."

Mrs. Ellerby’s holy living led Gordon to see a beauty in religion he had never realised before. Even the brave spirit that looked out of tired eyes, and from the trust that knew no failure, Gordon learnt that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

They had been talking about Will one day, as they so often did, and with a glancing different theories as to where he was likely to be, and wondering that he had had no news.

"I know this suspense is just wearing you out, Mrs. Ellerby. I wish I could help you. If I could only hear where he was, I would just go right back and bring him home."

"I cannot help feeling the suspense, and being a little anxious," replied the gentle lady; "but my boy is in God’s hands, and I can trust Him."

"I know not where His islands lift Their tender palms in air,
I only know he cannot drift Beyond His love and care."

It was a good thing that Mrs. Ellerby had the invalid to attend to; it took her out of herself, and diverted her bad thoughts. She nursed Gordon as tenderly as if he had been her own son. The presence of Edith, too, little about, for ready to take care or be teased, to obey or to command, according to his mood, made his imprisonment of the pleasantest kind.

Now he was on his legs again, learning to walk, with hopes of soon being able to go on to Manchester. He had not yet made a definite appeal to Edith, but since the morning on the cliffs at Hornsea, there had been that vague understanding between them which makes the early days of courtship so delicious.

"Mr. Buchanan, you have walked quite far enough, you must come in and rest now. Ah! I see you are quite tired."

Edith had gone to Hull to do some shopping, and Mrs. Ellerby, who had come into the garden to look after her patient, helped the cripple pro fess back to his couch in her pretty drawing-room.

"What an old nuisance I am to you, Mrs. Ellerby," said Gordon, as he lay back wearily on the cushions.

"Please don’t go; I want to talk to you," he added, abruptly, as Mrs. Ellerby turned to leave the room.

"I’ll be back directly," was the reply; and in a few moments she returned with a glass of egg and milk—"kitchen physic," she called it.

"You are good," said the invalid, as he drank off the agreeable medicine. "How can I ever thank you for all your kindness? May I show my gratitude by asking still greater favours?"

"Mrs. Ellerby, may I ask the gift of your daughter?"

Mrs. Ellerby was not wholly unprepared for the question. She had not been blind to the growing friendship between Gordon and Edith, but as she could wish no better future for her child, she had not interfered. In those weeks since the accident, Mrs. Ellerby had learnt to love and highly esteem her son’s friend, and now that her consent was asked, she was prepared to give it.

"I have no higher ambition for my child than that she should become the good wife of a good man," she replied. "She has her love, and you have my full consent, Mr. Buchanan."

A few more days, and the chunks were cast "to the moles and to the bats," and the limits of Woodside.
In two days he was on board the "Majestic," bound for New York.

Cottage were insufficient for the walking capabilities of Gordon's re-established "pin."

"Miss Ellerby, you must come and take care of me," he said, patting out his hand towards her, as he prepared to make his debut outside the garden gate.

"Will you promise to do nothing foolish if I come?" was Edith's reply. "If Dr. Munroe had seen you attempting to jump the flower-bed yesterday, you would have had a bad five minutes with him."

"I'll promise to be very good; in fact, you shall guide all my actions. Can you desire further submission?"

"I suppose a week to-day I shall be in 'dear, dirty Manchester' once more," said Gordon, as they walked towards Rice Woods. "I wonder if someone will miss me?"

"He asked, turning to his companion, and speaking in a tone full of significance.

But Edith, with a girl's perversity, pretended not to understand.

"We shall all miss you, Mr. Buchanan. I know my mother will."

Just at this moment quick footsteps were heard behind, and turning, they saw Mrs. Ellerby's maid running towards them with something in her hand.

"Please, Mr. Buchanan," she panted, out, "missis has sent this. It's just come, and missis said how I was to turn as fast as I could, 'cause it was very important," and the girl handed him a brown envelope.

It proved to be a cablegram from America. There was just the one word, "Found," then followed an address in New York.

Hastily retracing their steps, Gordon found Mrs. Ellerby waiting at the gate, eager for news. Showing her the cable, he made good his promise of a few days ago, by announcing his intention of going back to America at once, and bringing Will home. He had plenty of money; and, at present, plenty of time; how could he be better spent than in the service of others, making happy an anxious mother and sister, and rescuing, perhaps from degradation and despair, a fellow-creature and a man who was his friend.

In two days he was on board the "Majestic," fast bound for New York. Weakened by confinement and inactivity, the sea-breezes braced up his energies, and before New York harbour was reached Gordon felt a new man.

On landing, he at once sought out the address he had received in the cablegram. It was in a low part of the town, not very far from the docks—a lodging-house, one of the meanest kind.

"Is there a man here of the name of Ellerby?" he asked of the person in charge.

"Ellerby? Ellerby? Let me see," he answered. "I don't think so, and yet I seem to know the name. I say, Dick," he called to a man who was sweeping up the place, "is there a chap here called Ellerby?"

"No," came back the answer; "he went off two days ago."

"That is unfortunate," exclaimed Gordon. "I suppose you've no idea where he went, or if he's likely to return?"

"No; they never says where they're going when they leave here, and we never know when they may turn up
again; they're birds of passage, as you might say," was the indifferent reply.

Chagrined and disappointed, Gordon left the unsavoury atmosphere of the lodging-house, and wound his steps he knew not whither. It was too provoking to have come so far and missed his friend by two days. He knew not what to do.

Returning to his hotel, he wrote to the friend in Denver, whose help he had sought in tracing his friend, asking him for particulars.

Back came the reply. Someone in New York, whom the writer could trust, and to whom he had confided the story, having constant business on the dock side, had promised to be on the look-out. He had seen and spoken to Will Ellerby, and had sent on the address, which he (the writer) had cabled to Gordon. The address of the New York friend was given, and Gordon at once sought him out, to make further inquiries.

"Yes, I saw the poor chap," he replied, in answer to Gordon's questions, "and I did seem down on his luck. He talked of making his way back to England, but I don't know how he'll do it. He didn't look worth a cent, nor did he seem to have strength to work his passage."

"Do you think it possible he may have gone?"

"I shouldn't wonder, seeing he's left his lodgings; he seemed very eager to get back."

"I appear to be playing a hide-and-seek game. I've come over from England to find the man; my quarry eludes me, and is back home before I can get there. Well, good-day. Thanks for what you've done. If you should happen to hear anything, perhaps you'll drop me a line?"

And handing him his card, Gordon once more turned his steps towards Fifth Avenue.

"There is never a waiting time weary and long;
That will not sometime have an ending;
The most beautiful part of a landscape is where
The sunshine and shadows are blending.

"The Sorrow of Death."

"Where is my wandering boy to-night?
The boy that was once my joy and light,
The child of my love and prayer?
Oh, where is my boy to-night?
Oh, where is my boy to-night?
My heart o'erflows, for I love him he knows,
Oh, where is my boy to-night?"

"Oh, could I see you now, my boy, As fair as in olden time,
When prattle and smile made home a joy,
And life was a merry chime!"

"Go for my wandering boy to-night;
Go search for him where you will;
But bring him to me with all his blight,
And tell him I love him still.
Oh, where is my boy to-night?
Oh, where is my boy to-night?
My heart o'erflows, for I love him he knows,
Oh, where is my boy to-night?"

As he heard it repeated again and again, and over and over, the tone became familiar; it was the agonised voice of his mother.

The poor, mangled body was put into a comfortable berth.
THE DEATH TRAP.

"Oh, where is my boy tonight? My heart overflows, for I love him he knows, Oh, where is my boy tonight?"

Since the night he had felled his friend to the ground, Will Ellerby had been an outlaw and a vagabond. At first he had feared the blow was fatal, but he had hung about Denver until he ascertained that Gordon Buchanan's life was safe; but the shame of the cruel deed was bitter and overwhelming. Like many another young fellow, Will Ellerby was his own worst enemy. Caught up in a Christian home, he had "the root of the matter" in him; of baseness and meanness he was incapable. Gordon Buchanan had been his savio, his true friend. In his heart he knew that no prying curiosity had brought him to the club that memorable night, but that it was the loving desire to save him from the worst. And he had saved him, saved him at the moment when he was about to sign away soul and body. Yet it was his hand that had struck Gordon down. No, he could never face his friend again, even though he knew no word of reproach would ever pass his lips; knew the old smile of welcome would be his welcome still.

"Oh, I've been a brute beast, but I won't add meanness to my crime. Gordon is well rid of me; I should have been a thorn in his side always. The fellow that makes his bed ought to lie on it, and I'll lie on mine."

So Will Ellerby had drifted along, living from hand to mouth as best he could, eating when he had food, going without when he hadn't. He would not beg, he would not steal; he would not carry every penny long spent he earned, but his clothes became more and more shabby, his chances of respectable and suitable employment became less and less. In spite of awful temptations, in spite of the fact that many would have "treated" him to drink who would not "treat" him to food, and his friends offered him at times when he was starving, and when drink would have staved the hunger fiend; in spite, I say, of all these things, since that night in the secret club-house in Denver, Will Ellerby had never permitted a glass of intoxicating liquor to pass his lips. Though weak-willed, he was obstinate, out of conviction, not by compulsion, he stayed his hand where strength in him became utter weakness. He could stand at no glass, by great effort he could refuse to take any, but he could not stand at one or two; one taste of the firewater, and his will was no longer his own, he was completely in the power of the demon drink and his tyrannies.

As he hung about the docks, with the wall of the hymn echoing in his ears, he found himself close to a lager making preparations for her voyage to Liverpool. The vessel was the new fleet packet, the Atlantic, passing backwards and forwards with luggage, passengers taking leave of their friends; tramps, like himself, hanging about, waiting for something to turn up.

"Oh, where is my boy tonight? Oh, where is my boy tonight? My heart overflows, for I love him he knows, Oh, where is my boy tonight?"

The vessel might bring to an end a mother's anguish, might answer her waiting cry. Almost before he was aware, Will Ellerby found himself on the gangway. Under cover of the darkness, and hidden by a big box which a porter was carrying, he elbowed his way to the inner part of the vessel, and hunted about for a hiding-place. In his ignorance of machinery, he picked out the most horrible place in the whole ship. It looked attractive to the poor fellow, and he thought himself lucky to find it. But it was not the hide—the crank pit it is called—in the floor of the engine-room, into which the great crank sinks twenty-four times a minute when the vessel is at full speed. While the vessel was still, this crank was elevated above the hole, and Will did not know that in a short time it would descend, and possibly crush him to death. He crept in. The noise and confusion on deck continued. Will was quiet and comfortable; worn out with weary tramping, he fell asleep. The ship started. Wakened by the noise of the moving machinery, before he could realize where he was, down came the great crank on his left arm with terrific force. He could not move. In less than three seconds down it came again, crushing more bones and tearing more flesh. Drawing himself into the smallest compass possible, in an agony of pain Will awaited death. Every time the crank came down it escaped his head by about an inch-and-a-half—a movement it would be fatal. He, of course, did not know the exact distance, but he knew it came terribly near, and was in mortal dread that it would come nearer.

Not for long could any human creature bear this awful situation, and after a while Will knew no more of suspense or agony.

CHAPTER V.
A Bruised and Bloody Bundle.

"Speak gently to the erring—Oh, do not thou forget, However darkly stained by sin; He is thy brother yet, Heir of the selfsame heritage, Child of the selfsame God."

Gordon Buchanan felt it was useless to remain longer in New York, so once more he called upon his old friend and associate, Captain Buchanan, who was a merchant in the Atlantic. He was bitterly disappointed to think that his search had been futile; especially did he feel this, remembering how near he had been to finding his friend. How could he again confront Mrs. Ellerby without even news of her son? But the hope was strong within his heart; that his friend was even at that moment on his way home, and might indeed be there before him.

"Hope with a goodly compass feeds the eye, Shows from a rising ground possession high, Shortens the distance, or extols it quite, So easy 'tis to travel with the sight."

Hope held forth a still stronger beckoning ray. Distance was shortened, and the cold and coldly satisfying to Gordon Buchanan, in spite of a bad passage and protruding mid-deck. For was there not someone waiting for him in a little country village in Yorkshire? Someone whose eyes would brighten, and whose heart would beat more quick in some one coming from home?

Though the final words Gordon had meant to speak during that morning walk to the Rise Woods had never been uttered, Gordon knew, unless Edith was the most consummate liar—which she was not—that her heart was his, and the thought was comforting and full of delight. He who had been buffered about by circumstances, whose true heart had been riven by a hopeless love, was at length to find rest and peace. How he would love her! How he would guard and cherish her, and make her happiness his. No wonder, with those thoughts, his heart felt as comfortable and warm as it had been, and he wondered how much of the dimensions of his cabin, and the toasting of the ship, even the thought of Will, were only as momentary shadows across his star of hope.

When twenty-eight hours beyond Sandy Hook, in the middle of the night, one of the engineers who had charge of the engines on that watch, was startled by hearing unearthly groans proceeding, as it seemed, from the bowels of the ship. Others of the men heard them, and were seized with terror. Superstition did hard in a sailor. Gordon's friends, though not in possession of the ship, and it was doomed. So frightened did they become by the continuation of the sounds, that they refused to work. The assistant engineer went to the chief.

"Strange, unearthly sounds are coming from the machinery, sir; the men declare a fire is lighted in the ship, and will not work," he reported.
"They're a pack of fools, and you're the biggest. Be off with you!" was the reply, and the chief engineer turned on his heel.

Back to his post went the man, to do as best he could. Presently his watch was over, and he was relieved.

The commotion continued, and were heard by the new assistant engineer. Thoroughly alarmed, he, too, went to his chief, and at length succeeded in getting him out of his berth, and into the engine-room.

Yes, there was no mistake; the chief engineer himself, who was quite free from superstition, distinctly heard the weird sounds. He at once stopped the ship. Too demoralised to do anything, the men believed it perfectly impossible for any living thing to be amid that swiftly-moving, gigantic machinery. Protesting continually that ghosts or fiends had taken possession, and the ship was doomed, they absolutely refused to take any steps to find out the cause of the mysterious sounds.

Gordon Buchanan, restless and tossing in his berth, heard the unusual commotion, and the stopping of the engine. Thinking there must be something wrong, he rose, and partly dressing himself, made his way to the place whence the commotion proceeded.

Just then the watch on deck was called down to do what the engineers refused to do. Gordon joined them, and he, too, heard the heart-rending groans.

By the light of lanterns the machinery was thoroughly examined. Then a lantern was lowered into the crank pit, and there at the bottom, a bundle of rags was discovered. On being prodded, a groan proceeded from the rags.

They were hitted up. In them was a man, lorn, bruised and bloody. Terror and anguish and wounds had deprived him of sense, and almost of human semblence. He could not talk; he could only utter groans—groans so piteous they pierced the heart of every man.

The surgeon of the ship was called up. Luckily for the stowaway he was a humane and skilful man. He said afterwards he was bound to save that man if he could, if it was only to find out how he got into that pit, and was not killed at once when the crank began to move.

The poor, mangled body was put into a comfortable berth, and not a man in that engine-room but would have gladly made some sacrifice, if he could only have helped the poor fellow to a speedy recovery. But they all had their work, so Gordon, who had witnessed the lifting up of the tattered bundle, volunteered his services as nurse.

It was necessary at once to amputate the left arm, or it would have mortified, so dreadfully crushed was it. This was skillfully done, the badly bruised head was bandaged, and the sufferer made as comfortable as possible.

The other wounds and bruises were attended to, and the chief engineer, or Gordon watched beside the poor fellow.

As Gordon watched, he never recognised in that disfigured form his fair-haired, bright young friend, Will Ellerby, and Will, lying there, unconscious, little knew the man who had saved his life in Chicago, and rescued him in the secret club-house from those who had prepared a net for his steps and plotted his ruin, that same God-sent messenger was now watching beside his bed, helping to snatch him from the jaws of death, and save him for a useful and honourable manhood.

It was on the third day after his rescue that Will Ellerby opened his eyes to consciousness of things around him. His first glance fell on the watcher beside his bed. Terror seized him as he looked, and after one fixed glance he shut his eyes again, and moaned in his fear and anguish. His Nameans had overtaken him.

Gordon, who had been reading, turned to his patient, saying most gently and tenderly: "Can I get you anything?"

As there was no response, the eyes being firmly closed, Gordon thought he was still unconscious.

But Will had catch the familiar tone. At the first glance he thought the form beside the bed had been an apparition, the spirit of his friend come to torment and torment him, and he closed his eyes to shut out the tortured sight. But there was no mistaking the clear, sympathetic tones, the friendly voice; and when he stealthily opened his eyes to look again, he saw it was no ghostly semblance of his friend that sat beside his bed, but Gordon Buchanan in warm flesh and blood.

As he still looked, in his helplessness and weakness he
CHAPTER VI.
When Lovers Meet.

The love of all is as nothing
To the love of one.

Once more Bobbie is trotting down the Stirk- 
laugh lanes towards the station, with his young 
press benting the reins. Once more Mrs. 
Ellerby is arranging the flowers—lovely yellow 
and terracotta chrysanthemums—that are to 
welcome her boy’s return. These weeks of 
suspense have told upon her, but the expression of her face 
is sweet, if sad, rather than bitter.
As Edith drives to the station her heart is beating time 
to Bobbie’s jog-trot. Her mother was before who was 
so anxious for her to be in time for the train; now it is 
Edith who is the impatient one, for she is at the station 
full twenty minutes before the train is due.
She does not stay to ask herself the reason for this 
needless hurry, nor why she should have stayed so long before 
the looking-glass before starting, trying first one coloured 
tie and then another, to see which suited her the best— 
no need to ask herself why this fuss? Had she not the 
memory of tender looks, long hand-clasps, and low, whisper-

All the morning she had been singing blithely as she 
flitted about at her work:

“And though he’s never spoke to me,
I know he loves me true.”

And even when seated for a few minutes’ rest in her 
favourite chair, love’s tell-tale light would sparkle in her 
eyes.
She kept her beautiful secret to herself, but her mother 
heard and said all, and was thankful and glad for her 
lassie’s joy.

Somehow, by the time the train was due Edith experienced 
a reaction in her feelings that she was quite 
unable to account for.

"Botheration," she muttered to herself. "Why won’t 
my heart be still, and why can’t I feel natural? Mr. 
Buchanan was probably only amusing himself with me. 
I dare say he behaves the same to every girl. Well, he 
shall not know that I remember it all, or that I 
care for him except as Willie’s friend—indeed, I don’t 
know that I do.

And the girl, in her pride, stiffened her back and held 
up her head, and there was determination in her firm, 
set lips, and defiance in her bright eyes.

Very imperious and queenly she looked in her 
gray costume and bright-red tie, as she stood on the 
platform, a boy having 

The door now opened, and a young woman entered.
"Do you feel better?
Can I get anything for you?

"No, thank you," came the reply. Then, still with her 
eyes fixed upon his, she said:
"Gordon, don’t you know me?

Though face and form were disfigured, the voice was 
still the same; spirit intact to meet spirit, and the 
friends, separated so long by sin and sorrow and shame, 
met in glad recognition.

No need to ask for forgiveness, though Will tried hard 
to frame the words; and if the watching and care 
had been great before, it was two-fold greater now.

With hope and friendship restored, and the surgeon’s 
increased interest and attention—for he had to hear 
the story—Will’s recovery was rapid.

When the ship reached Liverpool he was taken to the 
hospital, and ten days after the time of landing he was 
pronounced sufficiently well to be removed home.

"O brother man, tell to thy heart thy brother; 
Where pity cries, the peace of God is there; 
To worship rightly is to love each other.

Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.”

"The love of all is as nothing.
To the love of one.”
CHAPTER VII.

Old Friends and New.

"They were indeed a lovely group:
Of happy, sportive creatures,
With all of beauty that can dwell
In earthy forms and features.
I blessed them all, and much I doubt
If time will ever bring
Words to my ear more musical
Than children's welcoming!"

—ELIZA COOK.

ORDON had not yet seen his home people, and though he still rather shrank from opening the old wound by meeting Susie, he felt he could not longer delay his visit to Manchester.

Will had business in Liverpool. A wound on his shoulder had been slow to heal, and was giving him some trouble, and he wished to consult the doctor at the hospital under whose care he had been. So it was arranged that the two friends should travel together, Will spending a few nights with Gordon, in Manchester, before proceeding to the further city.

It was Will Ellerby's first visit, and as they neared Victoria Station, the smoke belching forth from thousands of chimneys, the dull, grey sky, and the general gloom, gave him but a poor impression of the capital of the north.

"We are passing through one of the worst parts, and being covered you see, I forget," explained Gordon, in apology for his native town.

"Let's hope so," replied his companion, "for I guess this is pretty bad."

Will's first impressions were somewhat modified as they drove across the town to the Central Station, where they had to take train for Didsbury. He had been above the smoke before; now he was below it, and the handsome buildings, the immense warehouses, and the general substantial air of everything and everybody, inspired a feeling of respect for the great grey city.

The travellers were expected at Sandycliffe, for as the cab turned the corner of the road, four little people, who had been watching for their arrival, ran excitedly into the house, shouting:

"Auntie, mother, they've come!"

One boy stood his ground, and as the two gentlemen jumped out, the others went up to the elder one, and with perfect self-possession held out his hand.

"I'm so glad to see you, Uncle Gordon; I'm Donald," he said.

Then came the bewildering crowd of small nephews and nieces and cousins, and Master Gordon was the only guest.

Greta looked very motherly in the midst of her little flock; and Susie, though stouter, had lost but little of her comeliness. To the rest the new uncle needed to be introduced.

"So this is my little friend, Edith," said Gordon, putting his arm round a fair, bright girl of eighteen.

"May I claim an uncle's privilege?" And bending, he kissed the upturned face.

"And this is Donald Dewar, my first welcome; and this," he asked, turning to a little girl of eleven.

"This is Gordon's half-sister, Edith's little one, Greta; and this is Greta's No. Two, but she is generally called Birdie; and this is my baby Leslie, who is three years old to-day.

After this extensive introduction, Will Ellerby, who had been conversing with Donald, a fine lad of thirteen, came in, a share of stouter grown ups following.

Susie had been watching him, and wondering where she had seen a face like his. All at once a flash of memory carried her back to Algerian days.

"Mr. Ellerby," she said, "is it possible that you are my old pupil, little Willie Ellerby, whom I used to teach in Algiers?"

"I am Willie Ellerby," he replied; "and if you need to be Miss Kingsley, then I was your pupil. Of course, now I remember you married Mr. Hedges Buchanam. To think I should have been all this time with Gordon, and never found it out.""Well, this is a pleasant surprise!" exclaimed Susie.

"I recognized you from your likeness to your father."

Then turning to Gordon, she explained:

"Mr. Ellerby and I have just made the discovery that we are very old friends. He used to be my pupil in Algiers." "Is that so? Well, what a strange coincidence. I may crown you, them with developing his virtues."

"And how are your sister Edie and your dear mother?"

enquired Susie. "How should I love to see them! To think that Gordon's friend and Gordon's future wife should turn out to be my old pupils!

A very happy party gathered that evening in the cozy drawing-room at Sandycliffe. Nigel had returned from the city, and Dr. Dewar had spared an hour of his busy life to bid his brother-in-law welcome.

An old lady, who occupied a comfortable chair by the fire, was also of the party. In spite of her eighty years she was still active, brisk, and daring, with an handsome dark dress, with her high cap, lace, and mantles, she might have stepped from the canvas of some old picture. Aunt Allen had come from her widowed and childless home in Morrocco, to play propriety when Susie and her child took up their abode at Sandycliffe. It was to her Gordon had given up his pretended holiday, after that ill-starred walk through the Christmas snow, when the sombre threads of blighted hope wove themselves into his life.

What Susie had suffered for her child's sake was having an abundant recompense; except for the one misfortune, she had no regret for the steps she had taken. For the fulfillment of her cherished hopes she found all she needed to make life happy.

In Nigel's great kindness to herself and child, she proved how much she had wronged, in thought, Hedges's guardian brother; and in careful management of his domestic comforts she sought to make some return for the home he had offered her.
Nigel scarcely looked older than when we last saw him. In the rough and tumble of life it is worry, and not work, that whitens the hair and wrinkles the brow; and with a prosperous business, and freedom from domestic anxiety, Nigel had renewed his youth.

In little Edlea he had found a new object in life; on her he lavished a wealth of affection, and since her first arrival at Sandycliffe she had reigned a queen. Her bright, unselfish disposition, which in babyhood much petting had failed to spoil, still kept her sweet and lovable. She had no special feature of beauty, but she had a clear complexion, rosy colour, and a wealth of golden brown hair; with her sunny expression, her active limbs, and love of fun, she was best described as "a bonnie girl."

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes."

"Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word."

Will Ellerby was a stronger man morally, if not physically, than he had ever been in his life. From the moment he had resolved never to touch the intoxicating cup, the daily, almost hourly, task of mastering and overcoming fierce temptation had strengthened the moral fibres of his nature; he had more grit in him, more backbone, than ever before. The fact, too, that Gordon had for his sake and others given up the glass he had so enjoyed, and which to him had been no snare, and the unselfish nature of Gordon's sacrifice and friendship for him, made Will feel he must be worthy of such a friend. Like David of old, he had to exclaim:

"Brief life is here our portion,  
Brief sorrow, short-lived care;  
The life that knows no ending,  
The tearless life is there."

The waiting mother and wandering boy were in each other's arms.
"The light that hath no evening, The health that hath no sore, The life that hath no ending, But lasteth evermore."

"And now we fight the battle, But then shall wear the crown Of full and everlasting And passionless renown."

CHAPTER VIII.

Since Fifteen Years.

Fred are the charms that graced that ivory brow; Where smiled a dimple, gapes a wrinkle now."

ILL ELLERY was taken to see all the "lions" of Manchester. The Royal Exchange, the Town Hall with its famous frescoes, the Art Gallery, the General Post Office, and the Cathedral, were duly visited. But what interested him most was the old-world building and whitorn monastery now known as Chestham's College; this and the Seven Stars Inn, where Guy Fawkes is said to have hidden when pursued by the soldiers of the King, possessed a special fascination for the visitor from the New World.

His last day was spent at the Botanical Gardens, where the great Chrysanthenum Show was being held. All the world and his wife seemed to be present—at least, all the suburban world of Manchester.

As the party from Sandyhills joined the gay promenaders, Gordon eagerly scanned the passers-by in search of familiar faces.

Sixteen years bring great changes, and among all that through the maze he passed few that he remembered.

"You've known men now, grown almost of recognition; and former companions were fathers and mothers, with sons and daughters taking their place."

Gordon at length began to realize how "dreadfully old" he had grown.

"Do you see that lady with the green dress, and a bonnet with a pink flower in it, standing near the entrance?" asked Orcia of her brother. "See, she is coming this way."

"Do you mean the one with her dress trailing in the dirt?"

"Yes. That's Madge Stevens that was, and that little man—the clergyman—next door to her husband."

"Well, shiver my timbers!" exclaimed Gordon. "Who would think that plain, trollopy-looking woman was the once gay and festive Madge? Why, isn't that Lucas that's with her? Did she marry that curate fellow after all?"

"Yes."

"Well, she deserved him, for she was most persevering in her attentions. Shall I take the trouble to speak to them?"

"How about Mrs. Lucas? Have I grown out of all recognition, that you do not remember me?" said Gordon, going forward to meet his old acquaintances, who evidently failed to recognise him.

"It's not Mr. Gordon Buchanan, surely?" questioned Madge, putting out a hand encased in a shabby glove.

"Yes, verily," answered Gordon.

"And how has the world been without you, Lucas, all this time?" he asked of Madge's husband.

"Oh, Newton's indifferent as to how the world uses him," pettishly responded Madge, without giving her husband a chance to reply. "I tell him he's no spirit; he's just content with a round of commonplace duties—visiting his parishioners, and prefiguring his sermons seem the maximum honors of life for him. I'm always expecting to catch small-pox or fever, for the poorer the homes the more he seems to like to go into them. For me, I can't understand such taste." And Madge turned up her nose—which already had a tendency that way.

As Gordon watched his old acquaintance during this dialogue, he noticed the lines of discontent on her face—lines which the powder, evidently freely used, failed to conceal. Where dimples had been, wrinkles were now plentiful. When she had finished, her husband remarked in his most patient of tones:

"Now, my dear, may I reply myself to Mr. Gordon's question?"

"Certainly; of course I know nothing," and with an injured air Madge swept from the group. Are you still at the same church?" asked Gordon, when Madge had left them.

"No. I have the living of St. Oswald's. It's a very poor parish, but I'm so happy among my people; it is a great joy to me to put what brightness I can into their dull, monotonous lives."

As the little man spoke, his plain face became illumined with a light that was not of earth; like Mornes of old, Newton Lucas wist not that his face shone as he talked to the people. His voice still had something of the affected clerical intonation, but it was good to see that this man "walked with God," and gladly spent his life in the service of those whom God had committed to his care.

"Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride, And even his failings lean'd to virtue's side; But in his duty, prompt at every call, He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt for all."

"My one regret," he added, "is that Madge cannot make herself happy at St. Oswald's. You see, we have no children to occupy her time and attention, and of course there is no society in the parish for her, and she seems nervous about visiting in the homes of the poor. However," he continued, cheerfully, "I am hoping that she will get used to it."

"Well, good-bye, Lucas. I'm glad to have seen you, and I wish you God-speed in your work. I shall come and look you up one of these days." And with a warm, sympathetic hand-clasp they parted.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Gordon, as soon as his and his wife were alone. "What an ill-matched couple! It makes one tremble at the thought of matrimony. Poor Lucas! He's a grand fellow, though I'm afraid I used rather to despise him. I thought him so unmanly; but he's a noble man than I am. What a pity he has not a better helper, to help him do his work. His face positively shone with goodness. And how patient he was with his wife's rudeness, for it amounted to nothing less. A woman like that would drive me to the devil. How does she spend her time?"

"Reading novels, I'm afraid," answered Orcia, with a sigh. "I've tried to help her, and tried to get her to take an interest in her husband's work, but it seems useless."

As the brother and sister walked down the Grand Avenue, Gordon felt an arm put through his, and a voice close beside him exclaimed:

"How do, old chap? Has travelling taught you to cut your friends' names?

Turning round he recognized Fred Entwistle. The Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Lucas were quite forgotten in the pleasure of seeing his former chum, and leaving the rest of the party, the two friends went off arm in arm to a less public port to reminisce.

"Well, how's the world been using you, Fred? Tell me everything about everybody, about yourself first. There's a Mrs. Fred, is there not?"

"Not yet, but I expect there soon will be. We hope to be married next month."

"And where is the future Mrs. F.? How is it you're lacking here with such a sharp, old man. My friend is at this moment with my sister in the Gardens. I heard you were in the Grand Avenue, so begg'd off to hunt you up."

"Oh, that's all right! And how are your sisters? Are they married?"

"Eliza is. She is living in New Zealand. Her husband was ordered abroad for his health. Mabel is a nurse in a London hospital."
"So Maggie is the only one left?"
"Yes, we can't spare Maggie. She looks after the pater and mater, and is general boss of the establishment."

Then Gordon had to tell of his past doings and future prospects and then they separated. It was with the mutual hope that Mrs. Gordon Buchanan and Mrs. Fred Entwistle would "take" to one another, and the old friendship be renewed.

CHAPTER IX.
Christmas at Sandycliffe.

"Chant loud and long; 'tis Christmas Eve!
We've got a merry time before us.
And now, old friends, by your good leave,
I'll roll the song, and ye the chorus;
And this shall be the theme for girls,
A theme no cydile dare condemn.
May kindly word and loving heart
Be household 'stars of Bethlehem.'"

"O'ER come home for good then, Gordon?"
"Yes, I guess I have; 'm about tired of America." The name was pronounced with the peculiar Yankee inflection.
"Well, I shall be very glad to have you back in the business; things are going on all right, but there's work for two masters, and I want to begin to ease off a bit. When do you think of being married?"

"In the spring I hope. By the way, Nigel, do you think you could find a place for Will Ellerby in the business? Mrs. Ellerby means to leave Skirlaugh when Edith and I are married, and intends to come and live near Manchester. Will is good at languages and book-keeping, and, indeed, almost anything with his pen. He was no end of a help to me in the mill at Deer, and though he's only got one hand now, poor chap, fortunately it's his right one, that's left."

"I don't know but we might find him a place," replied Nigel, after a moment's consideration. "I'll think about it anyhow."

The two brothers were having a chat, as in old times, after the rest had gone to bed. Gordon had been at home nearly a week, but this was the first opportunity he had had of talking things over with Nigel. They had much to say, both about the past and present, and it was the small hours of the morning before they parted.

When Susie discovered that Gordon's friend was the little Willie she had taught in Algiers, she wrote at once to his mother and Edith, expressing her delight that her former pupil was to be her future sister.

"And now, my dear friends," so the letter ran, "I hope it will not be long before we meet, for we want you both to come and spend Christmas with us. Will, of course, will come, too. Now don't say 'No,' for I am longing to see you both."

There was quite a stir at Woodside Cottage when this letter arrived, and still further excitement when Will returned home, and the strange discovery was talked over.

"To think that I'm to be the wife of Mr. Hetley Buchanan's brother!" said Edith to her mother. "I remember him quite well. He, and the Moor with the long name, that I never could recollect; once removed a big cactus hedge that had blown down across the road so that we could not pass. That was how we first got to know him, don't you remember, Willie?"

"Yes, but I remember him best taking me to see over one of the ships in the harbour."

"You'll accept the invitation, mother, dear, won't you? It will be splendid," said Edith, who, truth to tell, was thinking more of seeing Gordon, than of meeting her former governess. Duties and pleasures had seemed dull and uninteresting since he had left Skirlaugh.

"Yes, dear, certainly we will go. I shall be delighted to see Susie again, and I am very wishful, Edith, to know those among whom your life is to be spent. By the way, Willie"—the mother nearly always called her boy by the pet-name of his childhood—"did you see Susie's child? She must be quite grown up now. Let me see, what was her name?"

"Edie," said Edith; "yes, I saw her," he answered, somewhat curtly. Man of twenty-seven though he was, he had quite lost his heart to the winsome maiden of eighteen, and the fancied hopelessness of his love made him sullen at the mention of her name.

How could he, with no prospects, and that empty sleeve hanging, mocking him at his side, ever expect to win one who could suitors by the score. For Burns "Bonnie Leslie" came into his mind whenever he thought of Edie—

"To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever."

The next few weeks were weary waiting for Edith; she wondered how she had endured Skirlaugh so long. Mrs. Ellerby, too, was unhappy; the undisturbed quiet of years was broken, never to be renewed, and with a mother's anxiety she wondered what the future held in store for her children.

Christmas came at last, and with it the anticipated visit. Bright holly and ivy decorated the old house, while a large bunch of mistletoe hung conspicuously in the hall, placed there by the anticipating Gordon.

Thought for others' pleasure makes a happy Christmas, and while Susie's past was to see the filling of her larder, Edie and Uncle Gordon planned presents and surprises for the children.

A merry party gathered in the long dinner-room on Christmas Day. The table was drawn out to its full length for the accommodation of the increased family, for all were present, from Aunt Allan, who represented "a land sync," to three-year-old Leslie, the small representative of modern times.

When turkey and plum pudding had played their part, Gordon, with Leslie on his shoulder, led the way to the morning-room, which had been mysteriously locked for several days.

The doors and capers of the children were sufficient reward for those who had prepared the richly-laden Christmas-tree, Edie, as the fairy princess, bestowed the gifts, and soon nothing was left on the ruffled branches but glittering balls and many-coloured tapers.

Romping with children is a grand excuse for forgetting one's dignity, and in the games of blind man's buff and hide-and-seek, that finished up the day it would be difficult to say whether Gordon and Edith, or Birdie and baby Leslie enjoyed themselves most.

To Edie those weeks at Sandycliffe were a constant round of delight. Her happiness seemed almost too great to be real.

There was little snow that Christmas, but the frost was hard and continuous. The meadows bordering on the Mersey had been flooded, and were now one sheet of ice.

Skating was the order of the day; morning, afternoon, and evening skates were in requisition, and it was only meal-times that brought the young people home. They never failed to appear then, with faces aglow, and indescribable appetites.

CHAPTER X.
Rice and Old Shoes.

"In the spring-tide, the only pretty ring time,
When drowsy dozes chin, hey dag a ding; ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring."

The pleasantest visit must have an end, and Gordon was buckling Edith's skates on for the last time. The night was dark, and a row of candles round the edge of the ice but dimly lit up the scene.

As hand in hand the lovers glided off, Gordon felt he must make the most of his last evening.

"Edie," he murmured, bending towards his companion,
"Won't you yield to my pleading? The time has been dreary without you, darling. How can I wait four more long months? Won't you come to me sooner?"

Gordon had many times begged for their wedding to take place early in the year, but with a girl's desire for an elaborate trousseau, she had named the end of April as the earliest possible date when she could be ready. But it would indeed have been an adamantine heart that could have resisted Gordon's tender tones.

"In every way I will seek to become worthy of Edlea's love." He had never by word or act betrayed his feelings to the girl; he would have deemed it a dishonourable thing, and a betrayal of the trust placed in him, if he, hitherto a roving ne'er-do-well, had spoken words of love to the much-guarded and innocent Edlea.

So loved and loving parted, to meet again in the near future; and in preparation for that time, busy-work was found in either home for hand and brain.

The wedding day came—a dull, cold day in March, the sun barely visible through the thick atmosphere; but such mornings often precede the brightest days, and this was one of them. There was a two hours' struggle between sun and mist, but by twelve o'clock old Sol had triumphed, and the earth was flooded with his warmth and glory.

Again the old church was thronged with people, eagerly watching for the first sign of the expected party. The gate of Sandycliffe was but a few yards from the church, so carriages were unnecessary, crimson cloth having been

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Along the CRIMSON PATHWAY comes the bridal procession.
spread along the short distance the bride must walk. At last there is a murmur and a breeze among the crowd.

"They're coming! They're coming!" And along the crimson pathway comes the bridal procession.

First there is Mrs. Ellerby, looking almost regal in heliotrope silk and white lace, leaning on the arm of Nigel, who looks so happy, one might almost mistake him for the bridegroom. Susie follows with Dr. Dewar, and then amid a murmur of admiration, the fair young girl upon whom all eyes are cast steps up to the altar on the arm of her brother. She wears a dress of white organza satin, and carries a bouquet of white orchids. Following her, and bearing her train, comes little Leslie Dewar, attired in a Louis XIV. costume of white satin, and looking as if he was the most important part in the day's proceedings. The three bridesmaids follow—Edles, Iris, and Birdie; they are dressed in pretty Watteau costumes of pale blue, while in their hands they carry shepherdesses' crooks ornamented with daffodils.

Gordon had been fidgeting about the church for some time before the procession appeared, and now, as he advanced to meet the bride, he seemed in no way to feel the solemnity of the occasion.

"Edie, what an awful swell you are!" he whispered, as he joined her; and when Leslie called out in very audible tones, "Hello, Untle Dorden!" he picked up the small train-bearer and gave him a kiss.

But the entrance of the two clergymen awed both uncle and nephew, and the ceremony proceeded without interruption, timely sweets being popped into Leslie's mouth by his mother whenever a coming remark appeared imminent.

The service was over, the solemn words were spoken, and the momentous promises made. Again the organ pealed forth its notes of rejoicing, again the old tower rocked with the weight of its bells, and again the "God bless them," from the old folks, and the showers of confetti from the young ones, followed the bridal pair as they passed down the crimson pathway.

Will Ellerby had taken his place by Edlesa's side as they left the church, and as he looked down on her sunny, girlish face, the love in his heart deepened, and in the future he saw himself again walking down the aisle, but this time in the role of bridegroom, with Edlesa as his bride.

[FINIS.]

On Friday next, May 2nd, we shall (D.V.) publish our No. 387 Thrilling Life Story, entitled:

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and MARIE MORRELL.

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“MUFFLED MARRIAGE BELLS.”

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CHAPTER I.
An Unseen Hand.
"Hear the tolling of the bells—
Iron bells!
What a world of solemn thought their monody compels?
In the silence of the night,
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of their tone!
For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a groan."

SUMMERHAYES was bubbling
over with excitement; it breathed
in the air; it flashed in the
eyes of the people; it rang in
the tones of their voices—well, Summerhayes was saturated
with it.

The form of a man... dropped upon the balcony just outside her room.
It does not take a very large thrown stone to disturb the surface of a pond or a puddle, and the smaller the community the more easily is it stirred to its depths by any event that transpires amid its limited circumstances.

Summerhayes was on the eve of a wedding, a swell wedding, a wedding between the chief resident of the neighbouring Mansions, Esq., &c., or the 'Square,' as he was locally called—and Miss Kathleen Carfax.

There are some English villages blessed (or cursed, as the case may be) by the presence in residence of titled people, Lord This, or Sir Jasper That, or Earl Somebody-else, and they give themselves tiny, sensibly airs because of the privilege glittering them of 'the quality.' Other neighbourhoods sniff scornfully at the Lords and Earls, and count themselves happy and lucky in the presence of their kind amid a rough though untutored family. It was thus with Summerhayes, and their pride in their Squire.

The wedding was arranged for half-past nine on the morrow, an unusually early hour for a swell wedding, but necessary under the conditions of travel which the first lap of the honeymoon tour demanded.

All through the hours of the long summer day willing hands had been employed in rearing local arches, transforming far poles into Venetian masts, festooning from mast to mast long streamers, suspending marvellous motiffs from the centre bights of the festoons, affixing shields and standards to every tumbled tower, and in a multitude of other ways adding artificial picturesque-ness to the natural beauties of the village.

Night lingered as though reluctant, as though she would fain make overtime so as to permit the busy workers to finish the unimposed tasks. The long, late afternoon was well gone into the hour of nine, and then light lingered still. But it was night at last, for there was no moon.

Eleven o'clock found the village as silent as a city of the dead, and, as dark, save where, in one or two cottages, the light glimmered-there was the society of some sick child was watched by an anxious-eyed mother.

Then through the darkness and silence a man passed swifly, making his way towards the cross-road that led to an old Norman building known locally as 'the church.' He was a tall, thin shadow, and was surrounded by a tiny "God's ace," amid the leaning cornices of which many a quaint old-yew tree cast black shadows on the mounds and stones around.

The man's feet must have been shod with india-rubber shoes, for his footsteps were quite unheard, and again and again a slight scuff as a stone rolled away from under his tread. He turned at the cross-roads that intersected the village, and was swallowed up in the blacker night of the tree-shaded road that branched to the right.

The silence and darkness grew deeper, and seemed to enwrap the whole village in cloister folds. Suddenly, with a crash that awoke every soul in the place, save the few besotted fool who had sported their brains and deadened their senses with the "devil in solution," served out as beer to his customers by the leer-eyed landlord of the Spotted Dog—the silence was shattered by the pealing of the church bells.

Was it that first, each bell sounding louder—so it seemed—than the other? Or were the awe-struck listeners—then they had ever sounded before, the changing strummings were, dim and clear. A moment later there came a change, and dim and gram, with a sound that gave the alarmed listeners a sense of shiver, each bell-stroke fell with a muffled sound amid their ears.

What could it be, what did it mean? Bells at midnight—a peal—and a muffled peal?

The bucolic mind (rightly or wrongly) is proverbly slow, yet even in the slowest of the brains of the disturbed villagers, as they trembled from their beds, and hastily dressed themselves for the storm to come, the minds that started inquiries to one another, strange questions moved over them;

Within ninety seconds of that first cracking peal, the whole village was astir, and most of them out at their doors, or huddled in little questioning, wondering groups.

"An enemy hath done this," quoted old StasRumby, while another hailed the "Heathen Church," and another the "Free Methodists," was allowed to quote, or misconstrue, was more often the latter—Scripture on most ordinary, and on all extraordinary occasions.

"Somebody as he've got a spite agin our Squire, or maybe again the lady," suggested a second.

"Can't be agin t' Squire," commented a third, "for what could anyone as he's a spite agin he be for?"

"Some poulin' chap, maybe," hazarded another.

"Or o' em grooms as he'd a track some time or o'theer." 

"Some 'oomn mos' likely," snorted the carrier's wife.

The suggestion was received with a scurrilous dental utterer in many keys.

"The street it's no 'oman in t'case where t' Squire be concerned," cried one of the men. "Us all knows 'um too well to believe any tale o' that kind."

"Ye'er never knows, never, George Mills," replied the woman who had hurled the bomb into the midst of the group more, however, in answer to their college days. They crack a joke like wi' some berried or what, as ain't got no more brains behind her pretty, powdered face than there is in that yểul skull whee's on the sideboard in t' doctor's cookin' room, and such gals want a common-sense as they spoes that t' just going gent as speaks pleasant to 'em goin' to marry 'em, an an—"

"Tain't no 'oman as t' Squire ha' jilted, I'd take my youth," interrupted one of the group, who had not as yet spoken. "It's known as a fact that a woman's like has to be. It's be a sight more likely as t' lady as Squire be goin' ter marry has a jilted some other chap fur he, an 'pach whose nos be out o' jint have planned to vex t' lady by playin' t' fule-trick wi' t' bells, an—"

The speaker stopped short, for with a suddenness equal to that with which they had begun, the pealing bells now ceased.

The various gossipping groups up and down the street now turned to one topic—the strange drama of quicksilver spilled on the polished top of a table would gravitate towards each other. Suddenly the schoolmaster appeared on the scene, and in a voice accustomed to command and lead, cried:

"This is our old friends. Let's away to the old church and take the somnart, whoever he may be."

Uncanny as the work seemed to the simple-minded people, they followed their leader readily enough, and in five minutes were at the door of the old church. The door was locked, but the schoolmaster had brought a key which was always left in his keeping.

There were nearly a dozen lanterns of one kind or the other distributed among the people—almost the whole of the population had gathered by this time—and as soon as the lamps were thrown, the assembled multitude fell in to the damp, earthy-smelling old church. Five or six, following the lead of the schoolmaster, swarmed up the belfry stairs; the remainder of the searchers ransacked every nook and corner of the main edifice below. But none, to the face all, reached the spot below the clock. All there was a glimpse of anybody, nor a sign of there having been anyone in the tower—not even that the bell-ropes still swayed, and the old, old beams and timbers that supported the bells groaned and creaked slightly, as they slowly settled back after their recent strong vibrations.

The churchyard was searched, and then, as the people straggled out through the lych-gate, they met the vicar, who had hurried from the further side of the parish. The schoolmaster, as spokesman, tolled him all that had been done, and with little like face of the mystery.

The people were gathered about the churchyard, as become-heaven clustered about their queen, the last word seemed to have been said that could be, and the vicar was suggesting that the people should return to their homes, when a new element of scare entered into the situation.

The single, solitary stroke of the deep-toned bell of the new church (it was twenty years old, but was always called the old, to distinguish it from the other) broke the night silence.

Just for a moment everyone was too bewildered to speak, then, just as the first stroke broke the spell, another single stroke of the bell sounded out, and a moment or two later a third, until everyone recognised that the death-knell was being tolled.

A strange fear now seized upon the people, and for once even their godly vicar, or the stout-hearted schoolmaster, could find words to aly the fear or explain the
MUFFLED MARRIAGE BELLS:

But a new and more carefully organised search was presently set on foot.

CHAPTER II.

More Mystery.

TANFORD EVANS, the bridegroom-elect, was wrapped in his first sound sleep, and dreaming of the morrow. The opening clash of that mysterious peal broke through his slumber-held senses, but did not actually awake him. But the sounds became linked to his sleep, and when the first few crashing notes suddenly softened to that muffled peal, the muffled sounds became part of his dream, and he smiled in his sleep.

When, a moment or two later, the peal ceased, he woke. The very air of his bedroom seemed, to his heated fancy, to palpitate with the throbbing of the bells of his dream, and he believed the sounds to have been a dream only.

"But how vivid," he mused, as for a moment or two he lay wide awake, thinking of his dream. He struck a match, looked at his watch, saw that it was only midnight, and settled himself down to sleep again. He had just begun to lose himself when the first note of that hideous death-knell sounded, and he started up, fully awake, and now fairly startled. As he listened, and the successive strokes resolved themselves into an unmistakable knell, a strange little shudder passed over him, and he murmured half-aloud: "I am not superstitious, but a death-knell in the night before one's wedding-morn is enough to give any man the cold shivers and creeps."

At length, as the knell showed no signs of giving out, he got out of bed and slipped un his dressing-gown, thrust his feet into his slippers, and went downstairs, opening the hall door to listen.

The bride-elect occupied a room in a house very close to the old Norman church, but, unlike her fiancé, she had not retired. In spite of the summer weather, and the fact that the weather was really summerlike in its heat, she had put a match to the kindling laid ready in the grate, and now, robed in a silver-grey dressing-gown, Kath sighed softly, her eyes following the disappearing boat, with their late visitor at the oars.
CHAPTER III.

At theParting Ways.

The startling mysteriousness of the last chapter of our story must remain in abeyance while we hark back some years.

Kathleen Carfax, at nineteen, and her sister Joan, of eighteen, might well have been taken for twin sisters only, but two-thirds extra-ordinary likeness to each other. The likeness, however, was in face and figure, and voice only, for in character they were as dissimilar as it was possible for two sisters to be.

Kathleen, the eldest, was a pure-minded, high-souled girl, loving, tender, strong, faithful in her friendships, loving everything beautiful and pure and strong, whether it were in nature, life, art, music, books, or wherever, in fact, she found them.

Joan, in her direct outspokenness, was cunning, cruel-eyed, black-hearted, utterly selfish, in soul an altogether reprobat creature, though she managed to hide most of her real character.

Among the many mysteries of human life, this is one of the most inexplicable that "angel" and "devil" should be born of the same mother, and that mother one of the sweetest, gentlest souls whom God ever permitted to "breathe life into a new and unseen form of life.

The sisters were orphans, and had been since Kath was sixteen and Joan fifteen, the father and mother dying within a week of each other.

George Carfax, the father, had been a miller in a large way; a man, though in trade, in whose veins there ran the veins of "gentle" blood. At his death he left everything he possessed to his two girls, and following an unusual course, he left them young as they were, with immediate absolute use of their separate inheritances.

The house they lived in—a fine old place, worth several thousand pounds—was left them jointly, and each inherited two thousand pounds; it would have been forty thousand pounds had each of the ex-millers died two years before, but he had deposited too many of his financial eggs in one nest, a nest that had proved a rotten one.

The girls had no living relatives, but attached to the house—if one may put it that way—was an old woman named Caroline, who had been maid to their mother; before her marriage Caroline stood in the place of confidant, friend, adviser, oracle to both the girls, and if Joan, with her scheming, cunning soul, inwardly resented the old woman's duennaship, she contrived to hide her dislike fairly well.

Kathleen's mourning over the death of her parents, her mother especially, had been long and deep, if, in fact, she could ever have been said to have got over it. Joan, on the other hand, seemed almost immediately to forget, and within a fortnight of the funeral appeared gay in spirit than she ever had been.

Kathleen wondered at this greeting, but with the blinding of a great love that refused to see or believe anything wrong in her sister, she concluded the lightness by saying to herself: 'She's young, and different to me. I must not judge her.'

Since those very youthful days the separate characters of the two girls had developed more markedly, Kathleen growing in sweet, unsullied purity, Joan becoming an adept in deceit, a very incarnation of black-hearted scheming and rank selfishness. Yet still her face was as pure as a picture, and her eyes full of an almost baby-like innocence.

The time when we first meet them here is Sunday afternoon, half past two, and they are in the glorious old-fashioned garden of the fine old house. They lunched at one end, and both being fond of the open air, they had each brought out a book, and had just settled down for a comfortable read, when the stillness of the hour was broken by a stentorian voice shouting:

"We're travelling home to Heaven above—Will you go? Will you go? To sing the Saviour's dying love—Will you go? Will you go? Millions have reached that blissful Shore—Their trials and their sorrows'! And yet there's room for millions more—Will you go? Will you go?"

"What on earth does that mean?" cried Joan, starting from her book.

The place where the girls were sitting was an angle in the wall of the garden, the spot being shaded with a very ancient wide-spreading cedar. By standing on a thick slab settle that occupied the acute angle of the wall, a view of the whole of the centre of the village could be obtained, and Joan asked her question, and the pair made for the settle, climbed it, and peered over the top of the wall.

At the foot of the stone cross that centred the intersecting cross-roads, a short, burly man, bare-headed, with face agleam with a repugnant light, stood with a book in his hand, giving out to the little crowd of villagers the verse announced above.

"You have loved ones who have gone before, who travelled this road," he cried, as the last word of the verse died away. "You stood by their bedside as they passed the river, your hand wiped the death-dews from their brow, you gazed with unutterable love into their face, and when, in feathery tones, and with broken breath, they, in dying earnestness, clasped your hand and cried:"

"Promise me that you will seek God, that you will make Him your friend!"

"And you promised. For a few days after the funeral, you were quieter than usual, and the Sunday after, you went to both services at the church, and you intended 'to be good' as you called it. But you did not seek God, and the devil pulled you to sleep again, and today this fine afternoe, when I can catch the spirit of this hymn, your loved ones are in glory, and you—you are farther from God than ever you were before. God help you! God help you!"

The next verse of the hymn was sung, and again he made a running comment on the thought of the verse.

Then followed prayer—such a prayer, and after another hymn, the first verse and refrain of which ran:

She opened her window presently—it was a French sash, and opened out on to a small balcony. Passing out into the cooler night air, she became conscious of voices not far away, and listening, was soon convinced that the voices were those of the village folk.

"Poor things," she murmured. "They have been disturbed from their sleep, and curious to find the practical joker, they are bound for the church."

Moving back into her room, she drew the French sash to, but did not fasten it. As she reached the table again, and touched the separate piles of letters, she suddenly altered her mind, decided not to destroy them, and taking two pieces of ribbon from a drawer, she tied them up, and placed both packets in the cupboard of a small cabinet.

The muffled peal finished at this moment, and she smiled to herself as she murmured: "The villagers have evidently caught the popular ring. What will they do with him, I wonder? Duct him in the pond, or put him in those old stocks, which, with their cattle pound, they are so proud of!"

The smile on her face grew sombre as she continued:

"It depends upon who the culprit is, how he will fare, for the common people, like their better, temper their judgments to the rich, and crush down heavily on the poor."

She was still busy with many things when the first stroke of that death-knell broke the renewed silence of the night. With a startled cry she stole aside, and still, her lips parted, her fingers clenching, her whole form instinct with fear.

Like some statues in bronze or marble, she never stirred until the last weird, grim, clanging note sounded, then she signed.

At the same instant the form of a man swung lightly from a bough of a great tree that almost overhung the corner of the house, and dropped upon the balcony just outside her room.
MUFFLED MARRIAGE BELL.

CHAPTER IV.

Checkmate!

TANFORD EVANS had come into the north-brook of Summerhayes for the sake of the fishing, and was settling at the old posting inn on the high road beyond the church. He was a wealthy man, of good family, and if various nusty old records, as well as some of more modern date, could be believed, he might have borne a title. But his more remote ancestors, as well as his more recent grandfather, had always refused the royal offers of a title. There was an old, old Welsh thymed legend in the family which prophesied dire disaster to the race if ever they accepted any of the titles of the land, and this may have influenced the refusals of the elder, more honest, house.

Stanford Evans was a man of fine parts, physically and mentally. Standing six foot in his boots, with the frame of an athlete, and the grace and bearing of a soldier, with a strong, earnest face, not strictly handsome, but full of expression, he was at the same time a cultured, well-read, much-travelled man. He had a father living, a man much of his own character.

On the Sunday afternoon with which we are dealing, Stan Evans was idling away an hour in a roomy old boat, hired from the inn where he was staying. He was not really working the two oars, but just lifting and dipping them enough to keep the comfortable old craft midstream, with his cigar held lightly between his lips, and his eyes more on the pages of a book he held in a rest (a home-made invention) secured to one of his knees, than upon where he was going.

Suddenly he was startled by a little scream, and looking sharply in the direction of the sound, saw two ladies in a light skiff not three yards away. Realising that the scream meant some mishap, he bent to his oars, and with a real University stroke, such as he had been wont to put in when he belonged to his college eight, he swept his boat across the river to the side of the skiff in a fraction of a minute.

It was none too soon. A piece of drifting timber, with a sharp, spear-like end, had pierced the side of the frail craft, and the water was rushing into the breach.

In a few seconds both girls—they were Kathleen and Joan Carfax, of course—were transferred to his roomier craft, and his own cleverly secured the damaged skiff as low. This done, he turned to the rescued girls, and introduced himself, Joan doing the same for herself and for Kath.

Joan was full of a gushing gratitude for his timely rescue. Kath was quick, but the present flush of her eyes as they met Stan Evans's spoke volumes to him.

"Where may I row you, ladies?" he asked, a moment or two later, when he had settled down once more to his oars.

Stan pointed to where the dark-red gables of their beautiful old house showed above the trees, barely a quarter-of-a-mile away. "That is our home," she said, "and if you would drop down that far, and land us—the lawn from the west side of the house runs down to the river's bank. We should be so glad.

As they drew near to their own landing stage, she beamed on him most graciously as she said:

"If our feet and skirts were not so wet, necessitating immediate change, we would ask you to drink a cup of tea with us on the lawn, but—"

She opened those baby-staring eyes of hers very innocently wide as she added:

"Perhaps to-morrow afternoon you would drop down to this same place, Mr. Evans, and let us thank you more fully then, in our fostered condition, we can do today."

Kath lifted her eyes to her sister's face, and there was a little look of depression in them, as though she felt that Joan's invitation savoured of boldness.

Stan Evans saw that little questionning, deprecatory look, and glanced from Kath's face to her sister's, but the grey eyes inquired his. Perhaps they had his own, but the gasp of a child-like nature; there is no boldness in her invitation; she's unconventionality itself—pure and simple.

The boat was at the stage now. He leaped from it to the shore, and secured his painter, turned, and gave his hand in turn to both girls in their landing. Farewells followed, and as he cast off his boat again, and pushed into midstream, the pair turned and waved him a final farewell before entering the house.

"We shall have to send you in such a quiet and unexpected place as this," he muttered, as he pulled slowly upstream again.

"They are marvellously alike," she mused, "yet there are small points of difference between the two faces, and—"

A little smile suddenly climbed into his face as he continued: "I like Kathleen best. I—"

He did not continue his murmured soliloquy, but many thoughts followed in his mind.

As early as he dared, next afternoon, he took his way down the river again, calling close to the Carfax landing as he neared the spot.

Joan was on the lawn, on the look-out for him, and greeted him with all the warmth of an old friend. Her manner was, however, altogether quieter than it had been,—rather as if Kath's face, deceived by the marvellous likeness between the two sisters, and by Joan's new manner, he took her to be Kath, and for some time basked in the sunlight of Kathleen's presence—as he thought.

It was only when he suddenly said: "How very relais
of me, Miss Carfax. I have not yet asked how Miss Joan is," that he discovered his error, his companion laughing merrily at his expense.

"I am Joan, and Miss Carfax is lying down—she had a slight touch of headache. But she will appear soon, fresh as the proverbial daisy, and ready for that panacene for every female ailment, a cup of tea."

There was a slight muffled sound between the pair, and the laughing Joan turned her head, crying immediately:

"Talk of angels, and we hear their wings! Here comes Kath."

A moment later he was greeting Kath, whose cheeks were warmed under the power of his admiring gaze.

For nearly another hour the trio were together, and Joan's quick, vivacious eyes saw how that in the presence of her sister any power that she herself had won over their visitor vanished, for he fell utterly under the thrall of Kath's tenderest personality.

Bought, she knew him, and expressing his surprise at having met them, uttered his regrets that he was leaving next morning for Seaclyffe.

All unconsciously to herself, a little look of blankness, of disappointment, leaped into the eyes of Kath as he uttered his regrets. Was he, for his glance had sought hers first, and he did not see the look of swift resolve that rushed into Joan's face, and he turned with surprise as she said:

"How strange! I, too, am going to Seaclyffe to-morrow, for a few days only. I hope we shall meet sometimes."

He turned to Kath to say: "Do you accompany your sister, Miss Carfax?" and turning thus quickly, caught the flash of surprise on her face at what had evidently been her first intimation of Joan's proposed trip.

"I think I understand Miss Joan a little," he mused; then still to himself he murmured:

"Checkmate!"

CHAPTER V.

A Chance Acquaintance.

It is worth while, or is it at all necessary, for any writer to elaborate comment on the details of character of the actors and actresses who "stir their little day" across the paper stage of his or her book? We think not. Rather let the story itself paint the characters. We have stated that Joan Carfax was a deep, cunning-hearted, evil-souled girl, and the swift, unerring speed by which she had as suddenly given utterance in the closing lines of our last chapter will outline in boldest character what she was at heart.

When Stanford Evans had left, she turned to Kath, and with a meaning little smile, said:

"I know you are burning to know what it all means, Kath. Well, simply this—"

There was a quiet defiance in her tone, and in the flash of her eyes, as she went on:

"Stanford Evans is a catch worth having, and I have taken a fancy to him, and mean to book him if it is any way possible. Before you came out he had risen to my bait beautifully—you see how much better the piscatorial simile suits a topic like this, than the bow-and-arrow比喻s that shall be employed to vivid-visions—and I am sure if I could have him to myself for a full fortnight I'd land my fish! What do you think of that for a bit of feminine Isaac Walton talk?"

Kath sighed softly, her eyes following the disappearing boat with their last visitor at the bars, her strong, earnest face fading slowly in the distance.

"What train shall you leave by, Joan?" was all the comment she made, knowing too well that any explanation would be useless. Joan had had several little independent trips during the past summer, at a week, sometimes a fortnight. But none of these little excursions had been connected with husband-hunting—at least, not so far as Kath knew; and Joan's speech of a moment ago almost disgusted her by its insolent vulgarity, her own nature being too pure to conceive of such thoughts, least of all to announce them.

The two girls were always early risers, and shared one habit in common as regarded travel, that was a preference always for an early start, so as to have the day before,

But a quarter past nine next morning Joan was clear of Summerhayes, en route for fashionable little seaside Seaclyffe. At the station, before her train started, she had kept her eyes wide open for Stanford Evans, but having seen nothing of him, concluded that he had not started. Then once started, she settled herself back in her comfortable "first," to enjoy "The Lady," "Modern Society," and half-a-dozen other literary trifles bought to while away the tedious of travel.

The moment that the train rushed into Seaclyffe, and she had alighted, she had begun a new search for Stan Evans. "He might have been in the train, unknown, not seen by me," she told herself.

Once, in her eagerness, thinking she saw him in the distance on the arrival platform, she began almost to run towards the spot; then just as she discovered her mistake, and was about to turn about, she plumpt right into someone.

Looking up in confusion, she met the amused and bold admiring glance of a pair of black, piercing eyes, set in the handsomest face, of the dark, Mephistophelian type she had ever seen.

"What a pair of dark men," she had said once to Kath, speaking in the gushing, random way of thoughtless girls of her type. And the only mental barber-sinister she had put upon Stan Evans the day before, as she had sat watching him while they talked upon the lawn, was the fact that the hair—four black curls—lay on his forehead.

Apologising to the owner of the black, piercing eyes for her clumsiness, she was met with counter apologies from the man. Holding her by the magnetism of his wonderful eyes, while he asked her if he could serve her in any way—luggage, etc.—he continued to keep her until, almost unconsciously to herself, she had been drawn into a regular talk.

We need not detail all that passed in conversation between them. It is enough that for a full quarter-of-an-hour they talked together like acquaintances of a day, rather than of moments only.

The man (Ferdinand Bartlette, his card said) was a specious, gentlemanly scamp, who contrived to strike one or two notes of common interest between himself and Joan. When eventually she entered the cab which a porter had summoned at her direction, her new acquaintance accompanied her to the vehicle, carrying her hand-bag and loose wrap.

When she was seated she held out her hand to him, smiling upon him as she thanked him for all his courtesy, etc. She had been longer, warmer clasp than her very brief acquaintance really warranted, riveting her smiling glance by the mesmerism of his eyes as he murmured softly to her:

"Do trust, Miss Carfax, we may meet again, for in the heavens above are softer blue than I looked into your beautiful eyes."

And held under the spell of his grace, and by flatly, she replied:

"Perhaps we may—Good-bye."

"So we may, but not good-bye," he quoted, leaving the hold he had upon her hand, with very evident reluctance.

As the cab wheeled round, she turned her head and met his ardent gaze, and in response to his gracious bow, waved her hand with a merry airness.

As the vehicle finally disappeared from his view he turned away, muttering:

"Is she worth anything, I wonder? If she is, I am sure I shall have the greatest pleasure in piquing her. It will be hard to me if I don't meet her in the town before the night is upon us, and half-an-hour's skillful pumping will settle all I want to know as to her game."

But he was right in one sense. Joan Carfax was a fool, as every girl is, he be beautiful or plain, if she suffers herself to be governed by her own vanity and overweening confidence into making herself light and careless with strangers of the opposite sex.
KATHLEEN was seated under the shade of a weeping willow that grew very near to the landing-stage that flanked the river. It was eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and two hours after her sister's departure. She had almost ceased to think of Joan's vagary, though once or twice, it is true, the thought had crossed her mind: "Has Stanford Evans left yet? If so, have he and Joan run up against each other?"

But for the last half-hour the sole thought that had possessed her was the statement made on Sunday afternoon by that open-air preacher at the village cross. Religion had never formed any part of her education, for both her father and mother had been, practically, atheists. Not that either of them ever denied God, or would have ventured to have sneered at religious but, like myriads of other people, they simply ignored God and all religion, and lived their own lives, content and happy in the comfort and wealth of their circumstances, and in the refinements and enjoyments which their tastes fitted them to enjoy, and in which their wealth enabled them to indulge. More delightful people to have to do with it would have been impossible to find; but over their whole lives, branded on all their many excellences, was the Divine lament, "But one thing thou lackest."

Kathleen and Joan Carfax, reared amid these influences, grew up, like their parents, regardless, unconscious of God, ignorant of even the letter of the great verities of the Christian faith. So that when that stentorian-voiced "ranter" had hurled his message into the open air, and it reached Kaths's ear, and was forced home to her heart by the Spirit of God, it became a real disturbing element in her life. She was still deep in thought over the matter, when the splash of an oar in the water aroused her to things present,
and lifting her head, and glancing down at the river, she met the eager, enquiring eyes of Stanly Evans.

"May I land, Miss Carfax?" he asked.

Nodding as she smiled an affirmative, she moved down the lawn, and met him just as he stepped from his carriage. Holding the water in his left hand, he gave her her hand in greeting.

"But I thought you were going to Stedclyffe this morning, Mr. Evans," she remarked.

"I had arranged to go," he replied, "but altered my mind after leaving here yesterday.

A warm blush filled her face swiftly as her eyes met his, for there was an emphasis in his tone as she spoke of when he changed his Stedclyffe plan that compelled her to think: "Did he do it to avoid Joan, and—and yet he has come here, knowing that she was away?"

He had secured his boat by this time, and was walking slowly up the slope of lawn by her side.

"Do you know, Miss Carfax," he said, "that I was guilty of watching you several moments before I let my own give that warning splash? How deep in thought you were!"

"Yes, I was," she returned, "for my mind has been strangely troubled since Sunday."

She told him all the story of the preacher at the cross-roads, and the message he had thundered forth, concluding with:

"I have never given a second thought to religion, Mr. Evans, and the thought of the individual choice of one's future destiny has never in all my life reached me before, except in my dream. And I assure you I am startled and alarmed, for it seems that preacher said be true, then I stand in a very dangerous position. Is it all true, Mr. Evans? What do you think?"

For a moment he was silent, and she saw a look of pain sweep into his face. Then suddenly he lifted his face, his eyes met her anxious glance, and husked his voice:

"It is not what I think, or, in fact, what anyone else thinks; the whole matter is put beyond the range of individual opinion, and is as surely settled as is God Himself. The Bible is a Divine revelation of man's lost, ruined condition. It is a provision of God for his lost state; the conditions under which a man is saved; and the assurance of salvation which a fulfilment of those conditions brings with it. The Bible being what it is, Miss Carfax, a Divine revelation, every one of its statements are as literally true as are those of any other book of revelation."

"Take that statement of the man you have just spoken of. He said, with all the authority of the divinely-commissioned man, that every human soul had the power of choice as to whether they would spend their future in Hell or in Heaven. The Bible is the one and only book which contains this in one form or another over and over again. Behold, I set before you an open door," it says. Again, 'Choose ye this day whom ye will serve,' Christ Himself said, 'I am come that ye might have life. Ye will not come unto Me. I know that ye might have life.' Revelation tells us that 'whosoever will may come and take of the water of life; and, in fact, the whole of the Bible teems with the wonder of this free will choice.'"

He paused, and sighed a little wearily, then continuing, said:

"Do not mistake me, Miss Carfax, and suppose that I am posing as a Christian, for I know I am not a Christian. I am one of those who, taught the way of life in earliest boyhood, have never yet chosen to walk in it. I have been idle, careless of these matters, while all the time the conviction, pleasing Spirit of God has often spoken to me. Your words, your questions, for instance, Miss Carfax, have again been as the voice of the Holy Spirit to me."

Again and again as he had talked, her face had filled with an utter amaze, and now at last she interrupted him, saying:

"You said that you were not a Christian, Mr. Evans! I do not understand this. Are we not all Christians—at least I mean all—all well, all respectable-living people?"

Her face was full of a deep earnestness as she asked her question, and the tones of her voice rang with a keen anxiety.

"No, Miss Carfax," he replied, sadly, but with emphasis, "That is where thousands make a mistake; only one thing can make us Christians, that is the possession of Christ, and Christ can only be possessed by us as we are born again."

He signed again as he added: "Oh, the shame of it, that I should know the way thus, that I should be able to tell another the way, and yet never to have walked in it myself!"

Joan was accustomed to say to her sister that it was all both the idea that a woman's tastes should all run into frocks and millinery, and a man's into game-play and things gourmand in general.

"Whyn't it be," she would add, "should not a woman love good things for the inside, as well as smart ones for the outside. I enjoy both, and intend always to live by myinside with the best I can get, while I adorn my outside with frocks and frills and faldelals."

She certainly lived up to this creed, and having secured her period of food-provision. He was an ardent—she had been there before in other days—and ordering a very comprehensive luncheon, and a pot of tea with it; she spent a full forty minutes over the repeat, for, in her deepest heart she was a gross gourmand, loving quantity as well as quality.

Over her shoulder she indulged in some strange, new thoughts as to the man Ferdinand Bartlette. The clock over the pier pavilion was striking three; when, dressed with peculiar care, she had sailled out, making her way direct to the Parade.

The wisdom from the turret to the pier she came face to face with Ferdinand Bartlette. He greeted her like an old acquaintance, and she responded with an equal unconventionality. Then, a moment or two later, hawk and pigeon passed through the turnstile, and side by side moved up the pier, ostensibly to listen to the band.

**CHAPTER VII.**

**If** it be true that "an idle heart is the devil's work-shop," then certainly his Satanic Majesty worked piecework in Joan Carfax's heart when he suffered her to listen to the lively, specious speeches of her chance acquaintance, Ferdinand Bartlette.

For nearly two hours they sat together within sound of the excellent band that discourse on that pier. Sometimes as the number of the items changed they would glance at their programmes—she had paid for both the shore—but the other shore, not they were too absorbed in talk to note the changes.

Number four in the second half of the programme was a "Selection from Faust." He drew her attention to the title, and drew her into talk about Goethe's wonderful story. "There are Gretchen and Fausts still among us," he remarked.

"And Mephistopheles?" she asked.

"Oh, like the poor, the devil we have always with us," he replied.

"I wish he was always visible to the human eye," she laughed. "Then perhaps some of the misery that comes into lives might be escaped."

With a tippling laugh she turned to him as she asked:

"What form do you think he would adopt if he came in visible form in this nineteenth century?"

"I think he does come in visible form," he replied, "only he is such a perfect quick-change artiste, and such an all-round clever impersonator of many characters—a sort of clever wizard and enterainer in life's great drawing-room—that we do not recognise him. The slaves of the Southern States, in the old days before the Emancipation, used to sing:

"Say! Did you ever see de debbi,\nWild a-wooden-up shubbel,\nAdiggin' up de taters\nIn a bob-tail coat?"

Joan laughed at the nonsensical rhyme.

"Yet there's a great truth in that nonsense," he went on. "We fell to see the devil, because he wears a bob-tail coat, or some other equally un-attractive disguise, and because he works side by side with us amid the potato-digging—the ordinary occupations of life."
MARRIAGE

She laughed lightly at the way he put the case. God help us! how we smile into the very eyes of the devil, as he talks to us through the lips of our chance acquaintances.

The clock was striking five when the band ceased playing, and the crowds moved off the pier. In the two hours that they had been together this man had continued to impress her with three important facts—first, his exalted position in society; secondly, his great wealth; and thirdly, his preference for herself above all other women whom he had ever met.

"Will you take a cup of tea with me?" he asked. "I know a lovely little select tea-room, where they have the most delicious cream I ever tasted outside of Devonshire, and their strawberries—well, come and try them, Miss Caxas."

And she went, as a silly sheep to its dooms; and every moment she was with him increased her infatuation. Once she had given a passing thought to Stanford Evans, then, her mental eyes dazzled by the picture that her Mephistophelian plumes had presented to her, she dismissed Stan utterly from her mind, and secretly determined to make the most of her time to secure so grand a catch as Ferdinand Bartlette.

For a week she lived in an artificial and a very monstrous paradise, driving, boating, strolling, lunching, and offering to her every growing sweet. It was the eighth morning after her arrival at Seaclythe, and she was waiting for his coming at the pier, having arranged over-night for a water trip together for the new day.

He was usually before time at their appointed rendezvous, but that morning he was a few minutes late, and when he did arrive Joan noticed that his face was graver than usual.

"What is it, Ferdinand?" she asked. They had been engaged lovers for several days now, and she always called him by his Christian name.

"My Uncle James, in India, is dead," he replied, taking a letter from his pocket. "I have never seen him, but he appears to have remembered that his only brother had a son, and he has left me heir to all he possessed. He was enormously wealthy, and—but I must leave all other explanations here."

There is a train leaves here for Dover at 12:15, and I must catch that, go on to Paris, where some business in connection with the estate must be attended to; then I shall have to go over-land, and make my way to India as quickly as I can.

"And leave me?" She almost screamed her question. "There is no help for it, dearest, unless—"

"Unless what?" she continued, eagerly.

"Unless we marry at once, and you go with me. In that case I will not have to travel alone, I can have a train from 11:30, and be possible, for to-morrow; I should be in time to get a special license before they close at Doctor's Commons—that is at four o'clock I think—then we could be married as early as eight o'clock to-morrow morning, and go straight on to Paris. We can have a delicious beginning to our honeymoon there for a few days, then go to India, and press on my darling. There is a train leaves here for Dover at 12:15, and I must catch that, go on to Paris, where some business in connection with the estate must be attended to; then I shall have to go over-land, and make my way to India as quickly as I can.

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CHAPTER VIII.

"Shall We, Kath?"

ATH felt and looked stunned as she held the letter in her hand, bearing the Paris post-mark, and signed by Joan. The very first line had taken away her breath.

"My dear Kath, I am married," the epistle began. "The interesting event occurred last Tuesday, and today I am Mrs. Ferdinand Bartlette."

Here followed a very highly-colored piece of fiction as to her first meeting with her husband, and continued in the same florid strain, she explained that they would be starting for India before any reply to her letter could reach her.

"I do not think, until we arrive, that I can safely give you an Indian address," the letter went on, "as I doubt very hard how we shall do, or where we shall be. We shall doubtless be gone a year, or we may even settle there for a few years; or, after India, we may go to a Round-the-world tour, if either of the latter courses should come to pass. I will send you an address to which to write. Of course you will be surprised at the suddenness of my marriage, and I doubtless say, 'That's just like Joan!' But you will, I know, Kath, get on quite as well, if not better, without me, and certainly you will have a clear field for annexing Mr. Evans—that is if he is in your neighbourhood, and I believe he is, for my own impression is that when he heard me announce my projected visit to Seaclythe, he immediately altered his plans, and said to himself, 'I'll stay here, and make love to Miss Kath琳.'

Well, success to his love-making, and I shall quite expect, on the receipt of my first letter from you—whenever I can let you have an address—to hear either that you are already married, or that the wedding is on the hills. By-bye, Kath, from your loving Joan."

Twice over Kath read this epistolary bomb, her first amaze giving place to some little anxiety lest Joan's vanity having blinded her to real caution, she might have suffered herself to be ensnared by some very sly scam who had merely married in the name of love.

Presently Kath's mind recurred to Joan's allusions to Stanford Evans and herself, and a warm blush suffused her face. At that moment there was the sound of a step near by; she knew by instinct who it was, and the flush deepened in her face as she lifted her eyes to meet the warm friendly glance of Stan's face.

"I have come to wish you good-bye," he began.

An almost frightened look flashed into her eyes. He saw it, and, without a break in his speech he went on:

"I have had a telegram from Cairo; my father is there, and a dangerous disease has befallen him. He has called me nearly a hundred girl to-morrow morning, Ferdinand. I have only ten thousand pounds, which brings me in three hundred a year only."

"Only three hundred a year, Joan?" he cried. "Why, how on earth is it invested?"

"It is not really invested in the ordinary sense of the term, she replied, as she rested at his back, who allow me three per cent. interest on it."

He hardly waited for her to finish her explanation before he said:

"That's a real swindle, my darling! You let me have the handling of that little affair, and you shall get ten, if not fifteen per cent., not that you will actually need money, with all my income, but you had better have a thousand a year for that little egg of your own, than three hundred simply. You can always fling it around in charity if you don't want it."

Before they left London next day, as man and wife, Ferdinand and Kath琳 had negotiated that ten thousand pounds, and the proceeds of his management were in his own personal possession—re-invest as Joan supposed.
espionage from the house, while no one could see them from the river without their approach becoming known.

"You know, my darling, what I would fain say," he began, as he seated himself by her side, still holding her hand.

"I had not thought to have spoken before I left, but—well, my impatient heart, and something in your own dear face, emboldened me, and I had begun before I knew where I was. Tell me, my darling, that I have not deceived myself, tell me that you love me, even as I love you."

She lifted her pure eyes to his; they told all the story of her heart, told it more eloquently than any words could have done, yet because he had said "Tell me," she obeyed him, and in a voice firm, though low, almost as though she stood at the marriage altar, taking the life-vows of wedlock, she replied:

"I do, Stan."

That was all, for, as a matter of fact, it would have been impossible for her to have uttered another word, for, for some moments, both her own and his lips were engaged in a work that rendered speech impossible—and superfluous.

After a while the kisses became intermittent, rather than a continuous, unbroken stream, and speech became possible, and with his arm about her, he whispered:

"I have only known you twelve days, dear Kath, but I loved you, I think, from the very first moment I looked into your dear face."

Then for half-an-hour they talked on together as lovers only do talk, until at last, looking at his watch, he saw that the moment had come when he must leave, and he rose to his feet, lifting her with him, for his arm was about her.

"I will write, my darling, as often as I can," he said, "and the moment my duty frees me, I will hurry back. God be Mizpah to us while we are parted."

He sighed a little wearily as he said:

"How glibly one takes those old, old Bible words upon one's lips, and yet I have not yet entitled myself to expect God's special care, since I am not yet His."

He gazed down with an almost solemn gravity into her eyes as he added:

"Kath, dearest one, shall we both begin definitely to seek God?"

"I will," she replied.

"And I will," he returned.

A few minutes later, the pair parted for the night.
The eyes of both glistened with unshed tears, he gathered her into his arms in one long, lingering, passionate embrace, their lips clung to each other's, then they parted.

CHAPTER IX.

In the Cafe.

JOAN CARFAX had been through the marriage ceremony with the man whom she knew as Ferdinand Bartlette, and had travelled with him immediately afterwards to Paris. It was her first visit to Paris, and amid a perfect whirl of continual delights she was regardless of everything past and future, contented utterly with the giddy life of her immediate present.

In response to her questions, her husband had told her a full and marvellous tale of his pedigree and antecedents, and over and over again she had chinked herself at the thought of how well she had played her cards, little dreaming what a past master of fiction he was.

The questioning had not been all on one side, for he had been curious to know her antecedents, and, like diamond cut diamond, she, too, indulged in some pretty fiction, making herself out to be absolutely relationless, declaring that as she had no home of her own, and being fond of change, she had lived in apartments for twenty and some years—she had already given her age as twenty-two—just where her fancy led her.

"Where was your original home, where were you born?" he had asked.

"At Mevagissey, in Cornwall," she had replied.

And looking into her innocent-looking eyes, he believed her.

They had been in Paris four days, when, after an excursion on the Seine, they repaired to a cafe—where already they were known—and the wily, wily, determined gentleman, engaging a private room for the meal.

"Madame is very gay to-night," the waiter told himself, as he watched Joan's exuberance of spirits.

On a couch in the private dining-room of that cafe lay Joan, wrapped in a deep insensibility. Grouped about the couch were a doctor, two gendarmes, the proprietor of the cafe, and Jacques, the waiter. Jacques tells all he knows.

Madame and monsieur had become pretty regular customers at the cafe during the past few days; just how many days he could not recall, perhaps a week, perhaps less. Monsieur had engaged the private room for dinner that evening; they had had the same room several times before. He had noticed how very gay both his guests had looked. Then, when they had dined, monsieur had gone out for a few minutes to purchase some roses; the roses were even now fastened in madame's breast. After that there had been an unusual rush of customers to the cafe; he had been desperately busy for nearly two hours, then in a momentary lull he remembered the guests in the private room, and as he entered the apartment he found monsieur missing, and madame as she now was. He had thought that she had taken too much of the liquor, for she had shown herself to be fond of the convivial.

"She is not drunk," the doctor said, "but has evidently been very heavily drugged. Let her be covered up warmly, and let her lie just where she is until she recovers consciousness. I will send a "little sister" in to watch by her." It was not until eight o'clock next morning that Joan awoke, heavy, stuporous sleep having superseded upon the drugged insensibility, and there had been no waking, conscious period between the two states.

She opened her eyes to see the wazon, almost bloodless face of the calm-eyed sister of mercy bent over her, the strange, magpie gorb of the nun staring at her for a moment, and acting almost like a Tom to her still half-deadened senses.

"What has happened? Where am I? Where is ——?"

She half-raised herself, looked eagerly round the room, then the sight of the familiar appointments giving her some faint clue to what she was, she finished her inquiry: "Where is Ferdinand, my husband?"

The nun did not understand English, and could speak no word of her patient's tongue, so simply shook her head.

Joan had been taught French at school, but had never been blessed by the linguistic faculty, and what little she had mastered at the time dropped from her before she had been away from school a quarter.

But she was awake now, and her own ignorance of French, and the nun's ignorance of English, could not stop her from making inquiries elsewhere. Leaping from the couch, she essayed to run to the door, bent upon finding someone of whom to enquire about her husband.

But the moment she was upon her feet she staggered, grew dizzy, while a horrible nausea assailed her, and reeling back to the couch, she began to vomit violently.

The sickness was barely over when the doctor, who had just returned from sitting up with a patient, appeared upon the scene. Almost at the same moment a gendarme and a superior arrived.

The doctor spoke English very well, and began to question his patient.

"Is your husband, you say, madame?" he returned, when Joan had told him all that she could remember of the evening before.

"Yes, we were married a week ago in London," she replied.

"A poor young lady!" he continued, pityingly. "You may depend upon it, you have been victimized by some scoundrel."

"Has madame a photograph of monsieur?" the police superior asked, through the doctor.

She took a large pocketbook from her breast, and pressing the spring, opened it, revealing the pictured face of her husband.

The official studied the portrait for a moment, then he smiled knowingly as, again through the doctor, he said: "Monsieur loves you too, my dear lady, and he would like to find this gentleman. He has, of course, discovered that we wanted him, and has fled from us as well as from you, madame. He is one of the greatest rogues and swindlers of the day, and is wanted for quite half-a-dozen things in France, as well as many in England.

"Took a gust of deadly, bewildering into the official's face, as, with the sudden memory of her ten thousand pounds, she cried:"

"But he has got from me ten thousand pounds—all the money I have, all that I have to live upon."

"He will have to answer for that, madame, when and if he married you for, my dear lady," continued the official, adding: "And you may depend upon it, you will never see a son of that money again."

At this moment Joan collapsed, and had to be got to bed by the nun and the doctor. And all that day and for on into the night, she was very sick and ill; then a long, natural sleep came to her, and she did not waken until noon of the next day.

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MUFFLED MARRIAGE BELLS.

which she had not shown to her husband, and found herself possessed of just forty-seven pounds in English money, and ninety-two francs in French currency.

"This will take me home, after paying the hotel charges," she murmured, as she arranged a pretty little fiction for Kathleen's special delectation, then contrived to live upon her ten thousand pounds, now that my own is gone."

She bade herself with her packing, and while she worked she mused-

"Or, or what shall I tell Kath, I must decide as I travel; meanwhile, his luggage (which, of course, I shall take with me) will lend colour to any pretty little fiction I may fashion, as to my appearance without him.

An hour later she was speeding across France, southwards and westwards to Calais. She had a splendid crossing to Dover, and from Dover to Victoria enjoyed a mild flirtation with a rather distinguished-looking, middle-aged gentleman, the only other occupant of the first-class compartment, in which she made up.

She spent a night in London, putting up at an hotel where she had often stayed in the old days before her marrying madness. It was typical of her character that she could so far divest herself of the trouble she was in as not only to go to the theatre, but to enjoy it, literally screaming with a laughter over some of the fun of the "Circus Girl."

Returning to her hotel at a quarter past eleven, she ate hot steak and kidney pie-she had ordered it—then went to bed, the list of some of the music she had listened to making across her brain as she laid herself down to sleep.

There was a vein of sadness in all Kath's thoughts now that her love was so far from her; besides which, the spiritual inquiries first aroused in her by the words of that preacher, and again more fully by her lover's reply to her questions on the same subject, lent a new gravity to her.

Again and again had she thought of Stan's words in that parting moment, when, having murmured that "God be with you to us, my darling, while we are absent one from the other," he had said: "How glibly I use that old word, and yet I have no right to expect God's special care, since I have not yet let Him come into my life."

Then as he had said: "Shall we promise each other, Kath, definitely to seek God?" and she had said, "I will," and he, too, had taken the same vow.

More than once, or twice, or thrice, since that hour her heart had gone out in such desperate yearning after the Divine, that almost in the very language of the seeker of old times she had cried: "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!

"How do men and women find God?" she asked herself, then remembering what her lover had said, that the Bible was the direct revelation of God to lost and fallen man, and that its pages teemed with the conditions of salvation, and how to have the assurance of that salvation, she set herself to read the Word of God.

It was all new to her that she read it with an avidity that would have amazed the ordinary religions-minded person. Much of it was entirely incomprehensible to her, but the story of the life of Jesus, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, her heart began to open strangely to the marvellous story of the Christ and of His great sacrifice, to the power of His resurrection, and to the promise of His coming again.

She had no idea how long as she could see this evening, and now, in the gloom, with the book upon her lap, and her eyes fixed upon the faint light on the horizon left by the lingering after-glow, she was thinking deeply over all she had read.

Yet for outer sense of sight was piercing by something, and she became conscious that she was watching some object. Like the sweep of a boomerang that returns to the hand of the thrower, her mind bounded back to things present and terrestrial, and she began to wonder what the shape was that seemed to be so rapidly growing up before her.

Clearer, sharper—that is, as sharp as the uncertainty of the gloom would permit—the silhouette grew, until the outlined form of a woman became plain.

The form was advancing towards the window, where Kath sat watching, with a strange, marvelling questioning in her heart.

"If I did not know that Joan was hundreds of miles away," she mused, "I should declare that that was Joan now crossing the lawn."

The figure drew nearer; she rose excitedly to her feet, her mind full of the absentee. Suddenly the sharp, glad knock of Reagh's, Joan's Irish terrier, which she had let behind when she went to Seaclyffe, sounded through the house.

Kath was staring out through the open French window, growing more and more excited and bewildered as the figure approached. Then, just as another ryp of almost frantic delight from the throat of the terrier sounded through the house, followed by the racing of the dog's feet, Kath stopped on to the lawn, and moving rapidly towards the forthcoming figure, said, "Joan!"

"Dear old Kath!" replied Joan, embracing her admiring sister as they raced into each other's arms.

"Just so," laughed Joan. "What is Caroline, and what can you give me for tea?"

CHAPTER X.

A New "Arabian Night's Entertainment."

UT where is your husband, Joan? Why have you come alone?" began Kath, her bewilderment seemingly growing rather than decrease.

"Let me get inside, Kath, and get my breath," laughed Joan, "for I have a long, but such a beautiful story to tell!"

She paused to pat the excited terrier, then bidding it lie down, she wound her arm about her sister's waist, and moving slowly on to the house, she began the fuller deception she had planned by crying gashingly:

"Oh, yes, I never dreamed that real love could be half so beautiful a thing as it is. 1—1"

They had reached the open window now, and stepping to the room together, she turned to Kath, saying:

"But I can't talk until I have had a wash and some tea—let Caroline get me a good, solid tea—med at cocoa. I shall not be more than ten minutes upstairs, at the outside, for I am hungry enough to eat a horse and chase the fiddler."

She made her way upstairs, leaving Kath to arrange for the tea; then, true to her prophecy, in ten minutes she was downstairs again, looking, Kath thought, more blooming than ever she had seen her look before.

"Being in love, of course agrees with her, that's evident," mused Kath, as she set herself to the work of putting on her evening-gown.

For twenty minutes Joan ate and drank almost ravenously, then finally when the meal was finished, the table cleared, and the door shut upon them, she drew her chair closer to Kath, and began:

"Now, sis, for a story of love and bliae rare to find in this fin-de-siecle age."

As we have hinted elsewhere, Joan was a born fictionalist, and told out now, in the wondering ears of her sister, a story that could hardly be surpassed by an "Arabian Nights" author, winding up with: "When Ferdinand got another wire, more urgent than the first, and he had to fly off at a moment's notice, I decided, at the very last minute, that I had better let him go alone, andtransact what business was absolutely necessary, then return to me as speedily as possible, if forced, poor dear, to see that it was best so, so we flung ourselves into each other's arms, and went—not metaphorically, but literally—on each other's necks, and kissed. That strip of being that parts la purifie alseion de la belle France is the fuller for the goblins, the thickets for the tears I let fall over the side of the boat, and—well, here I am, I have brought my broken heart home to the paternal hearth, to heal—or rake, as the case may be—until my knight returns from the East."

More than once questions of ways and means, and what financial arrangements her wealthy husband had made for her sister, rose to Kath's lips, but she did not give utterance to her thoughts, for she knew something of Joan's character.

"And now I have told all my story," Joan went on,
Eagerly watched by the two convicts, he drew from his breast pocket a couple of ten-inch hair saws, and one or two files.

"tell me how you have been getting on, Kath. How's Stanford Evans? Where is he, do you know? Did he call after I left, for I don't believe he ever went to Souclyffe? I never caught a glimpse of him."

The colour came and went in swiftly flashing changes in Kath's face, as her sister questioned her about Stan Evans. Joan saw the signs of her agitation, and smiled quietly to herself, half guessing at what she was to hear.

Very humbly, sweetly, but at the same time with a kind of holy pride in her noble-souled lover, Kath told as much of her love-story as would enable her sister to understand fully the position of affairs, ending with: "You said, out on the lawn a while ago, dear Joan, that you could not have conceived that true love could have been half so beautiful a thing, and I am sure I can fully endorse your saying."

Joan laughed low and merrily as she said banteringly: "How true is the old proverb, 'Still waters run deep.' Now here you —"
unwarily on her bed, "I should say that I felt as though I was sickening for an illness."

She finally slept late on the following morning, and when she rose at last, it was to be conscious that she was really ill, too ill to dress, so she rang her bell, and crawled back into bed again.

CHAPTER XI.

Birds of a Feather.

The Minister of Marine was carrying out some new harbour works at Brest, and was using convict labour for it was cheap and effective, for the workers were always, well-less—or at least they were slaves, which practically meant the same thing. It is true that no man among those gangs of chained slaves ever did more than one-third of an ordinary labourer's work in a day, but if they were slow they were sure, for the world under the sun had power to call them out on strike.

Under the blaze of a sun that was almost tropical in its fierceness, these convict slaves toiled with hope as dead in their souls as it was clean swept from their eyes.

Now and again a convict would pass near the convicts, and more often than not would pause and watch them working. The warders were only carelessly watchful, for with the black, leader hails that filled the chambers of their carbines, they knew that the life of any would-be escapee was not worth the powder that would hurt the bullet into his heart, his lungs, or his brain.

The heat made the warders sleepy, and they winked and blinked like owls in the sunlight.

Two men, chained together, chipped with slow, monotonous strokes of mallet and chisel at a huge block of Guerance granite. They were a dozen yards from the main gang, but between them and the sea that incessantly fretted the breakwater lounged a warder, with his carbine in the hollow of his arm.

A coasting sailor, who had paused to watch two stone-chippers, shuffled along in his clumsy sandals, and a moment or two later a very French-looking bourgeois sauntered slowly up, and paused a moment.

If the particular warder in charge of this furthest output work had been watching with a lynx-like eye the two stone-chippers, instead of being really half-awake and with his face turned away from the men, he would have seen that when the younger and stouter of the pair lifted his head and gazed at the bourgeois he started violently.

"Keep up the chin-chip," he hissed to his fellow, and he made a sign to the bourgeois. The latter moved on as though he would go on to the end of the breakwater, but as soon as he was past a stack of timber piles, and a huge calm of unknown rock that formed a kind of screen behind which the two stone-chippers were working, he worked his way round until he came to a point where, by crouching down, he could not only hold close converse with the men, but touch them, if needs be, by passing his arm either round the angle or over the upper edge of the block on which they were working.

"What the devil?" whispered the younger of the convicts, in English.

"Oh, I was over here on a bit of my own," replied the bourgeois, speaking English as no real Frenchman ever did, "so I finished my work and am free to go where I please, and I am going just to the sea here I am. Of course it won't do for me to hang about here too long, so what can you do about it? I've brought some tools; I've got a few quids; I've got some tobacco and a pipe, and I've got my whetstone.

"Out of the tail of his eye the convict Jean took a glance at the semi-transparent warder, then replied haughtily:

"Baliby for you, old man, for thinking of a pal; so just shove the tools under the edge of this block, your side, and pack some stone chips and dust well up against them. Pass up a quid or two, as much as you can spare, and what tobacco you have, and all right, Gud-bye—yet, old pal!"

"Though a feller's a sneak, he may be good for a pal. Hey ho! Teddy the Ratter!"
murmured the bourgeois, taking up a snatch of the old thieves'-kitchen song.

Then eagerly watched by the two convicts, he drew out of his breast-pocket a couple of ten-inch half-saws and one or two files, and proceeded to hide them in the manner desired and explained by the younger convict. This done, he passed up seven napoleons, laying them in a little heap on the top of the stone block, then he followed this gift with some casks of tobacco.

The younger convict passed three of the napoleons along to his fellow, and half of the tobacco, saying quietly, in poor French:

"We share, Jean."

"Merci," whispered the French convict.

When this actual business was completed between the bourgeois and his convict friend, there ensued a rapid conversation between the pair, much of it couched in such language as would have mystified every million man to one owning the Anglo-Saxon for their tongue, for it was all short and extremely in the manner of the backwater.

"Cut it!" cried the convict, suddenly, his voice low and eager, for out of the corner of his eye he had seen a movement on the part of the warder, and it was as well to be on guard.

The bourgeois moved cautiously away, the cairo of rocks and the stack of piles hiding him until he was twenty yards farther down the breakwater.

A moment or two later some naval officers, attended by a couple of sailors, bustled down the quay; every warder was immediately on his feet, and the quay was suddenly busy. The new-comers passed down to the end of the breakwater, remained a few moments, then returned, the bourgeois—known to us elsewhere as Ferdinand Bartlett —sauntering back in their wake, and eventually disappearing.

Thus new villainy, Ferdinand Bartlett, alias—well, a score of other names?

CHAPTER XII.

In an Eastern Light.

SANFORD EVANS's father was, to all human appearances, dying; certainly he was very dangerously ill. The heart of the young fellow was very sore, for between his father and himself there existed a mighty bond of affection. Then, too, to parti from Kath Carfax, just when he had learned that his love was fully reciprocated, had proved to be another cause of heart-ache to him.

In the cool of the evening he sat by the open casement of the room in which his sick father lay, watching the slowly-deepening amber of the sky-wind and listening to the sound of the sea. Ferdinand was naturally busy. The new-comers passed down to the end of the breakwater, remained a few moments, then returned, the bourgeois—known to us elsewhere as Ferdinand Bartlett —sauntering back in their wake, and eventually disappearing.

Now, as he gazed out on this Cairo sun-setting hour, those pictures of his childhood seem to be reproduced, life-size before his eyes, while his heart recalls the words of the book of life connected with the smaller pictures, and across his brain there sweep the words of his childhood's song:

"I think when I read that sweet story of old, When Jesus was here among men, How He called little children like lambs to His fold, I should like to have been with Him then."

He was in the midst of these tender association thoughts, when a servant brought him a letter; and the next moment he was devouring with delight the love-words of his fiancée, Kathleen.

Then finally he came to a postscript which surprised him intensely, "I forgot, in the haste with which I closed my last," the P.S. began, "to tell you the most surprising news ever. Our poor sister, who has been married suddenly, by license, and has gone to India with her husband, they had no opportunity to come to see me, for they started within a few hours of their marriage, and they had been married nearly a week before I knew a breath about it. Her husband is a very wealthy man, his name is Ferdinand Bartlett. It is all very startling, very sudden, and I do trust that it may not be a case of 'marry in haste and repent at leisure.'"
CHAPTER XIII.

A Stained Floor.

BEFORE the night of that day when Kath staggered back to her bed, conscious that she was ill, her case looked serious.

"Blood-poisoning," said the doctor, who was called in, adding: "And a serious case, too."

He gave a complete tour of the ground-floor of the house, and without coming to the room in which Kath spent most of her time when she was not actually in the garden or on the lawns or river.

The apartment was—why waste space to describe the room itself? It is sufficient for our purpose to know that, purely because it was, it had become a literal death-trap, the air being impregnated with a foul and deadly gas.

Ordering the carpet to be thrown back everywhere from the skirting-board, the doctor began an investigation, presently discovering a large, dark, damp spot in the floor of one place.

A carpenter was sent for to take up the stained floor-boards. When this had been done, a hideous condition of things was discovered: an old drain ran across the room beneath the floor, and the pipe was broken.

"Neither you nor I could wish to stay in this house another day," the medicus declared to Joan: "and I as your sister, is a journey in an ambulance conveyance will be less risky than remaining here. Where can you go, Miss Carfax? Have you any preference for any place? The suggestion of a convalescent asylum is not effective."

Joan suggested Seaclyffe.

"The very place," assented the doctor. "Shall I see the railway people," he asked, "and make all the arrangements for the removal in the morning?"

"And bring the Grills, too," replied Kathleen.

Before the morning Kath was delicious, and calling for: "Stan, my darling," Over and over again her pithecous cry rang out.

The doctor called at half-past seven in the morning, to announce that the ambulance carriage would be at the house at nine, and it would be put on to the ten train.

Half-an-hour later, and while Joan was sitting at breakfast, the mail was brought in. At her first glance at the little pile of letters she spied one bearing the Cairo postmark, and addressed to Kath.

She opened the letter, knowing, of course, that it was from Stan Evans.

"How he loves her!" she mused, as she read the closely-written pages. Then suddenly she came to a page that puzzled her.

"How you got on, darling, in the matter of seeking God?" the letter read. "I know that you will not be likely to forget your vow, even as I do not forget mine, though I confess I feel a fool, worse than a fool, as I remember that I had spent all the years of my life up to that day when you told me your soul-struggle, without once seriously the question of how and where I should spend eternity. But since that day when we talked together over these things, my darling, a new thought has possessed me, that is—how shall I get right with God, not simply to save my wretched soul from hell, and secure Heaven, but to redeem the past years which have been given wholly to self, and to do something for the Christ who hath redeemed us? Some other time, Kath, my darling, I will write more of this, but I must be closing to-day."

"My father is no better. Sometimes I fear that he will not pull through. God knows best."

Then there followed a line or two of rapturous adorations, and the epistle closed with: "Yours for ever and aye."

As Joan finished the perusal, folded, enveloped, and thrust the letter into her pocket, she forgot her breakfast, forgot the other letters, and staring straight before her, she presently murmured slowly:

"I wonder how he would take it if she died? What would he do? Would he console himself with me? Would he—he."

Her face grew tense and set, her eyes seemed to be seeking to fathom something beyond. Then suddenly, as though some startling intelligence or decision had come to him, a light flashed into her face, the tense, strained look went out of it, and a little, satisfied smile came into the lines of her mouth, and in low, decisive tones she murmured:

"I'll not let him know that Kath is ill. I've found all his letters to her desk. I know all that has passed between them. I am conversant with all that he has told her as if he had told me, so I shall write to him as though it was his 'darling Kath' writing. He does not know that our handwritings are so identical that not even the bank people could ever tell them the one from the other coming to him as such.

Her own experience of the bank people's difficulty in distinguishing between the handwriting of Kathleen and herself brought a new suggestion to her mind and a new smile to her face."

Her own original suggestion to the bank people's difficulty in distinguishing between the handwriting of Kathleen and herself brought a new suggestion to her mind and a new smile to her face."

CHAPTER XIV.

In Cairo Streets.

IN a sense, Stan Evans was always waiting for the mail. He had no sooner despatched a letter to Kath her answer came, but for a reply to it. He was waiting and watching thus now, his heart very sad at the prospect of the near dissolution of his father.

He needed some fresh air and exercise, so he decided to go for a walk, and, on his return way, to call personally for his mail. He started off. There was nothing on the way that he had not seen before, yet it all retained some novelty for him—the men natives in their flowing white gowns; the women in their black robes, their faces veiled with black, save for where their piercing black eyes shone with an almost unearthly light, in his abstraction, to be almost run down by the car running before a high official's carriage. He passed near enough to that most curiosities of all colleges, the Mohammedan University, to hear the buzz of at least five thousand voices, students and professors, as they pursued their studies, mostly in the huge, square, roofless enclosure.

His thoughts turned upon his desire, his search for God, as he watched hundreds of the Mohammedans native drop upon their faces, in the streets and lanes, in their workshops (open to the street), in their shops, etc. and every day, every hour, thousands of English Christians sing, but the Mohammedan acts the song sentiment, though he knows nothing about the hymn.

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," Stan mused, as he watched the open Eastern worship of the natives. "May He help me to learn how to worship Him in spirit and in truth."
He passed a mosque (there are five hundred of them in Cairo), and like a flash he remembered going into a little Methodist chapel in the village of his birth, when quite a lad, to see what a revival service was like. Like some elusive, haunting line of a forgotten poem, or the faint memory of some long-ago musical air that refuses to be recalled, the memory of that meeting recurred to him: the power that had been present in it, the strange, inexplicable power which moved him then, carelessly, happy-go-lucky as had be, though he could not understand the influence. Yes, the memory of that power, a vague, illusive sense of some of the subject matter of the meeting, recurred to him now, but the definitiveness which he would recall eluded him.

He was full of the mental effort to recall what he sought when he reached the post office. His father's servant was just emerging from the place as he turned to enter, so he took the letters from the man, pocketing all but one—Kath's.

How eagerly he devoured it! He could almost have kissed the written pages in the street where he walked.

"How her love for me bubbles over in this letter!" he mused, as he read the passionate, burning words.

Then he came to a little item of news. "I have just heard from Joan. She was at Susz when she wrote, and either she must have got a very wonderful husband, or else she sees him through very rose-tinted glasses, for she goes fairly into raptures over him.

"Now, Stan, as we never, of course, know just when you will be coming home, and as, when you do, I shall want you all to myself (oh, the selfishness of that last statement!), I am starting off to-day on a round of visits to introduce to whom I have been long promised. My first address will be—"

Here followed the address, and the letter closed with:

"God bless you, dear one, my precious, precious Stan, and may He speedily restore your dear father to perfect health—for I shall not believe that he is going to die. Deepest and ever-deepening love from your own

KATH."

"Bless you, my darling!" he cried, apostrophising his absent fiancée.

* * * * * *

James and Jean, the two convicts whom we saw chained together on that marine work at Brest, shared the same cell at night, for the prison was inordinately full. The closest friendship existed between them, and in the two years that James had already served out of the seven to which he was sentenced, he had made himself sufficiently perfect in the Breton French of Jean to enable him to talk very freely, very comfortably together.

Jean had all the fiery, rugged, independent courage of his race, and he never ceased to yearn to escape from the prison-life, and when his gleaming black eyes saw the gold and the steel tools which Jenny's pal brought, his mind was made up—he would make an attempt to regain his freedom, or perish in the attempt.

Both the Breton and the Cockney, Jenny, were favorites with the warders, for they gave no trouble, and both were handy fellows, and did endless little jobs in their cells, in the evenings, for their janitors.

Jenny was a watchmaker and jeweller by trade, and a clever workman, and had worked, at one time, or the other, for each of these warders with whom he came into contact. Jean was no mean career, and with one or two very crude, simple tools, chief of which was a knife, he turned out, very swiftly, every kind of carved work asked for by his janitors, they supplying the wood, some of his warders patronising even doing a brisk trade outside the prison with the carved wares which Jean supplied.

Under these circumstances it became comparatively easy for the two convict companions to plan and to arrange for the escape which Jean suggested, and which Jenny was heartily endorsed.

Their first work was to fashion an instrument by which to open the trap-door in their cell door. After this they make a pick for the door lock, which, when finished, was found to answer perfectly.

Piece by piece every detail of their plan was perfected, until at last, the night, the hour they had agreed upon, arrived, and opening their cell they crept out.

They were nothing but their shirts and drawers and stockings; their other clothes were arranged on their plant beds, with their respective bedding, and made to look like two sleeping men.

Silent as ghosts, cautious as tracking panthers, they made their way to a room where they knew, if they could gain entrance, they would not only find a selection of plain clothes, but could also easily escape from the prison building, by the window, into an uninfrequent, unguarded precinct of the prison.

Fortune favoured them: they might have had the prisons to themselves, so absolutely undisturbed were they.

Ten minutes after leaving their cell they were dressed in serviceable suits of civilian clothes, then easily forcing the window, they prepared to descend.

"No man liveth unto himself." Every life—the life of the week-old babe, or that of the doddering nonagenarian—has some influence, conscious or otherwise, upon the lives of others. And when those two convicts, Jenny and Jean, in their turn, were cut off between heaven and earth, clinging to that prison window sill, their fate, whichever way it might turn, was bound to affect the characters and after-events of our story. Our next, the continuation of this, will be entitled "BETWEEN TWO WOMEN."

(TO BE CONTINUED).

"Between Two Women."

NOTE!—The above, No. 358 Thrilling Life Story (sequel to the present number), written by GRACE GARLAND and MARIE MORRELL, will (N.Y.) be published on Friday next, May 9th.

The above story is well suited for all those who wish to read something of a cheery, bright, pure and wholesome character; and in, at the same time, intensely interesting and good throughout.

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"BETWEEN TWO WOMEN."

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Between Two Women.

By GRACE GARLAND and MARIE MORRELL,

Authors of "Muffled Marriage Bells," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE ENCOUNTER.

The death-angel brooded over the sick-room where Kath lay, the fair girl's life hung in a balance, and Joan's soul, her whole nature, shivered with that nameless fear of death's nearness to which persons of her peculiar temperament are specially liable.

All day she had grown more and more hysterically nervous, until now, at a quarter-past eight in the evening, she felt that she could bear the strain no longer, that she must get out of the room, out of the house, for a time at least.

"I shall shriek, shall go mad, or do something desperate if I don't, I know," she muttered to herself, as she went to her own

"I beg your pardon, madam," he stammered.

NOTE: For first part of this story, see our No. 357, entitled: "MUFFLED MARRIAGE BELLS." (Still obtainable).
room and hastily donned a long cloak that had a closefitting hood attached.

Once out of the house she felt immediate relief from the feeling of being watched. There was a stiff breeze blowing, and it acted like magic upon her over-wrought nerves. She set her face towards the Parade, and could taste the salt from the diffused spray that was breaking over the near-distance sea-wall.

She moved swiftly, her soul eager to see and hear the last faint echo of him as it beat against the concrete wall. Turning the last corner before coming upon the open Parade, the wind caught her, and literally hurled her into the arms of a man who was turning the corner, going the opposite way to herself.

Just fast enough to hold her he held her in his arms, as much to help him to recover his own equilibrium as to keep her from falling. Where they had collided a street lamp hung its wind-waved light down upon them, the face of each being perfectly plain to the other. With a started exclamation she cried:

"Joan!"

Swifter than he to take in all the meaning of this strange meeting, she made it appear that her breathlessness was due to the haste with which she had been moving, and from the stress of the storm— to these things, and not to her frightened face.

Smiling back into the staring, wondering eyes of the man, who slowly released her, she said:

"I do not know who you may be, sir, but you are evidently mistaken for my sister Joan, Joan Carfax that was last seen from Bartlette, and is now off the way to India with her husband."

He stared wonderingly into the fair-haired-encrusted face; the blue eyes answered his look of wondering, momentary doubt, with a stare as direct as his own, and he was utterly defeated.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he stammered, "but the likeness is extraordinary—enough to deceive almost anyone. I met Miss Joan Carfax frequently some time ago. Pray pardon my blunder. Good-night."

He raised his hat, and hurried away round the corner. He doubled again a moment later, round another corner, then feeling a bit safer, he slackened his pace, and lifting his hat, mopped the sweat that was streaming from every pore of his head and face. The moment that he was out of sight, Joan hurried on, her heart beating against his collar, against his breast. She raised her handkerchief up beneath the drawn hood, over her moistening brow. Bartlette, and is now off the way to India with her husband.

"What an escape! How did I manage to fit that so beautifully instantaneous, so admirably adapted for the circumstances?"

She thrust her handkerchief up beneath the drawn hood, over her moistening brow.

"If I go on at this rate," she continued, "I shall begin to think that I am really Keth, and she me. I sign the contract with her signature; correspond with her banker, and with her doctor; and I have now managed to deceive that wretch, Ferdinand."

A shiver shook her frame as she muttered the name of the man into whose legal keeping she had so recklessly given her life. "Why," she asked herself, "did I tell that lie? What strange instinct prompted me to hide my identity?"

She rose to her feet again, her hood was drawn well over her moistening brow, leaving only the central of her face exposed to view. Her hand was pressed against her side, as though she would, if possible, still the beating of her excited heart.

Suddenly a new thought struck her, and her heart stood still with a swift dread as she asked herself:

"Is he doing here? Why has he again come to this place, of all others? How am I to avoid meeting him again?"

She stepped clear of the shelter, and looked sharply along the wind-swept Parade. She half-expected to see him following her, but there was not a creature in sight. But the tear of meeting him again had taught her too fiercely to suffer her to rest, and with a sudden revulsion of terror she darted across the road to half a passing cab.

The vehicle was empty; it was a four-wheeler; she got in swiftly, having given a hurried direction where she was to be driven, and sinking back into the deepest corner of the musty old fly, she gave herself up to thought.

"Half-an-hour ago," she mused, "I was thirsting for adventure, and now I might be breaking the horrid monotonous sick-nursing. Now I've had an adventure, with a vengeance! Now the question is, 'What am I to do to keep clear of that wretch?'"

A moment later the fly drew up at the door of her lodging, she paid the man, and raced up the steps of the house, and pouncing on her husband, flashed anquiring glances all down the road, to assure herself that she had not been followed, that her husband was nowhere in sight, she entered the house by means of a latch-key.

Reaching her own room without encountering anyone, she flung off her cloak, dashed her hot face with cold water, brushed her hair, donned her nursing apron, then passed across the landing to her sister's room. All her hysteria was gone, but a hideous fear of another hand held her in its grip.

CHAPTER II.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.

WHERE he had paused the man, Ferdinand Bartlette was more agitated, as first, than Joan Carfax had been when she entered that shelter after their strange meeting.

"How could I have been such a blundering idiot," he muttered to himself, "as in let Joan's name slip? Surprised it had been her, why, she was like a tigeress, for those innocent-faced, fluffy, Persian-kitten-like women are nearly always tigresses at the bottom."

He moved very slowly on. "What's this sister doing in my wonder?" he went on. "Is she married or single? If single, her name will be Carfax, of course." He half-paused, his mind as well as his feet being in a halting mood. "I did not want to stay in this hole to night, but, if when I have consulted the visitors list, I find the name of Miss Carfax therin, I will stay, and tomorrow I will introduce myself, and who knows? There may be another thousand to be meddling."

With this new resolve in his heart, he turned and darted away in a new direction, in the direction of the station, bent on getting a local paper as a newsgear's on the way. He was too quick for him. The station-master was already so, the proprietor was closing the door, but he served his last customer with the paper—the last one in stock.

By the light of a street-lamp the scanty scanned the columns of names and addresses, that composed the "Visitors' List." Quickly, quickly, he searched the columns for the name, but it was not there, and he overlooked the line of lettering at the foot of the last column, and which announced, "For remainder of Visitors' List see page 6."

With one final glance at the page he had been studying, he screwed up the news-sheet, and tossing it into the gutter, pushed on towards the railway-station.

"I wish," he muttered to himself, "I could have found out what she was doing here, and where was she going. She looked, clad in that hood and cloak, as though dressed for a railway journey."

He quickened his pace, his last thought being: "If she is travelling by train, and I am quick, I may catch her at the station."

He arrived at the station platform just as a train was starting—for whence he did not know. All that he did know was that a cloaked and hooded woman, whose face and general appearance (seen at the distance he was from her) were almost identical with the woman whom he sought, was leaning out of the window of a carriage in the four-fifths of the train.

"Here's after her!" he muttered, as he leaped into the last carriage, just as the train was pulling out of the station.
CHAPTER III.

FLIGHT.

THE two convicts, Jenny and Jean, manœuvred their descent from that prisoners' clothing room with the greatest possible ease; two stack pipes, with the iron brackets that fastened them to the prison wall, made, seemingly, expressly for fugitives' convenience. When they landed in the wood-chopping yard, where there was a stack of unchopped blocks nearly forty feet high— as high as the precipice wall, in fact. Against the wood pile was a light ladder, the pile and ladder offering everything which the escaping men could desire.

To climb the timber stack was the work of a very few moments, then they hauled up the ladder, and lowered it over the wall, accomplishing everything with the most perfect silence.

The night was dark, everything favoured them; they ran lightly down the ladder, then when they were both safe on terra firma again, they lifted the ladder and ran it out of sight amid a dense growth of wild bracken.

They knew, from long observation from their cell window, in which direction lay the neighbouring town, and in which the open country, and they took their way to the country.

Their hearts were very light, for they felt pretty confident that they would not be missed until daylight, until the prisoners—"the-hip-pocket," call sounded. They had money in their pockets, good clothes on their backs, and believed themselves safe.

Jean knew all the Brittany coast, and also of a hundred places where they might live for a millennium and never be suspected, never be recognised.

"From the coast," he assured Jenny, "we could at any time get a passage, for a few francs, to Jersey, in a trading boat, and from there we could cross to England, and thus escape any police spying at the French ports."

An hour after they had left the prison, a light vessel driven by a merry-faced, sabot-shot peasant farmer, overtook them. The aroma of fresh fruit filled their sense of smell, for the wagon was laden with fruit. They hailed the driver, solicited a passage, offered to pay him for it, and for some time, if he could sell them any.

Five minutes later they were seated in the wagon, eating strawberies, and telling their story (a rare piece of fiction), while they covered the ground at the rate of a good six miles an hour.

For an hour and a half the wagon carried them on, then its light engine crossed country to a large jam and preserve factory, and the pair alighted. The man could not change the Napoleon offered him, but laughingly assured the pair that a mouthful of fruit did not matter, and that they had proved such good company, had made his tiresome night journey pass so quickly, that they were welcome to all that they had had.

"Our good luck again, Jean!" laughed the younger man, Jenny, as they pursued their way, refreshed by their meal of fruit and by the long ride.

It was an hour after dawn, that they were suddenly made aware of the proximity of a railway, by the shriek of an engine whistle, and found themselves almost close to a station.

What line was it? Could they travel by it into any part of Brittany? Would it be safe to venture into the station? They held a consultation, and decided that they would venture.

The station was open; there was a market train just leaving, and having found out—without betraying their ignorance—whether the lines went, they took their tickets, and were on the point of entering a carriage, when half-a-dozen gendarmes came briskly out upon the platform.

CHAPTER IV.

LEFT TO DIE.

SAN EVANS gave one swift, searching glance all around, then realising the situation, he muttered, "Trapped!"

A strange smile, a mingling of many emotions, crossed his face as he continued his muttered thought, and his breath came hard.

"But I'm British; as they will find, and if they mean murder, some of them will drop before I go."

His back was against a bit of ruined masonry; his eyes flashed with fierce determination; his nostrils quivered like some restless thoroughbred's; his right hand slid swiftly behind, under his light linen jacket, to reach the revolver that he carried in his hip-pocket. But before he could draw it forth, a big stone, hurled with the precision of a carefully-sighted rifle-shot, caught the elbow of his backward-thrown arm, and the limb dropped helpless at his side, the bone broken in two places.

At the same instant half-a-dozen other stones—great, ugly, dangerous missiles—were flung from hands that could aim as true as a battlefield sniper, and every stone reached its mark.

With a dull groan Stan dropped in a senseless heap upon the ground, while one huge stone had literally beaten in his breastbone, another had crushed into his temple.

"Take a pack of ravenous, snarling wolves, his consorts rushed upon him, fighting murderously one with another for everything with which he had been provided—army, clothes—for they stripped him. They would have flayed him alive, and taken his skin, had it been marketable.

"The whole process of robbing and stripping their victim did not occupy more than ninety seconds, then they vanished, as though from the earth, as their ghastly meal is finished, and they swept from afar some other carrion."

"Compressed with a strange sense of forbidding, and feeling the need of getting right away from the depressing surroundings of the sick-room, Stan had gone forth from the house, and was hurriedly winding a strange and certainly not knowing, whether he bent his steps. His mind was full of anxiety for his father, who, to the complete mystification of the doctors, still lingered. He was anxious, too, about Kath, for the mail that morning had yielded nothing for him from her—for the first time since they parted."

Unconscious of where he was going, he suddenly discovered that he had wandered into a rookery of old ruins, and, when it was too late, realised that he was cornered by seven of the most villainous-looking cut-throats whose faces ever likey on the noble name of "man."

The rest we know.

Insensible, apparently dead, he lay in the glare of the sun, in the angle of the ruined wall, where he had dropped when that murderous stone struck his temple. There was blood upon his breast where thatoulder had broken; there was blood on his temples; the sleeve of his shirt was glued to his broken arm where the blood had already begun to congeal. The goats, the felines, the mosquitoes, found him out; the flies—hideous insidious things—found out every wound, and feedted. The mosquitoes and gnats played havoc with his face, his neck, his hands. But, fortunately, he felt nothing of it all.

The robbers had taken his hat, and the sun beat down upon his brain. Fever was in his blood; his tongue was a bright-red poisoner. A groaning dog found him out, bounded towards him savagely, until within a couple of yards of him, then dropping its tail between its legs, it sneaked up softly, sniffed suspiciously, then, as if stricken with some sudden fear, it gave a frightened yelp, and turning, scurried away.

The sun slowly dropped in the brassy heavens; the blood from all his wounds had ceased to flow, and save for an occasional laboured moan or faint sigh, there was no sign of life in Stan Evans as he lay perfectly still under that fiery sky.

It wanted an hour to sunset when a gleam of consciousness returned to him. Insensibility was kinder than consciousness, for now he learned the deepest depths of physical agony.

With a piteous moan he murmured: "Kath! Kath—loved one—come to me—for I am now."

His teeth shot sharply upon a deep growl, for the mad...
daining gnawing of the myriad insects that were feasting upon him made itself felt.

By force of sheer instinct he tried to lift his arm to sweep the ravening things from his face, but with a new agony he realised that the limb was helplessly broken.

"Am I dying—am I to die out here, unknown—uncared for?" he moaned out in his misery.

He tried to open his eyes, they seemed glued; he made another desperate effort of will to open them, but again he failed. He lifted his left hand to one of the lids, and a cloud of insects rose from the lifted hand, and from the touched lid as well. The eyelids were swollen the size of tangerines, for the mosquitoes had worked their cruellest will upon them. He grasped the situation, and sighed heavily.

If he could utter a word of consolation or explanation, Stan sprang excitedly up in his bed.

"If only I could have seen!" he murmured.

He tried to rise, to turn upon his side, to get up upon his knees, but he was helpless, his brain reeled, and he had force to cease from all further effort.

"If this is to be death," he moaned, "God remember me in mercy!"

The sun sank lower and lower; a strange singing filled his ears and brain; he lost the power to hear, and lived on amid a deathly silence. All sense of life, of consciousness left him, and his head began to toss about restlessly, and his tongue to babble of many things, a strange mixture, as the babblings of delirium mostly are.

It was night—dark, deep, absolute night—and he woke again to a fitful sense of existence. The night dews had baked his swollen eyes, and he could now lift the lids a little. Through the tiny slit he caught a glimpse of the violet heavens above him, the great luminous stars shining down out of the blue vault like praying eyes upon him.

The awakening was only to a partial, to a vague, confused consciousness, yet, vague as it was, it brought with it the instinct to make his position, his need, known, and he found strength to utter a loud yell.

The yell scared one or two starving, prowling dogs that had found him out, though they had been afraid to touch him. The dogs scuttled away with fearsome yelpings, and he relapsed into utter unconsciousness again, the effort of his yell having been too much for him.

CHAPTER V.

RESCUED!

A SMALL military party, in charge of a captain and lieutenant, were returning to Cairo, after a three days' absence on a piece of special military business. The two officers were close friends, and rode slightly ahead of their men. They had chatted for a long time, but for the past half-hour had been mostly silent.

Everything was profoundly still and silent all about them. Suddenly the silence was shattered by a cry, a yell from a human throat, followed immediately by the yelp of several dogs, and a moment later four mongrel-looking mongrels shuffled wildly out from a bit of old ruin.

"That was a human cry, Hal," cried the senior officer. "Some poor creature in trouble. We must see what it is the matter."
He rode his horse to the ruin, and a moment later he and his companion had dismounted, and were standing over the nude form of Stan Evans.

"Strike a vesta, Hal," said the captain; and in another second the light of the tiny waxen thing was gleaming on the insensible Stan's face.

"It's Evans, who is staying with his sick father at the village," cried the lieutenant. "But Heaven help him: he seems to be...

He paused in his speech, to lay his hand upon the naked breast.

"No," he continued, with a relieved sigh, "he is not dead, but he's in a bad way, that's evident.

One of the troopers (for the whole party had drawn up in the spot) had lighted a bull's-eye, and now, under the directions of the two officers, a kind of hammock was improvised from a large, stout rug, and in an incredibly short time the insensible Stan was borne back to the city by his rescuers.

In an hour he was in bed in his own room, and the doctor and a nurse were in attendance upon him.

"What do you—do you think doctor?" asked the nurse, when all that could be done had been.

"I'd rather prophesy on the final recovery of the father, in extremis as he appears to be, than on this poor fellow. You know that I believe in the miracle-working power of the living God, nurse, and though, to all human sight and knowledge, it seems impossible for this poor fellow to pull through, yet—

'God's word hath still its ancient power,
No word from Him can fruitless fail,'

and if He sends forth the word of life for our patient, he will live. The issue is in God's hands. You and I, nurse, dare not despair because this mighty God, lives, and we dare not presume because we are but human and—comparatively—helpless."

CHAPTER VI.
COMPLICATIONS.

Hum! Misfortunes, like men, are very gregarious (I do you—do you?) and I have no doubt that both of us, if we think of it, will find ourselves in the same company with you.

It was Kath's doctor who soliloquised thus, the cause of his special reflection being that he had suddenly found two patients on his hands, instead of one.

Jean Carfax was seriously ill, and apparently with the same complaint as that which had brought her sister down to death's door.

Kath was no better, her life still hung in the balance; andJean's condition grew more critical every hour.

"And the worst of it is," continued the doctor, "we don't know any of their friends.

But the kindly-eyed medicus was a rank optimist, and on the cheerful principle of 'trust in God and keep your powder dry,' he kept up his heart, and did his level best for his patients.

But skilful and experienced as he was, he had not foreseen how long and fierce a fight lay before him. The day came when—this, however, will be forestalling events, so we will leave the matter here.

For one moment, as those half-dozen gendarmes emerged from the check board on to the platform, the two convicts Jenny and Jean, shivered inwardly with fear. But both of them were keen enough to realise, in the next instant, that the officers could hardly be on the hunt for them, so they kept up a bold front, entered their carriage, and waited for developments.

Less than twenty seconds later their train started, leaving the party of gendarmes laughing and chatting on the platform; they were going by an up train, the two convicts were in a down. All the day, until two hours after the sun set, the pair travelled.

"In a quarter-of-an-hour at most we shall be at the end of our journey, if we keep up this rate," said Jean.

Then, even as he spoke, the train began to slow up, and finally stopped. Jenny put his head out of the window to find out what was the matter. Some of the passengers were already out of the carriages, standing on the footboards. The guard, with his lantern, was moving along towards the engine.

Jenny opened the door of his compartment (they were the only occupants of it), and was on the point of jumping out, when the voice of Jean stopped him.

"Don't do that, my boy," cried the Frenchman.

"Everyone is getting out there."

He opened the opposite door as he spoke, stepped out upon the footboard, and bade his companion jump out.

When Jenny was clear of the train, Jean shut the door again, and joined the convicts, who were standing in the 'clear way,' between the two sets of lines.

"Follow me," cried the Frenchman, and the next moment the pair had been swallowed up in the darkness of the thick, moonless, cloudy night.

"That was a lucky stop of the train for us," laughed Jean, as they pursued their way along a narrow country lane.

"I had been wishing," he went on, "that we could slip off the train without arriving at the station. Everyone in Paris sees you and me, if inquiry is made by poking-nosed gendarmes, and so one may be tracked. But now—well—"

He laughed low and merrily as he went on:

"The last that anyone could swear to about us, even if they got on our track, would be that we were seen to leave the station at the junction, forty miles away back, for we slipped into our carriage again while the train was in that siding."

"Where are we going now, Jean?" Jenny asked.

"In five minutes we shall be at my brother's farm, mon ami," replied the Breton. "No one knows where I am, and with Jacques we shall be safe; he could double even find us harvest work at good wages."

They turned up a sharp bend in the road. A light gleamed from a window, half a hundred yards away, and pointing to it, the Breton cried:

"See! it is there, mon ami!"

CHAPTER VII.
RELEASE.

The eyes of Stan Evans opened to life again, his mind returning from its long delirious wandering. It was weeks since that day when, nude and brutally wounded, he had been left by his assailants amid those ruins, to die or live, 'as it should please the fates, by either way it would be kismet,' as they would have declared.

In his delirium his mind had lived alternately amid the scenes of his boyhood, and the house and lawn and river associated with Kathleen, and now that he had suddenly returned to the present again, he was puzzled to know where he was or why he was so weak. These were the first questions his enfeebled brain fashioned.

An intense stillness held all the land, for it was early morning. Cairo was asleep. Suddenly from hundreds of miles across the desert came the sound of a distant voice saying, 'Pray, O Lord God, for the peace of Jerusalem.'

The awakened Stan heard the calls, and knew that it was morning, and remembered that he was in Cairo, instead of England.

He sighed softly; things mentally were none too clear with him as yet. His eyes wandered to the window; it was uncurtained, and he could see a little of the farther distant landscape. A flock of purple pigeons passed across the warm orange sky; and nearer to him, in almost the same instant, two huge white birds, with long necks stretched out, and long, red legs trailing behind them, slowly crossed the red-brown sand of the "ships of the desert."—A caravan of camels was leaving the city.
Stan sighed, this time much louder than before. There was a momentary rustle as of someone rising from a seat, followed by the "frow-frow" of a woman's dress, and an instant later a nurse stood by his side.

Her professional eyes brightened with delight as she evidently recognised that his mind had returned to him. "Am I conscious again," she said. "Thank God for that!"

"How long have I been ill?" he asked, faintly, the strange, weak sound of his own voice startling him, it was so foreign to its usual tones.

"Some time," the nurse replied. She did not tell him that it was five weeks.

"But you must not talk," she went on. "You must take some nourishment, then, if you can get into a sound, natural sleep for a few hours, you will wake stronger."

Stan was faintly away, and his lips were trembling. "Wake stronger," the said, "he mused. "Fancy my being weak!"

He tried to lift his right arm, then, for the first time, he discovered that the limb was in splints.

He tried to turn upon his side, but an intolerable spasm of pain darted into his breast, and his breath came with all the fiery pain of an internal furnace blast.

The splints on the arm, the agonising pain in his breast, the sense of pressure from a bandage about his head, helped him to recall all the circumstances of that attack upon him — those hours that beat in his chest, broke his arm, and left him.

But he was spared any further thought, for the nurse returned with a cup of soup. She fed him as though he was a child; then, when he had taken the last spoonful of the nourishment, she shook up his pillows, made him comfortable, and left.

In five minutes he was sleeping as soundly as a newly-fed week-old baby. It was four in the afternoon before he woke — he had slept ten full hours.

The doctor stood by his side when his eyes opened; he knew him, for it was the doctor whom he had found on his arrival from England, attending his father.

"Come, that's better, Mr. Evans!" the medico remarked. His face smiled, his voice was full of a cheery ring.

"For a long time," he went on, "I thought you were going to slip through our fingers. But we played — nurse and myself — unto our God, as good old Nehemiah was fond of saying, and God has heard our prayers, and —"

"But my father, doctor! What of him?" interrupted Stan.

The doctor's face grew suddenly very grave.

"Not dead, oh, surely not dead!" There was a piteousness of scream in Stan's weakened voice as he uttered his question.

The doctor bent his head in assent. Then before he could speak or attempt any explanation, Stan sprang excitedly up in his bed, crying:

"Dead! My father dead! O God, what shall I do?"

"You must not excite yourself, Mr. Evans," replied the medico, as, taking his patient gently in his arms, he laid him back on his pillows.

The paroxysm of sudden grief, and the almost superhuman strength he had put forth, had been too much for Stan, and he sobbed pitifully.

The doctor laid his cool hand on the hot brow, and whispered quietly:

"You don't care for yourself more than you can help, Mr. Evans, or you, too, will die; and, judging from all that you have said in your delirium, there is some one at home in England who will sorely miss and mourn you."

With an effort Stan checked his grief, the doctor's implicit reference to Kathleen (of whose writings his delighted and joyous eyes must have told him) filling him with a sudden remembrance that there must be a heap of letters waiting for him, and, of course, some from Kath.

"My letters, doctor," he gasped. "Let me have my letters."

"He could scarcely speak in his excitement.

"Come, come, Mr. Evans!" cried the doctor, "this will never do. You are imperilling your life by all this excitement, and —"

Stan's eyes suddenly closed.

"Just what I feared!" cried the doctor to the nurse. "He has fainted!"

It was true; and from his sudden swoon Stan passed once more into the delirium of high fever. His case became even more critical than it had been at the first, and not only for a full fortnight the battle with death, by doctor and nurse, because a literal hand-to-hand fight.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PILE OF LETTERS.

I WANT my letters more than food, doctor, and news of my pande will go a long way towards helping me back to life.

It was sixteen days after that eclipse that Stan spoke thus to the doctor; and the latter, believing that the love of a true woman (though only written in a letter) would prove a mighty factor in his patient's recovery, gave permission for the letters to be given to him.

The bulk of the correspondence was addressed to him in the hand that he knew and loved so well, and Stan began to open these letters.

In spite of his impatience for the latest news of Kath, he knew that he might confuse his mind by opening the last letter first, so he began with the first-dated, according to the post-marks.

The three earliest letters were very brief, but full of repetitious love-expressions; now how she lets her heart go out it murmered softly to himself.

Then there came a blank between two periods, during which there was no letter, then came a later-dated one, shorter than ever, and saying:

"I have been very ill with blood-poisoning, my life, for a time, hanging in the balance; but I am quite myself again.

"God was very good to me in this illness, for He let Joan suddenly return, and she became my devoted nurse. You had told a sudden necessity for Joan's husband to proceed more rapidly to India than was at first intended, and so Joan elected to return to England, let him proceed in his rushing travel, and return to her as speedily as possible. She arrived the very evening before I was stricken down. Surely this was a special Providence.

"Now it is my turn to be nurse, for Joan is dangerously ill with the same disease as which prostrated me. We caught the poison from the escaping gas of an old drain, which had burst under the floor of our old house, which we have been obliged to leave, and are now in a house where you and I, darling, first met. I doubt if we shall ever go back there again, as a London sanitary expert, who has been down to examine the place, declares that in all probability the whole ground-bed of the house is saturated with the poison from that long-damaged drain.

"Joan needs me just now, my darling, so I must close this. Oh, how I long to see you, Stan, or at least to hear from you. It is so long since I have had a letter, but I know there is some good reason for this, so I wait patiently.

"God bless you, my precious love. — Your own loving Kath.

"Bless her!" he murmured, pressing the signature to his lips. "She, too," he went on, "has been ill. Thank God she has recovered!"

A tear streaming down his face he clasped his letters as, his mind reverting to the news of Joan, he murmured softly to himself:

"A queer affair all through, that marriage of Joan's. It may, of course, be all right, but well, there is 'an ambition that overleaps itself,' and Joan Carfax is just the type of woman who has always to be taken in, and who would be liable to be taken in by the first adventress whom she might meet who, with a dashing exterior and a flattering tongue, knew how to fool her into a hasty marriage, and —"

His fingers strayed to the pile of letters; he took up the last that was addressed in Kath's hand, and apostrophising her, softly murmured:

"It is of you, dear Kath, that I want to know, and not of Joan.

He opened that last envelope, and was startled to find that the paper of the letter was black-edged, and the spasm of fear seized him that it might be Kath; but the next instant he was reading the first line: ..
Joan is gone, my dear sister is dead, and, save for you, my love, I am now utterly alone in the world."

"There came a brief description of Joan's illness and death, followed by:

"I am going right away for a time to somewhere where I am not very likely to meet anyone I know, or who knew Joan and I when—when she was here with me. My heart is too full, as yet, for many words about her. But oh, that you were here, dearest! If only I could lay my head on your dear face, hear your voice, feel the comfort of your arms about me, and your kisses on my lips!

"Oh, Stan! Stan, my darling! what has happened? Why do I not hear from you? Are you ill, my love, or what is the matter? Can it only be a six-word wire, please, please let me hear from you."

The letter closed with words of urgent affection, and when he had finished it he lay back for a moment or two to think.

"Joan dead?" he mused. "And only a few moments ago I was full of hard thoughts about her. But it is of Kath I must think now, good girl, and I will wire her at once."

He mused silently for a moment. "Shall I tell her I have got this wire, perhaps it would be the wisest, safest way. I will add that all about the late death of her and my weakness hinder my flying to her at once, but at the earliest moment I will start for home.

A few moments later, by the aid of his nurse, the wire was sent off; then, by sheer force of will, he began to get well.

He almost insisted on getting up and being moved to a couch, a week nearly before the doctor considered it wise for him to attempt such a thing. Five days later he started for home, his bodily weakness literally subjected to the combined power of his strong will and his mighty love for the girl to whom he was married.

Ferdinand Bartlette (the name by which we knew the villain of our story) was travelling down to Cornwall.

"She said she was brought up at Maviguss," he mused, as the Great Western train from Reading took him tearing across some of the loveliest country the heart of an Englishman could ever desire.

He did not arrive until late at night, was tired enough to settle straight to bed, then, after breakfast next morning, he began his inquiries. But not a creature in the place had ever heard the name of Carfax.

"Then she lied to me!" he told himself. "And if she would lie to me, she would in another.

He travelled back to Reading by the last train that night (for a very few hours had been sufficient to find out in so small a place as Maviguss all that there was to know).

The next evening found him in Sedgley, his suspicious soul savagely musing. "I'm half-inclined to believe that it was she whom I met here that night, and that she palmed off a clever lie about a sister who was like her. If she did, then she was a cleverer bit of goods than ever I gave credit for being, seeing how smartly she cottoned to the situation and manufactured her lie.

When all else had failed, he was making his way to the railway-station, he thrusts his left hand deep down into his great-coat pocket. The movement was born of the savagery of his mood.

Suddenly his face lit up with a new expression. His hand had come in contact with a small book; he took it out. It was the tintest of purple velvet-covered "Church Services." It was Joan's. She had carried it in her hand one Sunday night when he had met her, and he had taken it from her at the time, stipped it into his pocket, and it had lain there undiscovered ever since.

By the light of a street-lamp he now opened it at the title-page, and read, "Joan Carfax, from her mother, on her tenth birthday." Below this was the name of the village and the date of gift.

"Eureka!" he cried.

CHAPTER IX.

DISTURBED.

COPELY-ON-STOKE was the name of the place that surmounted the date on the fly-leaf of that tiny "Church Service" which Ferdinand Bartlette had discovered in the pocket of his great-coat, and within twenty-four hours he was domiciled at the Jordan Arms, the chief inn of the place, one of the old posting inns of the ring-over-the-world.

After a careful overhaul of the whole village, he decided that if ever his wife had been brought up in that place, the only house likely to have been her home was that fine old manor-like place, whose sloping lawns ran down to the margin of the river; and he decided to pump a very generous old miller, who lived and came in contact with in the stable-yard of the inn, on the subject.

"Pretty house that, Sam," he remarked to the old man, when, half-an-hour later, he had opened up the conversation, and had described the position of the place he had intend.

"Aye, sir, you may well say that," returned the old man. "I'm no thinkin' the same village when the Carfaxes left the house."

Once started, the old man needed no further incitation, and talked on and on to the end of his chapter.

"Well, there's Carfax, sir, died when the two young gels, Miss Kathleen and Miss Joan were taken ill, I'm afraid, not very long ago, and our children, who might say, the house was left a little 'em, until either o' em should marry, then the house war to be hain as war still single. If she married, then the house war to be sold, and the money to be divided a-tween 'em."

"Then, asides this, each on 'em had ten thousand pounds left 'em. My sister, Caroline, sir, lived wi' the mother, an' lived on wi' the young gels after their parents died, so I knows the rights o' everything about 'em.

"But a three month ago, or less—I can't mind dates much—sum'un very took 'em by surprise.

Here followed a garbled story of Joan's going away, her sudden return, and the gilded story of her wealthy marriage, as told by herself.

"Then the very next morning as ever war, sir, after Miss Joan war come back, Miss Kathleen war taken ill, I'm afraid, not very long ago, and our children, who might say, the house was left a little 'em, until either o' em should marry, then the house war to be hain as war still single. If she married, then the house war to be sold, and the money to be divided a-tween 'em."

"Then, asides this, each on 'em had ten thousand pounds left 'em. My sister, Caroline, sir, lived wi' the mother, an' lived on wi' the young gels after their parents died, so I knows the rights o' everything about 'em."

Once, a very long time ago, or less—I can't mind dates much—sum'un very took 'em by surprise.

"And have neither of the sisters ever been back?" asked Bartlette.

"Never on'lic, sir," the old man returned. "The house wur sold; drains wur put right; house done up inside: ain' all ready for the new people to come in, an' now they own it, ma'am, an' it's been sold far sale again. No one knows nothin' about the two young gels, sir."

Bartlette was busy for an hour or two after this interview, for, posing as a possible buyer of the old Carfax home, he succeeded in going all over the place, showing a curious interest in searching the cupboards, etc.

When he finally left the house itself, and had got almost as far as the entrance-gate to the ground, he caught the tones of a man's peculiar high-pitched voice, and he suddenly darted behind a deep, high-bush of laurelism.

Few men in the kingdom knew that voice better than the hideous Bartlette. It was the voice of Croyland, the celebrated Scotland Yard man.

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth," says the grand old Book; and Ferdinand Bartlette supposed that Croyland and the man with whom he was talking were after him—for he was wanted for many things—so he
decided not to go back to the inn, not even to go into the village again, but to take to the wood on the east side of the house, and get away across country.

"I'll go over to France," he muttered, as he made his way. "I'll go to Brittany, and lie low for a time. I'm glad Jemmy's clear of that stone jug, and wrote me where he was, because it gives me a pal to work with, as well as a definite place to toddle to."

CHAPTER X.
THE INTANGIBLE.

No homeward-bound mariner after years of cruising, no schoolboy starting for home and holidays, no swallow fleeing from a British winter, not even a Duke and Duchess of York hungering on their world-round tour for a sight of the faces of the bairns they had left at home in England, could have been more impatient to reach their destination than was Stan Evans when once he had started for Kath and for home.
If I wire her my coming," he had told himself, "the hours and moments will be laden until I arrive; and as joy never kills, they say, I will just go on, and have the bliss, perhaps, of seeing her even before she sees me.

Acting upon this thought, he did his best to possess his soul in patience, and made his swiftest way to the address where she lived. She had written back that the place was a kind of cottage village on the outskirts of Summerhayes village in North Hants. The house itself, which had been used of late years as a shooting-box, was as pretty a little creeper-covered place as could be found beyond the confines of "this night little, little island." He stood some forty yards back from the road, and without being shut in, was fairly secluded by the trees that grew just inside the grounds.

It was half-past eight at night when Stan arrived and entered the grounds. He had walked the quarter-of-a-mile to the cottage on his bare feet, and gazed over the trees through the glass, as it were, excitedly, the form of his loved one, as, seated by the table in a cozy sitting-room, with the French windows wide open, she read by the light of a pink-shaded lamp.

Moving quietly, cautiously across the lawn, he stood within six feet of the open window, watching her for a full minute before he made his presence known. Then when he could bear the suspense no longer, he took two quick steps, calling in low, passionate, eager tones:

"Kath, my little love, I lift my steps on the gravel, and lifted her face from her book; she, with the first sound of his voice, she leaped towards him, and in a moment was in his arms. For one long, rapturous moment no sound passed either of their lips, nothing but the hot, passionate kisses of long-separated friends."

"Oh, my love, my love!" he cried at last, as, literally carrying her, he moved across to a wide arm-chair, where he sat himself down, cradling her in his arms, and gazing with a rapturous hunger into her face.

"What is it?" she asked, questioningly into his ears:

"Your illness has changed you in some way, my darling. I cannot explain how, but you look—"

"It was the suddenness of Joan's death, even more than my illness," she interrupted.

"Oh, Stan, my darling," she went on, "I thought I should have died during all that awful time. I believe I should have done, but for the thought of you. I had your love, I had you to live for, and—"

"Her voice broke, and with a little hysterical burst of tears, she exclaimed:

"My little love! my poor little over-tried birdies!"

He whispered, tenderly crooning over her as a Southern States mammy would croon over her foster-child.

His comforting must have reached her heart, for she quickly recovered herself, and lifting her head, she reached up and laid her lips on his.

He snatched her close to himself, and kissed her over and over again.

Presently she spoke: "Stan, dear," she said, softly, "never, never let there be any mention between us of Joan. I shall be altogether myself now you have come, darling, only—only—I don't think I can bear the past to be brought up; I want to forget it—in a sense. And as for Copely-on-Stoke, I never want to see a leaf of its trees, a spot of light, a dust-grain of its road, a ripple of its river. With your love, Stan; living in your heart, dear; and with your strong hand to lead me, and help me; and your dear voice to cheer and bless me, I want nothing else, save an eternity of life down here to revel in your love.

He looked at her curiously. Was this his shy, somewhat reticent Kath? "What a miracle love had worked in her!" he mused, "a miracle such as the sun works in the rosebud, and changes it to the glorious open flower." Yet, somehow, he almost felt as if he liked the old Kath best.

But he was too much in love to be critical; besides, her last utterance needed amending; and he replied to her: "This will be but a poor arm to lean upon, in my way, but I both have God's absolute strength around, beneath, above, and within us. How does it fare with you, my darling, as regards your soul? Have you found the inward joy and rest that we agreed to seek?"

She lifted her eyes to his, her face was crimson with a strange blush, as she asked:

"Have you found what you sought, Stan?"

"Yes, my darling; in the darkest hour of all that I have passed through, I cried unto God and He heard my cry, He delivered me, He taught me to live, and in the wondrous language of the old writer, 'He brought me up out of the miry clay, and hath set my feet upon a rock; He hath put a new song in my mouth, and established my goings.'"

She sighed, then nestling her cheek close against his, she rephrased some other lines:

"Stan, darling, I cannot say all that you can, but perhaps I shall be able to in time; meanwhile, dearest, be patient with me. Perhaps it is that all the trouble that I have recently gone through has hardened me a little, has blunted my spiritual perceptions, but I know, I feel, Stan, that—"

She lifted herself higher in his arms, wound her arms about his neck, and gazing into his eyes with a look of ineffable love, she continued:

"Because I have the capacity to love, as I love you, my darling, therefore, I feel sure that I shall learn (especially when we are one, and are always together) to love God even as you love Him."

He gazed down wonderingly into her face, and just for one instant it seemed as though he would give himself up into the arms of the peculiar delights of the merely human love. But it was only for a moment, then holding her by a looser clasp, and looking gravely into her upturned eyes, he said:

"Do you know, Kath, my love, young as I am in this new life, new as I am in the study of the Bible, I am beginning to see that the measure of the soul's love to God is just the measure of the soul's appreciation of God's love to it, and I doubt if human love to God ever gets beyond that; standard."

There was something piteous, almost peevish, in her tone as she said:

"If you love me, Stan, if I do not enter into all this just now, as fully, as freely as you do. God knows my heart, and He knows that, in my present state, all that I feel to want is human love—your love, my darling. It is doubtless the effect of my illness and sorrow, my heart-aching anxiety about you during all that hideous time of silence, my loneliness since—all this, I say, may have served to have produced the feeling, but it seems to me that I feel like a sick child, who only wants to be nursed and petted."

Touched to the quick by the piteousness of her speech, he gathered her to him, raised his arms, held her clasped tightly to himself, and whispered:

"It shall be mine to nurse and pet you, my poor darling!

Then for a time she lay silent in his arms, her eyes half-closed, though always uplifted to his. In those moments of absolute silence he studied her more closely than ever. "There is some subtle, intangible, undefinable alteration in her, though where it is, what it is, I cannot say," he mused.

Once a strange thought came to him as he continued to study her face, and to himself he said: "In the midst of those matters of absolute silence she studied him more closely than ever. "There is some subtle, intangible, indefinable alteration in her, though where it is, what it is, I cannot say," he mused.

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 Jacque Boisong, the farmer-brother of Jean, the convict, was prospering. He and Jean had been born and reared in an old homestead that stood upon a miserable coast farm, the lands of which, from thousands of years of drenching with the salt spray of those stormy Breton seas, had grown poorer and poorer yearly. The buildings, of which the great ancestral acres, the Boisongs had clung to their home and farm with the dogged willingness to suffer rather than succumb, which is so often found in people of this type.

Then two terrible troubles came upon the family about the same time. Jean, the eldest son, was accused of stabbing a high-born farmer with a short, dark, stark form was found murdered in a bit of wood that bordered the Boisong farm. The circumstantial evidence had been so strong against him that the jury had returned a true bill of murder, and he only just escaped the guillotine, being condemned to a long term of penal servitude instead. Whether Jean had been guilty or not, whether he was a criminal in heart before, or not, one thing is certain, that what has happened to myriads of decent men—and women, too—who have been condemned to hang with criminals, happened also to Jean, and he became a criminal in heart by associating with criminals.

The condemnation of her son, had been the death of Mere Boisong, and it was on the night of the old woman’s funeral that the second great catastrophe that came upon the family happened—the house and all the farm buildings were destroyed by fire. Poor Boisong being burnt in his bed.

Not so much as a charred bone of the poor old man was ever found, and in his sudden bitter loneliness Jacques decided to renounce the neighbourhood with which all these painful associations were connected, and to start life again, further inland, and where the soil would better repay the labour and capital laid out upon it.

The house and farm buildings had been well insured; and he found a good customer for his barren acres, in the person of a manufacturer who desired to build a factory close to the coast, since he owned a number of small coasting vessels with which he proposed to run his manufactured goods to various ports.

The combined sums from the sale of the farm and the insurance money made Jacques a richer man than any Boisong had been before. With a third of his wealth he took a larger, better-stocked farm than he had ever known on the coast, a farm whose acres yielded the maximum of crops at the minimum outlay of labour, etc. Another third of his money he banked as a fall-back and the remaining third he also banked, but he banked in Jean’s name, believing in his heart that, sooner or later, his brother would escape from his servitude.

The new farm was a hundred or more miles from the old coast home, and as Jacques took no one, in his old neighbourhood, into his confidence, it is generally declared, (as though it was a known fact) that he had bought a potato farm in the largest of the Channel Islands.

On taking possession of his new farm it became known that Jacques was from Jersey. Jacques had always supposed that he had lived there during the latter years of his life, though they were all satisfied that he was a true Breton by birth, his speech betraying him.

The man from whom he took the farm, had won the grand prize of a great lottery, and would be independent for life—if he knew how to make the best of his good fortune. The farm-house he had left was as comfortably furnished as such houses usually are, and Jacques Boisong took everything just as it was, making good a bargain over the furniture in the house as he did with the stock and implements outside the house, for the prize-winner was too intoxicated with his sudden wealth to set a very great store by the farm and its contents.

Jacques had never married. Some said (in the parts from which he came) that, when little more than a lad, a girl had played shuttle-cook with his affections, and that he had been soured against the sex ever since. This may have been only gossip, yet the fact remained that at one year under forty he was neither married nor engaged.

When you like, dear,” she replied; “only you must give me a little time to prepare.”

A few minutes later they had settled everything.

CHAPTER XI.

CLOTILDE.

"You must not go away again, dear Stan, unless—until...

She faltered, her eyes dropped, a little blush came into her cheeks, and she whispered the remainder of her sentence.

"Until we can both go together, dear.

"How soon may that be, Kath?" he asked. "How soon will you marry me?"

"When you like, dear," she replied; "only you must give me a little time to prepare.

I am not good for a man to live alone, the Bon-Dien has said this; so the cure tells us in church on Sunday."

He was missing thus one September evening, when, the harvest having all been gathered in, he stood at one of the gates leading out of the stall-yard into the high-road.

"I am tired of being alone," he went on, still talking to himself; "and yet I do not know any woman here about who will care for my wife?"

He smiled to himself as he added: "Though if they thought they dared do it, there are a score of likely-looking women within half-a-dozen miles of here, who would not be asked, but would offer themselves, and—"

He paused, for coming up the road approaching him was where he stood, though she had apparently not yet seen him, was a woman.

Her voice, as she sang a tender little Breton love-song, familiar to him as was his native tongue, came low but rich to his ears, sitting some strange, long-forgotten memories in his heart, and making him wonder who the singer was.

As she came nearer he could see that she was beautiful in a regal kind of way that was new to him. Tall and straight, and as strong-looking as one of the pines that grew upon the ridge that overlooked his farm on the east side, she walked like a queen. Her face was a beautiful oval; her complexion was soft and creamy; her brown hair—what heavy swathes there were of it—was glossy and black.

Suddenly her song ceased in the middle of a line; she had seen him. She was abreast of the gate now, and he gave her greeting, as folk do in the country to all passers-by, by they strangers or friends.

She returned his greeting, a kind of proud though kindly grace in her manner. Then suddenly she paused (close to him, not more than four feet away), and addressed him.

"Are you Monsieur Jacques Boisong?" she asked.

"I am," he replied, and his voice, as well as his face, expressed the surprise he felt at her use of his name.

"Is it true that you want a cattle-woman?" she asked.

"My name," she went on, "is Clotilde Trevant. I am a Breton by birth, am twenty-eight years old, strong and willing; I love work, love cattle, and all cattle love me, and I want a place. Can we come to terms, I wonder?"

"You have travelled far. Clotilde," he said, glancing at her dusty feet and skirt-hem.

She mentioned a village twenty miles away, saying:

I left there at noon, so I have not dawdled, and her smile, as she spoke, glorified her face.

"Come in, and rest and eat, my girl," he went on, "and when you have taken a meal we can talk.

He opened the gate for her, and walking by her side led her into the house.

The kitchen-maid sat knitting a stocking in the great xander kitchen as they entered the house that way. The girl was a short, fat, dull-looking, dunce-headed creature, who stared at the new-comer with a wonderment that had something of awe in it.
Jacques ordered the girl to lay a meal quickly for the newcomer, "And make some coffee," he added. "If I may have a brush," the stranger interjected, "I will clean my shoes of the dust, that I may be more fit to sit at your table." Jacques himself carried her a brush—she had stepped outside to do the brushing—and took her a bowl of water, and soap, a towel, and a comb.

She thanked him, showing her brilliant teeth, and flashing a rare look upon him from her great, black, lustrous eyes.

Something came over Jacques that he had never known before in the presence of a woman. He was completely fascinated by her beauty. He could not help watching her as she shook and brushed her skirts, then suddenly he realised that she would feel free if she were quite alone, so he turned and cut her the house, and began to help the girl to lay the stranger's meal—his old woman housekeeper had gone out for an hour.

In ten minutes the coffee was made, the napkin was laid, and at the same moment the stranger entered.

"What a glorious creature she is!" he mused, as he watched her entrance.

She had certainly made the most of her time in that country village, as she was fully dressed, her hair arranged in braids, and her face made up with flowers.

She ate and drank with the heartiness of a traveller ready for a meal; and when she had finished, Jacques spoke to her (before the kitchen-girl as to the vacant post on the farm, and in a very few minutes everything was adjusted. She was to go to bed that night, and after the bath she should sleep there that night, and next morning she should return to the house next morning and fetch her belongings, and enter on her duties on the third day.

CHAPTER XII

WHO was this tall, straight, beautiful woman, who had engaged herself to him as cow¬maid? What had her history been? These were the questions which Jacques Boisquet naturally asked himself.

He might have asked the beautiful girl herself, but he preferred to find out indirectly, and as he was a perfect stranger in the place she had mentioned—twenty miles away—as the one from which she had come, he took an opportunity two days later, to settle in his heart on his farm, to run down by train to her old village.

The train went between two miles of the village, and on getting out of the station he started to walk.

The road was thick with dust, and many a ramshackle old cart, drawn by a sorry mule, or carrier horse, har¬nessed into the crazy shafts with odd rope ends, cluttered by him, for it was market-day in the town nearest the village.

A bare half hour brought him to the village, and his "ma'um," as he termed it, led him to the door of the very cottage where Clotilde had lived most of her life. It was empty, but an old woman stood in the doorway.

"Is this house to let?" Jacques asked.

"It was," replied the old woman. "Yes, it was up till last night, but now it is going to be white-washed inside for Paul, the basket-maker's son, who is going to wed Rose, the little niece of the priest's housekeeper. They have been love-making this six months!"

"Has the house been empty long?" Jacques asked again.

"Not it, monsieur," returned the old woman.

Then Jacques met another grapple old soul, who dearly loved a gossip, and the fact that her listener was a stranger cajoled her tongue.

"Some villagers," she went on, "complain that, because so few children are born in these days, the villages are going down. But that is not so here, in this place, that is the count. All our people have the large families, and our boys and girls marry so early, nowadays, that a house never stands empty long.

"We'd thought that Clotilde, who lived here until a few days ago, would have married the son of the man who wanted her, and has lived on among us, and had a family. My! but Clotilde's children, if ever she has any, will be brave boys and beautiful maidens, for there never could be a braver, more beautiful woman than our Clotilde.

"We always called her our Clotilde, for she seemed to belong to us all. You see she had no father or mother among us, and she loved us all, served everyone of us in our turn, when our time of need came, and would never have paid for a kindness. If we wanted to pay her, she would laugh and say, "Let us be the Bon Dieu, and I must not interfere with His entries.' Oh, she was a rare 'un, was Clotilde."

"Was she born in this place?" Jacques asked."

"She went on the old woman. "The Bon Dieu sent her at the time of the great floods. That would be twenty-five—it's a lucky number, twenty-five—ah, quite that, and more, years ago. We get wild weather in these parts, in the autumn and spring, monsieur, and our hills send down the waters, and our river widens and deepens until it floods the country, and our hay-ricks and cattle, and sometimes even our cottages, go floating about like the paper boats which the children float in our tubs on washing-days."

"But there was one great storm, more than twenty-five years ago, when a flood that took us of us who were living there, killed ever, and a son of ours."

"When daylight came next morning, the whole village looked a wreck, and the men began to search everywhere to find out if any of the people had come to grief."

"But no one from among us had been actually washed out of our house. A moat made of the down-stream of the cottages were flooded. Dead sheep and cattle floated about, and all around there was ruin and desolation."

"Then suddenly, two of the men who were searching together heard the cry of a child, and, following the sound, they came across a cradle made of plaited white, lined with oil-cloth, and inside the cradle a girl child of six months old, as near as we could guess. It was a beautiful babe, and when no one could be found to own it, our Cure, when he saw it and heard its story, undertook to pay for its keep, if anyone would take it in and nurse it.

"Old Nanette took pity on the foundling, and brought it up, and right well did Clotilde pay her. Nanette had had a girl child when she was first married, thirty-five years before, and now she tended Clotilde, and so she gave the tending her dead child's name.

"Clotilde grew up strong, handsome, clever, and with a wonderful power over all animals; and all the single men of the place, eyes, and of the neighbourhood for miles round, talked of her.

"There was an artist here two years ago, come grape harvest, who was crazy for her; but she would have nothing to do with him. The big hotel up at the big house has tried to win her over and over again, but she would never give him a scrap of encouragement."

"Once it suit asked her why she married not, and she told him that she would never marry unless she loved the man, and then it would have to be a man who owned and loved cattle, and who loved the soil on which he worked."

"Jacques met him to her, and she loved him a month before.

"A month ago old Nanette died, and the men pestered Clotilde so then, to marry and have a home of her own, that she went away for a couple of days, and when she returned she sold all the things she had, save her clothes, and said she had arranged to live elsewhere. But no one knows where; we only know that she has gone, and we miss her as much as though she had been born to us each."

Jacques listened to a little more, then, having heard all that he needed, he made his way back to the station.

"He was the recital of the words of the old woman returned to him, and Clotilde's expression never to marry a man unless she loved him, and then only a son of the soil, who owned and loved cattle."

"We shall see," he mused, as he entered the railway station on his return journey.
CHAPTER XIII.
AN EDEN QUITE MARRED.

Clotilde had been cow-maid to Jacques Boisong three weeks, and he knew that whatever might be thought of his action by his neighbours, he would have to marry his cow-maid—if she would marry him.

"When did I begin to love her?" he asked himself, and he smiled as the answer came to his heart:

"That very first moment I saw her, when, standing before me, she asked, 'Are you Monsieur Jacques Boisong?'

"I cannot bear any suspense over the affair," he mused, in the afternoon of the twenty-first day of her sojourn at the farm. His eyes, as he spoke to Himself, travelled to where he knew, in the 'Marguerite lot,' as a certain meadow was called, Clotilde was platting her straw, and singing low in her rich, pure voice, some of the songs dearest to the Breton heart, while she watched the cows.

"I'll go to her," he muttered.

She saw him coming, she was standing beneath the shadow of a great tree. Did her heart tell her why he was seeking her? Perhaps. Had her woman-wit divined his secret during the days she had worked for him? It was very likely.

"Clotilde," he said, as he came up to her, "how well the cattle look. You have only had the care of them fourteen days, and yet their appearance has changed wonderfully.

"Cattle always pay for care," she said.

"Do not all things live?" he asked, adding, in a kind of after-breath, "Even we men do.

She looked at him keenly. He met her glance with a look in his eyes so ardent that her own dropped for a moment. He took her two hands in his, and whispered:

"Clotilde, dear girl, I want someone to care for me.

Will you, dear? Will you be my wife, for I love you, dear, I have loved you ever since that night that we met on the road. Do you care for—do you love me?

Will you marry me, Clotilde?"

For a moment she made no reply, but she let him fold her in his arms, and 'poor love's coin from eager lips' upon her. When, presently, she did find her voice, she began to declare many reasons why he, a wealthy farmer, should not marry his cow-girl.

But love laughs reasons to scorn, and he had his way, and a month later they were married, and went to Brest for a week's honeymoon.

While at the great naval port he got permission to see his brother, and tried to give him full directions how to reach his new farm, should he ever be free to come there. He had told Clotilde of his brother's sentence, and she had visited the convict with Jacques.

At the first glance into the eyes of his convict brother-in-law she shrank from him, mistrusted, feared him, and though she never uttered her thought aloud to her husband, in her heart she cried out, as she left the prison:

'God grant that that man may never come to our home, for the evil in his soul looks out of his eyes.'

It was six months after the marriage of Jacques and Clotilde, and the pair were seated together in that happy kind of general indefiniteness of occupation indulged in by busy workers, at night, after a heavy day's work.

The sudden barking of the dogs startled the pair, and sent Jacques out to see who it could be calling at that time of night.

Through the darkness of the yard a voice, which made Clotilde, brave girl that she was, shiver, called softly:

'All right, Jacques: it is only Jean and his friend.'

From where she stood in the doorway, Clotilde could distinguish two moving figures. Her husband stood for some minutes with the pair, the three voices, in their turn, coming in a buzz of sound to the ears of the anxious wife.

Presently she heard her husband's voice say: "Come along. Clotilde will be glad to make you comfortable.

Jacques did not answer. He had turned his bright face into the room, trying to quiet her heart, for a strange sense of foreboding, of some near, coming trouble, came to her.

CHAPTER XIV.
IN A PITEOUS CASE.

DARKNESS—dense, inky darkness—darkness and blackness that could be felt, and somewhere in the darkness, living, human thing?

Where was it? Was it a room? A cellar?

Was it above ground or below? It might have been in Hades; it might have been in the eternal blackness of night's infinite space, as far as any knowledge of her whereabouts had ever come to the solitary prisoner.

Silence—intense, painful silence, save for the soft sound of gentle respiration. It might have been the breathing of a sleeping babe in some resting cradle, so soft and regular was it.

Then the silence was broken by a high, deep and prolonged, followed by the surging of a form amid the black darkness. With the starting of the one came a cracking sound as of a rickety wooden bedstead.

The cracking continued in varying degrees for half-a-second, then there was a sound like the planting of two slippers feet on the floor, and through the piypan blackness one could almost have conceived that a human form raised its arms and stretched every limb.

The slippers feet moved across the floor, the hesitating sound in the steps betokening the extreme cautiousness of the movement, as through the blackness hindered the walker from boldness of movement.

A hand touched earthware. In the intense silence it was very easy to recognise the true, faint, as it was, of the earthenware, as the fingers groped about it to find the handle. There was a soft rustle of garment as the vessel was lifted, a faint click of a lip against the stone, then the gurgling, gulping of water told of the unseen one's draught.

One or two more footsteps, and Clotilde was in the prison chamber, and brought food and water—not that the prisoner knew anything definite about the space of time between these visits, for time had no measure amid the horrors of that silent darkness.

"When does my glover come again?"

The voice of the captive was an uncertain, straining, and through it all it was little more than a whisper—but in contrast to the tense silence it was thunderous.

The voice was a woman's, a cultured woman's, but was full of an infinite, pathetic sadness.

"When?" the voice went on. "What serves it to ask that, when time is not, it is all the same?"

She sighed, then continued: "Where is this place? How came I here? Who is my captor? Why am I kept captive?"

A low sob broke her voice, and a rustle of garments, the dull sound of two knees dropping on to the floor, followed by a crease of the bedstead, told of her kneeling by her bedside, and a moment later her voice rose in the sobbing prayer:

'Mighty God, loving Father, pity and deliver me. Preserve my mind, and keep my reason from giving way.

There were other utterances; every separate one had been punctuated by a sob, until, at last, with a passion burst of hysterical weeping, she must have let herself fall forward across the bed.

For seven or eight minutes the sounds of the weeping continued, then there came a cessation, and the prisoner rose to her feet, and her voice, but low:

"I must eat if I would live, yet I almost loathe the food."

Solitariness had begotten in her a habit of talking aloud, and for a moment or two she communed aloud with herself:

"Then, even as she talked, her hands were busy, and the sound of her gnashing fingers was followed by the noise of one plate being lifted from another, as though the first plate had been used as a lid to cover the food in another.

She made a meal; then, regardless of the food left un- eaten, or possibly forgotten, she moved towards the bed- stead, and laid herself down upon the bed.

For a moment or two the cracking of the rickety old bedstead told of its occupant's efforts to get settled down, then presently the soft breathing of sleep just stirred the otherwise absolute silence.
For an hour no other sound disturbed, then there came a sudden scamper of tiny feet, accompanied by a series of snappings and squealings, and the sleeper leaped shudderingly to her feet, to scare away the rats that were fighting and ravening over the food she had left uncovered. "If only I had a light!" she moaned.

Then, as she choked back the sobs that struggled for utterance, she lifted her voice to God. "The darkness and light are both alike to Thee, O God," she cried. "Let me have Thy light in my soul, and I will not repine. Thou hast made my sorrow to be the pathway unto Thyself, and though I have no light to read Thy Word, and no Bible to read, even if I had a light, I know Thee now, and I know that I am Thine, and that Thou art mine, and that Thou wilt yet deliver me from this cruel imprisonment.

"It may not be my time. It may not be in my way," and yet in Thine own time and way Thou wilt deliver me."

She was continuing when her strained sense caught the sound of a slight noise. She knew what it meant. A moment later there was the sound of an opening door, and the very faintest light possible to conceive was just discernible amid the blackness.

The light came dully through an opaque glass that shielded the tiny flame of the tiniest hand-lamps; it was not sufficient to give real outline to the form of the masked and black-robed figure of the woman who carried the lamp.

Swiftly, silently the woman janitor put down the jug of water and the new plate of food she had brought, lifted the jug and plate she had left the day before, and always keeping her masked face in the shadow of the tiny lamp, she turned to leave.

The prisoner began to plead, as she had pleaded every time she was thus visited.

"Oh, tell me who you are? Why I am here? Where I am?"

But she spoke to the air and the darkness; the figure
had passed through the door by which she had entered, the door had closed behind her, there was the sound of bolts shooting into their sockets, and the captive was alone again in the darkness, that was intensified by the recent faint light from the lamp.

And all hope would have died within the solitary one's breast, but that she knew God, and had learned to say, "I shall yet praise Him Who is my help."

CHAPTER XV.
THE LAUGH ON THE LAWN.

That first week of re-union with his fiancée was a strange one to Stan Evans. She wanted him ever with her, and clung to him strangely, her manner a mingling of an almost childish abandonment of herself, and of an almost pathetic clinging.

She puzzled him more and more every day, for though of course she was the woman to whom he had pledged his troth, the woman to whom, in his letters while absent from her, he had confided many things of which he had since spoken freely to him, yet he grew more and more alive to the fact that that strangely subtle change in her, somewhere, which he had been conscious of that first night of their re-union, but which he could not define, increased rather than diminished.

Again and again when, with her head upon his breast, she gazed up into his face, there was a look, a something in her eyes that puzzled him, and which, somehow, continually reminded him of the dead Joan.

There was a change—ever so slight, but plain enough to a lover's ear—in her voice, a new note of something less dulcet than the tones he remembered so well, of those days when love's dream was so young with him, when he played the loud-eater on the lawn of that picturesque old house at Copely.

"I have had her illness," he told himself, "the shock of Joan's death, her great sorrow, and her natural anxiety about me, that has wrought the change in her. I have heard and read of such things. But double time, and a happier life, and, above all, my love, will retransform her utterly to my old, sweet Kath.

Half-an-hour later she was sitting with him; his arm encircled her, her head was cradled against his breast, and she was saying:

"Stan, darling, do you remember the day after you rescued Joan and I from our peril on the river, and you called to see us, I told you to lie down for an hour with a headache, and Joan had you all to herself until I suddenly put in my appearance? Well, I have a confession to make about that afternoon."

He looked down almost sharply at her, but if she saw the change in his glance she took no notice of it, and went on:

"I actually felt jealous of my own sister that day. It is a shameful thing to have to say, but it is true; and I remember saying to myself when you had gone that day, 'What has come over you, Kathleen Carfax, that you could grow jealous because your own sister has been enjoying the company of a man who was a stranger to us both until twenty-four hours ago?' And even as I asked myself the question, the answer came in the words of the old saying, 'Where jealousy is, there is love,' and I grew with blushes at what seemed so terrible a thing to me, that I had let my love go out to a man who had not as yet asked it of me. Was it not shameful, Stan?"

She looked so like the old Kath at that moment, that he forgot all that had puzzled him about her, and gathering her into his arms, he showered caresses upon her, saying presently:

"I do remember that day, my darling, and how I made a curious mistake, for a time, speaking to Joan under the impression that she was you, until, finally, with a laugh, she said, in reply to something I said, 'You mean my sister, Jemmy.'"

His hauteur, lying there in his arms, laughed lightly, and again he looked down sharply into her face, the laugh was so like that laugh of Joan's on the lawn on that day of which he had spoken.

CHAPTER XVI.
INTERLOPERS.

CLOTILDE turned to meet her husband and the man whom he brought in with him, and Jacques could not help noticing a certain cold, proud, repellant look in her face such as he had never seen there before.

"My brother Jean and his friend have escaped," he said. "They have come to the reform, for now those horsey knows Jean, and they will pass as two chance acquaintances whom I met in Jersey, and who have come to work on the farm. You will give them welcome, Clotilde?"

She offered her hand to Jean, who leant forward to kiss her, but she drew back, saying, with a hard, defiant, little laugh, still holding his hand.

"I know it is the custom in these parts for a wife to receive a greeting or a parting kiss from her husband's brother, but I count a wife's kisses to be a husband's only."

Jean's face darkened as she stepped back to make room for his companion—Jemmy, the Cockney—to whom Clotilde was already offering her hand.

Jacques was puzzled at his wife's manner, for he had never known or seen her other than gracious, and to Jean and Jean she was showing a decided hardness and coldness.

Under his breath Jean cursed her, and swore to make her suffer for her treatment of him; while Jean mentally registered a vow against her that would not have sounded like a beneficence could it have been audible to the others in the room.

Excusing herself on the plea of getting a meal for the travellers, she left the room, and the three men talked together in low, guarded tones.

Supper was quickly prepared, and Clotilde herself announced it.

The two ex-convicts had been a month at the farm, and had dropped into all the ways of the place as naturally, though they had been brought up there all their lives. Jacques could find them plenty to do, and they worked willingly at all he arranged for them; and then in the evenings they were not idle, for Jemmy carved and Jean made all kinds of mechanical toys and other trifles.

Between the two new-comers and Clotilde there was no intercourse or converse save of the sparsest kind and of the most officious character. She disputed both men, and this, no, because they had been convicts, but because their souls were evil, her keen instincts telling her this.

Another cause of her continued dislike of the pair came out of the fact that their coming had spoiled all the comfort of her home to her, since the old, close life and intercourse that had existed between Jacques and her, previous to their coming, had been swept away completely.

"They'll go in the spring," her husband said, when, alone with him, she bewailed the marring of their old, sweet life.

"It'sRight, but her heart did not grow any less bitter towards the interlopers, and all the time, unknown to her, other trouble was travelling towards her."

Jemmy had written to Bastille to a certain English address, and had a line in reply, saying:

"Never be surprised to see me over there. I don't care about wearing single-breasted jacket, and there's no pal ever suited me like Jemmy the Britter."

CHAPTER XVII.
UNDER PROTEST.

AS immaculately dressed and groomed as if he had been the veriest loafer about town doing an hour in the park, or taking a turn down Bond Street or any fashionable quarter of the metropolis, Ferdinand Barillette hurried down the half-mile of road between the little French railway-station and Jacques Boiseng's farm.

There had been a sharp little shower of rain just after noon; and the roads were dust-laid and pleasant to walk over. The shower had been sharp enough to wash every
BETWEEN TWO WOMEN.

15

leaf of tree and bush and hedge-row, and with her face thus cleansed, Nature looked very sweet and fair, for the autumn was not so advanced as to give her yet the faded look that she would wear a month later.

The only blot upon the fairness of the scene was a moral one—the scoundrel Bartlette, who, in spite of his swell clothes and smiling mouth, would always, morally, mar any scene in which he figured. He sauntered along with a contemptuous air, his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his old-fashioned duds, the only sign of aliveness about him being the restless eyes that glanced at everything.

"I shall catch Jemmy on the hop beautifully," he muttered, as he cut at a trailing rose stem with his cane, scattering the petals of the late blossoms in a fairy shower underfoot. "I wonder what sort of a crip this is, and what kind of people these Boissons are?" Jeanne said nothing about them, but one can pretty well fancy them. The man with a round bullet-head, short-cropped black hair, each separate hair as well as the gullies of the festal porcupine; a short, black beard; heavy eyebrows, and eyes that hold as much sense in their expression as one sees in the eyes of the head of a dead sheep. He will be medium height, round-shouldered, his bullet-head hanging well over in front of him like the different stage of one of their Boissons. His hands will be like shoulders of mutton, and when he is not using them in work, or manipulating the wooden spoon and fork with which he gorges himself with cabbage broth, he will never know what to do with them, swinging them like a windmill's blades, wasting them in this shapeless, careless fashion as the carved paws of a stone god in a Jap temple.

He will wear wooden sabots, which, on account of the size of his feet, would serve well for a north-country coiler's clumping, and he will shuffle like a leg-chained convict.

The scoundrel smiled maliciously at his own picture, then continuing, murmured half-aloud:

"The wife—well, one can dash her off in a few strokes. If she is of the thin type, she'll be as craggy as a peak of Australian mutton, as sour of face as a vest of her own country's vinegar, and as sharp of voice as the tinging of a raw tool. If she is of the line of visage, she will be as shapeless and squint in figure as a loosely-fitted sack of oats, with cheeks like swet dumplings, eyes as dull as a bronze statuette's, and—baah! why waste my brain in this sort of thing, when to sum her up in a sentence, she'll prove to be a donkey. The best way to treat her will be to chafe, to rub her, and then at last to rub her into the shapelessness and grace of a hippo-calamus."

He turned the bend of the road at this moment, and came in sight of the farmhouse.

"Pretty!" he murmured, pausing a moment to gaze at the clean, picturesque place. Then he sauntered on, as though to be standing by that gate where Jacques and Clotilde first met.

Leaning over the gate, he let his eye sweep over all the place, amazed at the perfection and wealth of all he saw. Suddenly a woman pushed out from some door at the back of the house, and crossed his line of vision. She carried a large wooden bowl in the crutch of her left arm, and with a graceful sweep of her right hand, after dipping it into the bowl, she scattered the shower after supper of golden grain to a crowd of several hundred head of poultry that had been waiting for her coming. Her sleeves of her dress were looped up and fastened well above her elbows, exposing two of the most beautifully-bosomed arms possible to find.

The polished scoundrel, leaning over that gate watching her, was utterly amazed at the sight of her. More than once, as she turned Hitler and thither to scatter the grains more impartially, he caught a glimpse of her face; and marvelled at the beauty.

"Who can she be?" he muttered. "If she is Madame Boisson, then I've made an idiot of myself in limning the scraggy and the shapeless as I have been doing. This woman is a queen in face and form." And this feeling of his as he was about to leap against the gate tore his heart; it was not really fastened; and, under his weight, it suddenly swung open with a sharp-click, that caused Clotilde to turn sharply.

He smiled his bluest, most persuasive smile as he advanced towards her, raising his hat in the most perfect manner, and greeting her in his best French with a "Pardon, madame—or is it mademoiselle?—I have come to see Monsieur Boisson's."

Clotilde's eyes had swept him from top to toe, and, after the fashion of a woman, had noted every item of his dress, and had summed up his character in that one comprehensive word—"fop." "A top in clothes and manners," she told herself, "and a villain in heart. His eyes are cruel, and so is his mouth; he is a friend of that beast, Jenny, but Jenny is as an angel of light compared with this man, and I hate him already."

He was Monsieur Boisson's," she said, coldly, "and the man whom you seek is with my husband in the barn—yonder—you can hear their tails!"

Without another word she turned upon her heel, moved quickly to the back-door, followed by a little flock of flying, screaming fowls, to whom she flung the remaining contents of the bowl, "never once looking back at the astonished Bartlette.

"Well, I'm blest!" he muttered, as she finally disappeared into the house. "She's a stick-up, if ever there was one.

He turned towards the barn, and began to pick his way therither, a diabolical smile on his face as he continued:

"But I'll make you treat me differently before I've done with you, you stick-up jade! I never met the woman yet, whom I set my heart upon conquering, that I did not manage in a week—"

His soliloquy was cut short by a loud "What! from the barn, and looking up, he saw Jemmy standing in the wide doorway.

A moment or two later he was introduced to Jacques, and had renewed his acquaintance with Jemmy. The two men talked together for a time, Bartlette asking Jacques to take him into the house as a paying lodger for a time.

"I have no doubt my wife could manage for a little while, monsieur," Jacques replied. "I will go up to the house, while you talk to your friend, and will see Clotilde, afterwards I will introduce you to her."

"I fancy I have already seen her and spoken to her," Bartlette returned, "and if that tall, beautiful woman to whom I spoke, and who directed me here, was your wife, then two things are certain, mon ami; first, that you are a lucky man, and second, that she will not be very willing to accept me as a lodger, for she has taken a dislike to me at first sight."

"You are right in the first, monsieur," Jacques smiled back. "Clotilde is a beautiful woman and a rare wife, and I am a very happy, as well as a very lucky man. But the second matter, I think you may be mistaken. But see, I go."

Farmer only as he was, he was French to the backbone, and impressed by the dress and manner of his visitor. Jacques lifted his hat as he moved away.

Whatever passed between him and Clotilde was known to themselves, and if the beautiful girl-wife had been unwilling to receive their externally-polished visitor as a lodger, she yielded to her husband's pleadings, and when they all met at the evening meal, Ferdinand Bartlette was an accepted member of the family, for he was.

But it was evident that it was under protest so far as Clotilde was concerned.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONFIDENCES.

The coming into their home of Ferdinand Bartlette was destined to go far towards making a real rift in the line of happiness that had been annotated between Clotilde and her husband. It seemed to Jacques that his wife changed considerably as the days of the polished scoundrel's second week's residence among them moved on. She grew silent and reserved towards the wondering Jacques; she was nervous, and apparently overstrung; started at anyone's sudden entrance into the room; and in a dozen little ways showed herself altogether different to the happy-hearted, singing Clotilde whom he
had known before the coming of those three other men.

Excluding the sleeping hours, husband and wife rarely got a moment alone together now, for Clotilde made a score of excuses for going early to bed, leaving the men to their pipes and pipes; and on her husband's arrival to bed, later on, she was either asleep or too tired to be.

But one day the pair had some six hours alone together. It was the occasion of the monthly fair at the chief town nearest them, and by ten o'clock in the forenoon they were wandering far away from the farm, Jacques driving his wife in his handsome spring-cart.

Half-a-mile away from their farm they took a road that was comparatively little used, and soon after entering it Clotilde started on the subject that was burning within her.

"How long, Jacques," she asked, "do these men propose to stay at our house?"

"You are tired of them, Clotilde, dear one?" he replied.

"I'm sick to death!" She sighed as she answered, then added quickly:

"And you, dear Jacques—you are not the same quite since they came. Tell me, dear, with the cards at night, when I have gone to bed, have they not won money from you?"

He did not meet her gaze as he replied:

"Oh, a little; just a little." He could not tell her the truth, that his losses had already run into the third thousand francs.

"I am glad it is but a little that you have lost, Jacques." She was too wise a woman to give him the faintest idea that she knew by his manner that his losses were greater than he made them out to be.

"But," she went on, "the loss of a few francs is so very little thing compared with what you may lose, dear one—your liberty and all that you possess."

He turned sharply, a startled look of enquiry upon his face, as he cried:

"What do you mean, Clotilde?"

"I mean that all three of the men—for even your brother is in the same list as the others—are evil men, Jacques. Neither you nor I know anything of the man Bartlette, or of that cur Jemmy, save that Jemmy was a convict with your brother, and that Bartlette was a friend of that fellow's before he was convicted. No, we know nothing about these men; but you may depend upon it that the police do, and they may be even now upon their track, and may appear at any moment at the farm to arrest all three of them; then, as it could be easily proved that you knew your brother and the others, you would be imprisoned for harbouring them, and possibly have all your property confiscated."

Clotilde talked earnestly and sensibly, and Jacques became both convinced and alarmed, and was just promising to take immediate steps to rid his place of the troublesome trio, when passing a cross-road, he was hailed by a farmer acquaintance who was footing it to market, and begged a lift. After this there was no further chance of talk between husband and wife until the return journey, and when they were once more alone together.

It was Jacques himself who renewed the subject, and in a gentle, tender way, added:

"But tell me, Clotilde, why have you been so strange this last ten days? You have not been yourself, dear heart, but distant and distraught, and nervous."

He leant forward, and turned his head so that he might look well into her eyes. She met his gaze with the fearless look of a great love and a pure mind, as, laying her hand on his wrist, she said:

"Jacques, dear one, your love, and our old, sweet life together, are very dear to me, dearer than aught else on earth, and now that you have promised to rid the place of the somn, I will tell you. That our Jemmy, and his base-hearted English friend, have each been persecuting me horribly, and have each dared, unknown, I suppose, to each other, to seek to win my love from you, and even to fly with them."

The face of Jacques darkened, and he cut at the mare in the shille with his whip, putting a good three-mile-an-hour more into her pace, for he suddenly wanted to get home quickly, that he might break his vengeance upon the two would-be destroyers of his domestic joys.

"The fools!" went on Clotilde, laughing sarcastically at the thought of the absent men, "that I would I would ever look at either of their black carcasses, when I had a man like my Jacques for a husband."

Sudden tears glistened in her eyes, and reaching up her arm, she wrenched it about his neck, and meeting his lips as he bent down towards her, she kissed him passionately.

It was well that it was a lonely, unfrequented road, for there was more than one tender little love-page between them.

On their arrival at the farm they were met with a startling turn in events, which, with its consequences, must form the subject of our next number.

(TO BE CONTINUED).

NOTE!—The sequel to this Story will (v.) be published on Friday next, May 16th, 1902 (Thrilling 354). It is written in a decidedly powerful and absorbing style, religious interest and pathos being maintained throughout every chapter.

Entitled: "MY WEE GIRLIE." Written by GRACE GARLAND and MARIE MORRELL.

TWO MEN—the convict Jemmy, and Ferdinand Bartlette—sat in a— and floated idly down the river. "Phew!" whistled the rascal, as he tore the letter into fragments. "She'll be free in eight days, and is burning with a desire for revenge upon me." Picking up the coat pocket he took out a letter-card and addressing it to Lizzie Bartlette, No. 2184 H.M. Prison—he turned it over and wrote: "c/o the time you receive this I shall be well out of the country. I'll manage, if possible, to send for—Yours as ever—F. d."

(See our Next Week's Story. viz.: "MY WEE GIRLIE.")

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The startled cry that had sprung to her lips died away as she evidently recognised him.

My Wee Girlie.
By GRACE GARLAND and MARIE MORRELL.
Authors of "Muffled Marriage Bells," "Between Two Women," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.
A GAME OF BLUFF.

TWO men—the convict Jemmy and Ferdinand Bartlette—sat in a wherry-built boat, and floated idly down the river—it was the Thames in one of its upper reaches—with the out-going tide. Hours before they had floated up the river, had landed and enjoyed a few hours ashore, at skittles, in the bowling alley of an old-type river-side inn; then, when the tide turned, they took to their boat again, and began to paddle and float down stream again.

For some time the pair had been silent from sheer laziness, contenting themselves with their pipes and the keeping "a harf a heye" on the goings of their craft.

"* For previous parts of this Story see our Nos. 357 and 358."
MY WEE GIRLIE.

"What about your Liz, Barty? Aisn't she time nearly up?"

"Soon, I reckon," replied the sleepy-looking scamp, adding: "I don't quite know when she comes out; I must write and find out."

Jenny raised himself on his elbow, and looked curiously at his companion.

"Write where?" he asked.

"To the prison, you know; either to the governor or the chaplain who returned Bartlette."

Jenny sat bolt upright as he cried:

"Well! of all the crises of Brunswick brass bound up in one human hide, that ever I knew or heard of, you beat the lot, Barty. You talk about writing to the prison. You're more about as much what's-his-name as if you were ordering another teacake for your tea at a coffee-shop."

"About the same," replied Bartlette, adding: "Bluff is a good Jenny to force your way through life with; I believe I'm in it."

The sun was drooping by now. The two men gathered up their lazy limbs, picked up their basket, entered the boat again, and taking turns with the oars, while the other steered, they made rapid way with the tide.

Before he went to bed that night, Bartlette wrote to the chaplain of the prison, where Liz (the woman of the conversation between Jenny and himself) was serving her three years.

Jenny would have found a new source of admiration of his confere, could he but have seen this letter, which ran:

"To the Chaplain of H.M. Prison—

'Rev. Sir,—Will you pardon this communication from one personally unknown to you? But I have the misfortune to have a sister confined in the prison in which you hear spiritual rul and oversight."

'My sister's name is Lizzie Bartlette, and her unfortunate career has been an awful grief to the whole of our family, all of whom hold a superior position in society."

'Our poor Lizzie had the misfortune to become entangled with a fascinating, witty, handsome, and clever scamp, Ferdinand Bartlette, an ex-convict (we only learnt this afterwards), to whom she was secretly married within ten days of her first meeting him. She was little more than a child—barely seventeen when she was married, and from the first, as we have since gathered, she began to assist her scoundrel husband in his nefarious work. He must have exercised some hypnotic power over her, with her sweet, pure, unsullied nature, she would never have yielded to sin."

'At a recent family gathering I declared that, as both sisters, it was my duty to seek to give her a chance to start fair in life again, when once she was free of this imprisonment—with this proviso, that she promises to once and for ever have done with the man who led her astray into the paths of law-breaking and made her what she is to-day, a convict and a shame to his friends. With this desire to help my poor sister back into something of her old life of respectability, it occurred to me that the wisest thing I could do was to write to you and ask you if you would kindly let me know whether Lizzie has shown any signs of repentance or expressed any wish for amendment. With this object in view, I propose to meet her on her release, and take her to my own home, where my wife, who is a tender, loving, sympathetic soul, wants to be a real sister to her."

'I think perhaps it would be wisest not to previously acquaint her with this, or the fact that I have written to you. If you will kindly give me answer to above questions, with the exact date when my sister will be released, kindly address 'Gerald Fancourt, The Mount, Veules, Berks.'"

Yours very sincerely,"

Gerald Fancourt.

Three days later, the scoundrelly writer of this lively epistle travelled from Paddington to Bedwyn, and alighted at the station of this quaint, old-time village, hired a trap and drove to Veules.

He called first at the tiny village post-office, and acquired for any letters or telegrams addressed to 'Gerald Fancourt, at The Mount.'
"One letter, sir; came this morning, sir," began the obsequious little postmistress; "but as I had not heard that The Mount had been let, I did not send it up; but wanted for developments—that's a word our clergyman is very fond of, sir, and it means a lot, sir."

The woman handed him the letter, then, in a timid, halting fashion, said:

"Excuse me, sir, but have you taken The Mount?"

"I have rented it only, for five years," he replied, "and it will depend largely upon how the place agrees with my dear wife whether I eventually purchase it. Any letters—everything postial or telegraphic, in fact—that may come during the next ten days, will you kindly re-address thus?"

He laid a card upon the counter, bearing the address: "Poste Restante, Lyons, France."

"We shall be here, settled in by Christmas, when you must permit me to send you down a hamper and a five-pound note from The Mount, by way of an instalment of other gifts for all kindly service which I feel assured that you, in your official capacity, will be willing to render to us all."

With a perfect breathlessness of excited, joyful expectation, the obsequious little woman tried to express her thanks, and in the midst of her speech the specious rascal wished her a smiling "Good-morning," and departed.

Mounting the trap again, he directed the driver to drive on again a little way, and take the first turning to the left. A quarter-of-an-hour later the trap pulled up at the door of The Mount.

Bertie gained admission of the caretaker, and proceeded to go quickly over the place, his keen, professional eyes taking in every weak spot (from the burglar's point of view) in the ground-floor of the structure, as well as every room above accessible from the outside by balcony or other climbing help.

Then, just three-quarters-of-an-hour after entering the village, he left it, waiting until he got into his trap to return to London, before opening the chaplain's letter. It read as follows:

"DEAR SIR,—In reply to your received this morning, I can only rejoice at the truly Christian spirit exhibited in your expressed desire to help your unfortunate sister.

"I am a little in doubt how to reply to you as to whether she has shown any signs of repentance, or expressed any desire to amend her life. The attitude of her mind has always appeared to me to be rather one of sullen reconciliation to her lot here, and a fixed and rooted desire to hunt down and revenge herself on the man through whom she has been brought to this sorry pass, rather than any real repentance for her conduct. It is very easy to make a mistake in diagnosing cases of this kind, and it may be that the two features I have mentioned loom so large in all her thought and expressions, that her repentant thoughts are hidden as by an overshadowing process.

"I have ascertained from the deputy-governor that she will be released at eight o'clock on the morning of the nineteenth inst. I shall certainly respect your confidence, and give the prisoner no idea of your having written me on her behalf.—Yours very sincerely,

C. Fowler Bellows (Chaplain)."

"To Gerald Fane-court, Esq."
"Phew!" whistled the rascal, as he tore the letter into tiny shreds, and flung them from the window.

"She'll be in six days, eh?" he muttered, "and is burning with a desire for revenge upon me. Very pleasant prospect for me, I'm sure! Well, I don't intend her to find me, so I'll better try and throw her off the scent before I go.

He was feeling in the breast-pocket of his coat as he soliloquized, and now drew out a Russian leather wallet, from which he took a letter-card, and addressing it to "Lizzie Bartlette, No. 434, H.M. Prison, New York," he turned the long, hot poker in the fire.

DEAR LIZZIE,—I don't quite know when your time is up, but I write to tell you I'm in no end of a mess, and am cutting my sticks, am on my way to a certain port where I shall take steamer to—well, you will know when where it is to the place where you once said you'd like to go, and forget all the past. I've been counting on something very different to this. I had taken a country pub, and—hang it all! my plans are knocked on the head, and ifs has been dropped in the crib, which is all lost, since I cannot do anything to get any of the outcry back for fear of being nabbed. By the time you receive this I shall, if all goes well, be out of the country. This Django, (I hope) to send for you. So long, old dear.—Yours ever,

Ferd."

At Reading, while the train waited a few moments, he posted his letter, then returning to his compartment, he posted sundry notes and diagrams in a small pocket-book, which referred to the structure of The Mount.

"A few or two before he had crossed the river with Jemmy, he had overheard one gentleman telling another that he was on the point of settling at Verlaine, giving the same particulars to his friend that he (Bartlette) had given to the postmistress.

A moment the listening rascal made up his mind to see the house before it was occupied, and also to use the address of it to receive the prison chaplain.

A tall, handsome, but sulker-eyed woman stood in her cell, reading Bartlette's letter-card. There had been just a moment of hesitation on the part of the man in the prison (exercising their legal censorship on all letters) as to whether to allow her to receive the epistle, but finally, having taken a copy of it to forward to the Scotland Yard authorities, with a view to help them in their search for the culprit, the hand of the prison. No. 434, they allowed her to have the pale blue card.

"He thinks to blind me by this piece of bluff," she muttered, as she read the lying lines.

Then, apostrophising the absent man, she continued:

"You are my love, Ferdinand Bartlette, if you own a foot, you are my love, too; no leaving England; the whole letter is a piece of bluff. I know you—know you through and through, can read you like a book, and, in a week, I shall begin my work of hunting you down. I will go to Scotland Yard, tell them who I am, show them my ticket, tell them of my hate, my desire to be avenged upon you, you give them certain information that may help them; and then I'll begin my search, and it will be hard if in a week I am not on your track."

The look on the woman's face boded ill for the absent man, or the place in which he had hidden himself.

"The morning came, a few days later, when the woman's own clothes were brought to her, and casting off the concrete garb, she began to array herself in her own things. All the time that it was a matter of underclothing, she did not care much about the crosses and wrinkles the ears of strange had produced, but when it came to be the dark-blue dress, and the three-quarter fawn-coloured coat-jacket, every womanly instinct of rebellion rose in her gout as she noted the tell-tale creases.

The feathers in her hat were broken and out of curl, the trimmings of ribbons and lace, and altogether her toilet was a disappointment to her.

"Every old lag who sees me will know that I have just one time," she muttered to herself, "and everyone else, no knows anything about 'uncle's,' will grin to themselves, and say, 'She's just took her togs out of pop, and been up the spent some time, from the look of them.'"

A little shiver of disgust passed over her, as she added:

"Then, look, at the fashion of them. Ugh!"

The light of a pleasantness flashed into her eyes, as she added:

"There's one comfort; there's a matter of nine pounds of mine in the governor's pocket, and shouldn't be spent any more if needs be, for a pound or two. Then there's twenty-odd pounds in the Post Office Bank, if only Mother Captains has done the square with me, and has kept my box safe, with my Bank-book in it."

Her fingers had been busy all this time, and she had done the best she could with the broken ribbons and false, donning it, smelted the coming of the gaoler to release her.

Twenty minutes later, the great gates of the prison opened to her, and she went forth free of the law. She glanced neither to the right nor to the left, never once did she deign to question or curious looks of any of the little crowd of loungers about the prison approaches.

When she had got quite clear of the neighbourhood of the gaol, she suddenly lifted her head, and with a flashing light in her eyes, she murmured:

"Better for you, Bartlette, if either you had never been born, or, being born, had died before you fooled me with your lies and treachery."

The rank, oily odour of unbleached calico suddenly came to her sense of smell. She was passing a large general drapery store, and, well-like, turned in the place to get a new dress jacket and hat. It was an hour before she emerged again, transformed woman, with one quest and purpose in life: to find and to be avenged on the man who had betrayed her.

CHAPTER II

"CAN I BURN UP THE PAST?"

I was the night before the day arranged for the marriage of Stan Evand and Kath, and the bride-elect was in her room. Though the night was windless and almost sultry, a bright fire burned in the grate.

For the last few hours a strange restlessness had been upon this bride of to-morrow, and more than once she had passed through the open French windows that led out upon the balcony, and had stood silent, but strangely nervous, drinking in the fresh, sweet night air. Then she would turn suddenly, shrug up on her heel, and return to the room again.

But it was on one of these returns that, after a little debate with herself, she struck a match and set light to the kindling that was laid ready in the grate. Now she stood by the table, counting a number of letters. The letters were all in the same handwriting, and all began in the most conventional terms, and all were addressed to the same person, Kath.

Yet she sorted these letters into two piles, placing all up to a certain date in one pile, and all of a later date in another. Holding each pile in a separate hand, she seemed to be weighing some question in her mind.

"Shall I burn them?" she murmured half-aloud.

She glanced at the grate; the blazing coal was sending up fiery, leaping tongues of flame. A very few moments after being tossed upon those leaping flames, the fair, white, written pages would be reduced to black cinder. "Shall I burn them?" she mused for herself again.

A strange smile curled her lips as she muttered:

"Can I burn my past by burning the letters?"

She laughed aloud, though low, and the laugh was an evil one.

From that time on, all, he had to keep them, so, to keep the sheep from the goats, I will tell them in separate bundles.

She took a piece of ribbon, cut it in half, and tied each pile of letters in a separate bundle, and put them away in a drawer of a cabinet—it was the same cabinet from which we saw Jemmy and Vearla. Chapter, take these letters of Stan Evand's to his fiancée, at the time when she (Kath) was first stricken with that hideous illness.

She had only just closed and locked the cabinet on those two packets of letters, when the crash of bells startled her, and a moment later that weird, mysterious, muffled peal (of our prologue chapter) was sounding out on the midnight stillness.
She shivered more than once as she listened to the uncanny sounds, and sighed with distinct relief when the mysterious peal ended as sharply and suddenly as it began.

Deep-rooted in her nature was a very distinct tendency to superstition, and she muttered something to herself about "that black portended by a muffled peal."

Then, when she was finally thinking about going to bed, a single stroke of a bell which, she knew, belonged to the new church at the opposite end of the village, struck sharply upon the night silence. A moment later there came a second stroke, another, and another, until, with a shuddering little cry, she buried her face in her hands, and gasped:

"A muffled marriage peal, and now the death-knell! Oh! — What can it mean? What can it portend?"

Tense of nerve, with every muscle of her beautiful face fixed and rigid, she started into space, her eyes growing glassy with terror. She saw nothing, she heard nothing, she imagined nothing, yet a hideous terror consumed her, for over all her frame, through every vein, through every limb of her body, a frightful sense of a myriad crawling, writhing things seemed to move. Under the silk stockings that she wore, creeping about the soles of her feet, and gliding cold and uncanny up the nape of her neck, and wriggling hideously round the crown of her head, the writhing folds of this horrible, nameless fear filled her with cold shuddering terror.

She might well fear, might well have some premonition of hearing horror, for within eight feet of her, watching her with murderous eyes, there lurked a ghost of her past which she would fain have forgotten, but which was destined—other chapters will tell.

CHAPTER III.

A WARNING.

Milo, the Tuscan carter of Jacques Boisang, was waiting in the stall-yard when Jacques and his wife drove in.

"Be careful, Jacques, dear one," Clotilde whispered, as they drove into the yard. "For my sake," she continued, "and for your brother's; for that smooth-tongued beast, Bartlette, and Jemmy as well, would as soon turn truant upon Jean, to spite you, as a bee would sting honey.

He flashed upon her a look of adoring love that was an assurance in itself to Clotilde, and which perfectly satisfied her.

"Where are the three Jersey men, Milo?" asked Jacques.

"Are they windowing?"

"They are gone—all three of them, sir," the man replied.

"Gone?"

"Gone!"

The voices of Jacques and Clotilde rang out the wondering question simultaneously.

"Where?" And again the two voices spoke the same word at the same instant.

"I do not know," replied the Tuscan. "Pete brought a letter for the man Jemmy, just after you had gone—the post-mother sent it up by him as he was passing this way—and all three of the men read it together, standing away where I could not hear what was said or read. Then Jemmy took a match, struck it, lit the corner of the letter, and burned it, and when it was all burned, they talked together for a few moments, then Jean said, 'Henry, Milo, and I are bound for the big cart.'"

"I did as he bade me, and in a quarter-of-an-hour they were cleaned, dressed, and ready to be driven to the station. I drove them, but not to our station below here, but across to the main line junction. It is a long drive, and it is but now that I finished boarding the Flemings."

Jacques and Clotilde were utterly amazed, but readily surmised that the letter which had been received by Jemmy had contained some kind of urgent warning, which, since it touched one of the trio, served as a warning to the others, any desert of the officers of the law upon the place for one man being likely to cause the recognition and arrest of the others.

Both Jacques and Clotilde thought it likely that Jean or one of the others might have left a note of explanation somewhere prominent in the house, but a careful, exhaustive search of the various rooms failed to produce any sign of anything in the shape of a communication.

"You were right to be fearful, Clotilde," Jacques confided to his wife, later on, as they sat in the moonlight and unvisited, and knew that they were out of all earshot of others.

"Even now," he went on, "we must be prepared to be visited by the law officers."

As the days went by the pair were ever on the alert, expecting to see some more gendarmes approach the house; but the days stretched into weeks, the weeks into months, without the slightest intimation, and gradually they breathed more freely. No letter or communication came from any of the three men, and though Jacques carefully watched every newspaper which he could get hold of, he read nothing anywhere that touched upon the arrest of anyone answering the description of any of the three live residents at Vrance Manor—the name by which the Boisang place was known.

Close to the window of the bride-elect's room, so close that one wide-sweeping bough literally overhung the corner of the balcony on which (in an earlier chapter) we saw the standing image of the bride-elect, the dead leaves were so far from being cleared away that it was almost as though one might have been planted in that tree. In two weeks, however, the dead leaves and the withered boughs, which had been planted there merely to prevent any of the parson's friends from finding the secret place of rest, were completely swept away by the wintry winds, and the open door to the balcony was left unobstructed by the possibility of any. It was now the custom of the little bride-elect, as winter's fitful days passed, to sit watching the world outside, and often she would turn and sit beside the church door, and watch the passing of the strolling nurses, and the passing of the smiling churchkeeper with his alert dog, and the passing of the old men and women who were among the first to attend the church on market day. She would watch the passing of the village beneath the branches of the withered tree, and watch the passing of the world beneath the branches of the withered tree, and watch the passing of the village beneath the branches of the withered tree.

"What's her little game, I wonder?" he muttered, as he saw her light the fire, and watched her setting the leek.

When, a few minutes later, she stood over the fire, evidently debating whether to burn the letters or not, the cruel eyes of the watching man smiled scornfully, defiantly, and he hardly checked the laugh that rose to his lips as he muttered:

"If that is the past you are thinking to burn, my lady, you are making a mistake; none of us can ever burn, or drown, or smother, or strangle, or stab, or rid ourselves in any other way of our past. Why, even when we reach hell, as, of course, you and I will do, my dear, in spite of our handsome faces and our polished manners, our past will live with us, live with us to torment us."

The soliciting man, jockeying that bough, was as thorough-paced a rascal as ever trod this earth, yet even as he sat in that tree, apostrophising the beautiful occupant of the room into which he peered, a singular memory resonated to his name. "Yesterday at the church," he muttered, "there was a sacred conference about the same woman, with a man named Guillemard."

Curiosity had once tempted him to enter a village chapel one winter's Sunday evening, where he had heard a sermon on the undying property of memory, from the text, "Sea, remember."

"Preacher—the carpenter and wheelwright of the village—after graphically picturing that story in the sixteenth chapter of Luke, had come to the bell episodes, showing how the rich man carried his memory with him to hell, and how that memory composed up all his past, and the past became part of the forecast of his then present."

A hundred long-forgotten things in connection with that village carpenter's sermon came sweeping back to the mind of the tree-hidden scamp; yet, each is the deadening, hardening effect of long-continued neglect of Divine things, he could even laugh quietly to himself over the solemn, awful, remembered warnings, and jeocously apostrophise the woman whom he watched and alluded to as his own probable companion in that never-ending hell to which he knew he was fast hastening.

He sat on, ever watching the occupant of that room. That evening, the first muffled peal of the bells pealed out, and he smiled, and muttered "Good!"

"Then, as he watched the start which the girl in the lighted room gave at the first muffled note of the bells, and saw the look of amaze and disgust that swept over her face, he chuckled maliciously and muttered, "Behaves up, eh, my little pretty dear?"

With his unbroken gaze fixed upon her, he waited on until the death-knell rang out its separate, mournful
In the sleepless hours that followed the disturbance of his night's rest by that muffled peal and death-knell, Stan Evans was the victim of some strange thoughts. Strive as he would, he could not get rid of a wretched misgiving of heart as to his approaching marriage.

"I can't understand myself," he muttered under his breath, as he turned restless from side to side in his bed. "Why am I so full of strange apprehensions, subtle dread, strange misgivings? Why is it that I have, at times, a positive shrinking from Kath?"

A sigh from him broke the stillness of the room, then he went on:
MY WEE GIRLIE.

CHAPTER V.
A MAD REQUEST.

TAN, Stan, my darling!" The sick girl raised herself in bed, and stretched out her arms towards her lover, as he entered the room.

She looked very ill, but very beautiful; Stan thought she had never seen her look more beautiful, and with a sharp, sudden sense of remorse for his recent thoughts, and with a great pang for his cruel treatment of her, he gathered her to himself, and kissed her with a passionate warmth such as he had not felt for her for some time of late.

And she clung to him with an almost child-like abandon, such as he had not seen since the tears starting from her eyes and falling on his breast and held her so close to himself.

For a few minutes he stooped and pouted her; then, as she clung to him, she suddenly startled him by crying:

"Oh, Stan, dearest, this disappointment is awful! But listen, dear one! Don't, oh, don't think me forward or unkindly, for God knows, I did only mean to do you thisgreat kindness—marry me here, my darling!"

He started, and his entire body relaxed a little of the weight upon her, and he stared down amazedly into her face.

She saw the startled look in his eyes, she saw something else there as well; she saw that he evidently conceived her request to be the unkindly thing that she had deprecated in her speech. Seeing this, she hastened to overcome his scruples, as clinging to him more passionately than ever, she continued:

"Stan! Stan! I love you! I love you! do not look like that at me. I have said no wrong, said no harm, dearest, surely. In the ordinary course of events, but for this wretched . . . "

"But listen, Stan. After I had married her, and we were married, Stan Evans and his 'best men' were on the spot in good time; but ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, and then a second quarter of an hour passed, and the bride did not come. Then, beginning to be alarmed, Stan sent a mounted groom to ascertain if there had been any mishap.

After the messenger's departure there came another season of waiting, then the man returned with the news that the bride-elect was ill—too ill to rise from her bed.

"Stan's friend, the groom s-man, who stood by him when the message was delivered, looked sharply at Stan, and in a low voice, for a sign that broke from Stan's lips was so evidently one of relief that he was strangely puzzled. He would have been more puzzled still had he known what intense relief the news had really brought to Stan's heart; for with the love that he was about to offer her."

"I dare not marry this woman, feeling as I do," his feelings of repugnance to the marriage had reached a stage which could welcome any deterrent of the deed.

But in spite of the certain amount of relief which he experienced at the idea of even the temporary postponement of his marriage, Stan was truly grieved and anxious about this unexpected collapse of his plans, and with one or two hurried words to his friends, he hurried out of the house, into his waiting carriage, and drove direct to the house of the sick girl.

He was met by the servant opened the door, he began to ask her questions, but all that he could learn was this—"Miss Carfax had seemed all right overnight, only just a little excited; that she had given orders that she was not to be disturbed in the morning, and that the house was to be kept quiet, as she would probably be up and about by dinner time. I am very glad to lie in, in the morning, up to the last moment."

"But at last, sir?" the maid went on, "when we heard so sound of her stirring, we were afraid that there was something the matter, so I went to her room, and found her ill and almost speechless. I sent for the doctor, and that brought your messenger arrived, sir. She tossed up a little just now, and asked if you had been, or had sent, and when I told her you had sent a groom to inquire, she said, 'Mr. Evans will come himself presently, as soon as he knows that I am ill. When he does, bring him up to me at once. I must see him.' I will tell her you are here, sir."

The maid left him alone while she went up to her mistress's room.

The moment he was alone an almost uncontrollable desire to fly the house came over Stan, and he fought a real and literal battle with himself, a battle so fierce that his brow was beaded with perspiration.

"What possesses me, I cannot conceive!" he mused. At this moment the maid returned, saying:

"Miss Carfax is ready to receive you, sir, if you will follow me."
plation I can to my friends, who are all awaiting my return.'

'Give it to me,' replied the maid. "Remain here, while I cross the room and examine her, and I will report aloud to you across the room; then you can come and take your temporary farewell of her.'

The doctor passed quickly to the bedside, but before he could speak a word to the sick girl, she began to appeal to him.

"Tell Mr. Evans," she cried, "that I am well enough to be dressed now, or I shall harden our marriage in an hour; or urge him, doctor, to let us be married at once, here, in my room, for—oh—"

My dear!" returned the gentle creature, "you must be out of your mind to conceive either course tenable in your present state. The excitement of either course might kill you outright."

She knew that her "fancy" must have heard the doctor's words, and she literally screamed out her protest across the room.

"Don't you believe it, Stan. I am not out of my mind, unless it be with the disappointment of this morning.

Stan moved quickly to her side, and taking her hand, said something, or two, then added: The doctor wants to go into your case more fully, dear, and as my friends are all waiting my return at the church, I must hurry away. Good-bye for the present."

He had literally to tear himself away from her, but he waited till the last, and passed hurriedly downstairs and out of the house.

He drew a distinct breath of relief as the front-door closed behind him, and he found himself in the open air. As he turned out of the gate, and moved up the road a little way, in the carriage, the driver was washing his house to and fro—he possessed a gentlemanly-looking fellow, whose black, piercing eyes met his in the one flashing instant of their passing. Something in the searching, questioning of the man's glance made Stan curious to know who the stranger could be, and why he stared so hard at him.

But he was abreast of his carriage now, and as the driver pulled up he entered it, and the vehicle turned.

Still full of his curiosity, he thrust his head from the window of the turning carriage and looked back. To his amaze he saw that the stranger was actually turning into the gate of the house he had himself just left.

* * * * * * * * *

Left alone with his patient, the doctor tried to settle and calm the agitated, disappointed bride-elect, but it was no easy task, for she acted like a frenzied woman.

In one of the momentary lulls of her passion, he said: "Miss Carfax has given me confidence. For a doctor, like a lawyer and priest, should have the absolute confidence of his patient."

She looked at him questioningly.

"You have had some fearful shock, that is evident," he went on, "and if you can give me ever so little idea of its nature it will help me to treat you, so that you shall be strong enough to stand the excitement of your marriage at the earliest possible moment."

She was silent for a moment, then replied: "I have had no shock, except the shock of waking to find myself a stranger to myself, and to waking, I was too ill to rise and dress for my wedding."

He fixed his eyes keenly upon her, and she read his displeasure in their glance before he could utter his protest:

"I am sorry you will not trust me, Miss Carfax, since, professionally, your unwillingness compels me to throw up your case."

"Do you mean that?" she asked.

"I do," he replied. "You leave me no option."

He rose as he spoke, and with one appealing glance at her, evidently hoping that she would reconsider her refusal, he said:

"Good-day, Miss Carfax."

"Good-day, doctor," she replied, giving no sign of wishing to stay his going, for in her heart she was saying: "I don't want a doctor. I only want to be left to carry out my plans in my own way."
his wife, the pair moved quickly forward to meet the strangers.

"Monsieur Jacques Boisong?" queried the taller of the two callers as the quartette met.

"The same, monsieur," replied Jacques.

"We have called upon important business," continued the stranger.

You have recently had three men working for you," he went on, "who were said to be Jersey-men?"

"Oui, monsieur!"

"Where are they now?" queried the stranger.

"Ah, where?" replied Jacques. "I wish I knew! I wish I could get at them. I'd break every one of their foul heads in half, for leaving me as they did, without one word of warning, and just when all the born-work was in full swing."

"Did you know them before they came to you for work?"

"Yes, I looked his questioner squarely in the face as he uttered his negative.

"Two of them turned up at the farm here one evening," he went on, "just when I was desperately in need of labour for the harvest, and as they seemed decent enough in looks, I engaged them, and they were strong, and were full of life and fun. I engaged them straight off for the winter; and as the days went on, and they worked well, I was more than ever glad that I had engaged them. Both were handy fellows with tools, so I arranged that when all the other work was done, they should repair everything on the place, the sheds, the gates, and carts, the fences —everything, in fact, for nothing came amiss to them in the way of work; Jersey-men are said to be like that. Then by-and-by a third man came along, who had been known to the other two, and though he did not ask for work, he was asked to be taken as a lodger, and my wife and I accepted him. He, too, was a handy fellow, and did so much to help on the farm that I hardly cared to take the pay he offered for his lodging. Then, one day when my wife and I had been to market, we found, on our return, that the third had left suddenly, and had got my cow-man to drive him away to the junction. From that day to this I have never heard of, or from, or seen anything of them. Curse them! for leaving me in such a pickle!"

He paused, glanced at Clotilde, then, turning again to the stranger, said:

"But will you not come into the house, messieurs? We are just going to dinner; we can offer you hearty, if not simple fare."

The two men accepted the offer, and a moment later found themselves in the best room, while Clotilde prepared the table in the living-room.

When Clotilde had left the room, the chief of the strangers leaned suddenly towards Jacques, and asked:

"Are you not the same Jacques Boisong who lived some time ago in Jersey?"

"I am, monsieur!"

"You had a brother Jean, who was convicted for the murder of a farmer named Lemarré?"

"To my sorrow, yes," returned Jacques.

"And where did you last see that brother, monsieur?" asked the stranger.

"At Brest, earlier this year. When I was married I took my wife to Brest, we spent our honeymoon there, and I got permission to see Jean then."

"Where is he now?" queried the stranger.

"At Brest, I suppose," Jacques replied, adding: "He was employed, so I understood, with a number of other convicts, in building an extension breakwater."

The stranger bent his keen eyes upon the farmer as he asked:

"You have not heard, then, that he has escaped, monsieur?"

"Escaped!"

The tone of voice, the look of utter amaze, the forward start, and the gesture which accompanied Jacques's one word of startled exclamation, was as superb a piece of acting as ever had been conceived and performed, and it thoroughly satisfied the two officers of the law, the chief of whom told Jacques as much as he thought it professionally politic to tell of the escape, adding:

"From what we had learned about the men who stayed here a while ago, we concluded that two of them must have been your brother and his fellow felon."

Jacques smiled as he replied: "My brother Jean must have been the smartest actor the world has ever seen, as well as the cleverest bandit at a disguise, if he could have entered my house, sat at my table, and worked with me, day in and day out, and me not know him. Besides, I would defy any true-born coast Breton to hide his speech, and none of the three men who were here spoke real Breton of any kind, least of all coast Breton. Two, by their tongues, bore out what they said—they were Jersey-men; the third was also a Jersey-man, who had lived long in England and Paris."

The two strangers exchanged a meaning glance as Jacques gave this description of the third man.

At this moment Clotilde appeared with the dinner, and the quartette repaired to once more the table.

The anxious wife had done her part well, and something approaching sumptuousness awaited the strangers, the wine (she had placed a large bottle to each of their plates) being of really prime quality.

When, an hour later, the two officers left the farm, and took their way to the station — Jacques drove them there—they were thoroughly satisfied that even if Jean Boisong, and Jemmy, his mate, had been at the farm, they had concealed most effectively their real identity.

Of course they had really been deluded, but deluded and satisfied spell the same way sometimes, and this was one of those times.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE TRAIL.

The two Paris detectives who had visited Jacques Boisong proceeded, immediately on their arrival at the city, to the office of the head of their department, to report themselves and the result of their investigations.

They had just finished their verbal report, and had answered one or two searching questions put to them by their chief, when a third detective, who had been pursuing investigations in another direction, was announced.

The evidence of this third man was full of importance.

The three men who were wanted had been heard of in London; and the reporter of the news—one of the smartest detectives in the Paris force — was despatched at once to cooperate with the local police in the tracking and capture of the wanted trio.

That sharp rat-tat, the sound of which had floated up to the ears of the sick bride-elect as she lay upon her bed, was answered by the servant, just as the doctor was descending the stairs, and the latter heard the caller ask if he could see Miss Kathleen Carlyx.

"She is ill, and in bed, sir," the servant began; then suddenly becoming conscious of the near presence of the doctor, she added:

"Will you come in, sir? The doctor is here. He would tell you if Miss Carlyx is well enough to be seen."

Ferdinand Bartlette accepted the invitation to step inside, and a moment later he was closeted with the doctor, introducing himself as Fred Carfax, brother of the sick girl.

I only arrived from the East two days ago," he went on, "and travelling down to the old house, found that my sister Jean was dead, and that poor little Kath had sold the old place, moved right away, and was on the point of being married. I should have arrived last night, but had the ill-luck to be in that accident on the Chudleigh-cum-Polkerton branch line, got a considerable shaking up, and was only glad to crawl into bed, and remain there until this morning."

The doctor asked a question or two about the accident, of which he had not yet heard, explaining that "we never get a daily paper here until quite noon."

The plausible-looking man before him had read the newspaper, and poured out the story of the collision as he had read it, though he was miles away from the spot at the time of the occurrence.
Breaking off suddenly in his story, he asked the doctor the nature of his sister's illness. "There is something very mysterious about it," replied the medico; then telling all that he knew about the attack, he added: "As a medical man, I say she has received a great shock of some kind, though she declares that she has not. I suppose you do not know, do not remember, sir, that she was ever subject to any complaint that would account for this sudden indisposition, for even we doctors get deceived sometimes; and though her condition suggests nothing so much as a shock, it might arise from some other cause, and she refuses to tell me anything, so, very reluctantly, I have been obliged to throw up her case."

The professed brother of the sick girl smiled in an enigmatical way. "Ah, you know something, I see," cried the doctor. "You may be able to help me in this matter." "Kath has been subject to curious attacks ever since she was fourteen, doctor," returned the lying scoundrel. "Once we had to put her away in a private asylum; and when I heard yesterday that she was going to be married, I was utterly amazed, and I wondered whether she had told her fiancé of her tendency to what was really a type of insanity. He ought to know, sir, for though she is my own very dear sister, I would not, if I could help it, allow her to deceive a man, and perhaps ruin his life."

"Insanity!" cried the doctor. "Ah, that would account for many things which have puzzled me in your sister's case, sir."

He proceeded to ask several questions, all of which the scoundrelly impostor replied to with a glibness that would have deceived a whole college of physicians. Then suddenly he asked: "Have you, sister, do you know, doctor, told her fiancé of the fatal tendency?"

"I feel certain she has not, or he would not have been so utterly in the dark as he was when he talked with me, in her room, less than half-an-hour ago. He had, in fact, only just left the house as you arrived, Mr. Bartlette."

"A tall, fair, good-looking, military type of man?" asked the rascally Bartlette. "That's him, exactly," replied the doctor. "Then I passed him just outside the gate," the scoundrel replied. "He's too straight a man (if I know anything about character at sight) to be made a dupe of, even though the lady who duped him were my own pretty little sister, Kath." He asked a few questions about Stan Evans, then continuing, said: "The question is, doctor, will you tell him, or shall I, or would you open up the case to him, and I will see him later on, and give him more detailed particulars?"

The doctor decided that the latter course would be the best, and after a few more exchanges between them, the doctor passed out of the room, preparatory to leaving the house.

Bartlette accompanied him, and in the presence of the servant, who waited to open the door, he said: "After all you have said as to my sister's condition, doctor, I will not attempt to see her until after your evening visit. I have some correspondence to see to, and I must send for our family solicitor to complete certain deeds of gift to my sister, in view of her marriage. You will look in about five, you said, doctor?"

"About that time," replied the medico, offering his hand to the bland, plausible scoundrel.

When the door had closed upon the doctor, the impostor turned to the servant and asked a few questions as to the household arrangements, and charmed the girl by his graciousness of thought for the general comfort of the two domestics, and by the gift of a sovereign as a solutum for her broken night's rest, and the extra work involved by the illness of her mistress.

"Give this to your fellow-servant," he said, handing the girl two half-sovereigns. "Then come back to me. I shall want you to take a telegram to the station."

Measuring other people with his own bushel, the wily scamp told himself that the girl would hand her fellow-servant one of the half-sovereigns, show her the second one as a proof
that both were sharing alike, while she pocketed and kept an absolute silence in either case.

Ten minutes later the girl returned with her hat and jacket on, glad enough to get a run out at such an hour, and especially pleased that this new master insisted upon the wire being taken to the railway-station instead of the post-office, because it meant a good twenty minutes’ run instead of ten.

The moment the girl was gone, the villain slipped down the stairs to the kitchen, and interviewed the cook as to a simple luncheon to be served in an hour. This woman he found to be almost a cripple, with an attack of rheumatic gout in both feet, and he smiled indulgently as he mentally congratulated himself on the fact that her locomotion must necessarily be very slow.

Three minutes sufficed to do all he needed below stairs; then, as he regained the hall, he felt that the coast was cleared to carry his schemes a little further, and quietly mounting the stairs, he paused a moment at the door of the invalid’s room—his keen eyes had noted the room from which the doctor had departed.

The door of the room was ajar, the edge of a plush curtain, hanging from a portiere, was just visible. He stopped softly, pressed lightly against the door, and it yielded silently to his touch.

* * *

The sick girl lay silent; her eyes, fixed on the ceiling above her, were wild and staring in their intensity, and her hands clenched in impotent passion. She had just taken a dose of chloral, for she wanted oblivion, she wanted to be free of the torments of her secret thoughts, and her conscience. What Kipling says of the soldier in his imprisonment, might have been written of her.

"The horror of our fall is written plain,
Every secret self-revealing on the aching white-washed ceiling.
Do you wonder that we drug ourselves from pain?
We have done with Hope and Honour, we are lost to Love and Truth.
We are dropping down the ladder rung by rung.
And the measure of our torment is the measure of our youth."

For once, for the first time in her experience, the opiate had succeeded to wonders. Its deadly charm, and its ghastly spell, must have become real to her senses. Her face was turned partly towards the window as well as upwards to the ceiling. The creeping villain moved silently between the bed and the wall—her back was to the wall.

She flung her arm out savagely, the fingers of the hand were tightly clenched, as she began again:

"He must marry me! He shall not slip me now, after I have suffered! I will make him do my bidding! I will—"

The opiate must surely have been taking some effect upon her, of the presence of that stealthy, creeping sound, must have become real to her senses. Her face was turned partly towards the window as well as upwards to the ceiling. The creeping villain moved silently between the bed and the wall—her back was to the wall.

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"He must marry me! He shall not slip me now, after I have suffered! I will make him do my bidding! I will—"

He had risen to the window, and was looking out. His eyes were fixed upon the invalid, and his thoughts were turned to another subject.

"If I were in her place, and saw him like that—" His eyes swept over the invalid, and his thoughts were turned to another subject.

"If I were in her place, and saw him like that—"

She had risen to the window, and was looking out. His eyes were fixed upon the invalid, and his thoughts were turned to another subject.

"If I were in her place, and saw him like that—"

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"If I were in her place, and saw him like that—"
He bowed his face between his hands, and in that hour of his mental darkness he drew nearer to the great Burdencaster than ever he had been before.

The lark slowly descended, its song flooding all the silent silence, and Stan lifted his eyes again, not to the lark, but to the feathered chorister’s Maker, as he whispered softly:

“But though I may not climb the air, Bronté, the light is a secret air, Worn by the noiseless feet of prayer.”

His face was calm, strong, serene now, for his silent communion with God had given him a new, an upward outlook.

A step sounded on the gravelled path; he looked up; it was the doctor whom he had left at the bedside of his sick girl.

Wondering at his visit, he rose from his seat, and stepped out from the shelter of the maple to meet him.

“Anything special? Anything more amiss, doctor?” he asked.

Then noting the grave look in the medic’s eyes, he asked quickly:

“No, I think not, Mr. Evans; but, as a matter of fact, she has practically dismissed me, the case is no longer in my hands. She knows what her illness is due to, but referred to return to-day to give me any hint of the cause of her sudden break down. I was just leaving the house when a relative, a brother of hers, arrived; he only landed in England, from the East, about thirty hours ago, and—”

“A well-set-up, rather horsey-looking man, dark-complexioned, with piercing black eyes?” queried Stan, interrupting the doctor.

“Yes,” the latter replied; “and he said he passed you as he neared the gate, though he did not, of course, know who you were. He’s a smart fellow, seems awfully fond of his sister, but was not a bit进来 to hear any of her attack, and, at my request, told me some startling news.”

Stan looked up sharply.

“You must prepare yourself, Mr. Evans, for some very strange news, the doctor went on.

“Tell me everything, doctor, keep nothing back; the only thing I cannot stand is suspense.”

The medic told him word for word that all the second Bartlette had told him, and fitting in with what he had considered the wildness of his own thought in the hours preceding this eventful day, Stan swallowed Bartlette’s fiction as readily as the doctor had done.

The “Poor girl!” with which he greeted the startling news had nothing of the broken-hearted lover in its tone, and the doctor made his own menial conclusions.

“What an escape!” was Stan’s next exclamation.

“Ah! a very near one for you, Mr. Evans,” returned the doctor, adding quickly:

“Of course, the information which Mr. Fred Carfax gave me enabled me to understand everything which had puzzled me in connection with his sister’s case.”

It was now Stan’s turn to confide in the doctor; this he did, telling him everything from the day when he rescued the two sisters, but especially dwelling upon the curious change he had found in his betrothed since his return from Cairo.

“This attack was working within her, and doubtless produced the change you noticed,” the doctor remarked.

The two men exchanged a few more words, then the doctor shook hands and left.

Ten minutes later “Mr. Fred Carfax” was announced, and Stan returned to the house to see his visitor, little conceiving all that the interview would mean to him.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLING REVELATION.

He passed a moment, then looking Stan fairly, squarely in the eyes, he said:

“I have nothing against you, Mr. Evans, I owe you no grudge; we are both men, and, as such, have many things in common; yet though you almost deserve to be left here by the cropper—as you certainly would if I left you in the dark—I tell you what I will do with you, sir; I’ll trust your sense of honour as a gentleman.”

As you please, sir,” replied Stan, eying the would-be blackmailing curiously.

“Very well, sir, I’ll leave you to yourself; only when you are floundering about in the mess that you will have made for yourself, please remember that I offered you a really cheap and a thoroughly effective way out of your difficulty.”

He paused a moment, then looking Stan fairly, squarely in the eyes, he said:

“I have nothing against you, Mr. Evans, I owe you no grudge; we are both men, and, as such, have many things in common; yet though you almost deserve to be left here by the cropper—as you certainly would if I left you in the dark—I tell you what I will do with you, sir; I’ll trust your sense of honour as a gentleman.”

As you please, sir,” replied Stan, eying the would-be blackmailing curiously.

“Very well, sir, I’ll leave you to yourself; only when you are floundering about in the mess that you will have made for yourself, please remember that I offered you a really cheap and a thoroughly effective way out of your difficulty.”
"That lady," went on the smiling rascal, "is Mrs. Ferdinand Bartlette, a Miss Joan, and not Miss Kathleen Carlax."

Stan's lips parted as though he would speak, but no words came from him, and Bartlette went on:

"If you purpose to pose as a brother of hers, but she is my wife. As Miss Joan Carlax, I met her a few months ago at Sealey. I was fairly gone on her——"

It was hardly worth while for him to let his listener know that it was her own heart that had been gone upon.

"And she was equally gone upon me. She almost asked me to marry her, and, when I did propose, married me by special license within twenty hours of my proposal. We went to Paris, and had been there a week when I was suddenly called away to India to rejoin my regiment. She preceded to Europe, and I received the countermand to my previous orders, and returned at once to England. But I could find no trace of my wife for a long time. At last I got a clue, and began to follow it up. It has taken me weeks to hunt her down, and the result of my search and inquiries has put me in possession of certain facts that prove that Joan Bartlette is not only a cleverer woman than I ever supposed her to be, but that she is as black-hearted as she is beautiful. Her sister Kath had been very ill, she had her removed from where the girl was staying, and with an ingenuity truly devilish in her conception, she has personated her sister, keeping that poor young lady in hiding somewhere—"

"God help me!" cried Stan, excitedly, and putting his hand to his head, he added:

"I feel as though my very brain reeled and rocked. I can understand some things now, though: the likeness of her laugh, at times, to Joan's; her lack of that sweet, shy grace that was such a distinctive part of my tender little Kath's character. Then there has been the shrinking, almost loathing for her, which I have occasionally experienced when in close company with her—"

With a sudden change of tone, he cried:

"But where is her sister? Where is Kath?"

"Ah, where, sir?" replied Bartlette. "I must leave you to find her, sir. I have found Joan. But what about my reward, sir?"

"For one flashing instant Stan's eyes flashed savagely at his questioner; it seemed to the heart-anguished man like suicide in his questioner to talk of money, of reward, while the fate of Kath, his heart's real love, was unknown. That instant of instantaneous prevalence, and turning to the money-seeking, he cried eagerly:

"Help me to find my Jabout, and the same hour that we find her, I will give you the five thousand pounds."

"Shake, sir!" Bartlette held forth his hand as he spoke; and though Stan took the offered hand, loathing in his heart for the follow, he took the hand offered in a bargain-clasp.

"But we shall have to go quietly and very cautiously to work, sir," the visitor said, "for Joan Bartlette is evidently equal to the very — herself for cunning."

"God can defeat the devil," replied Stan, quickly, feeling the necessity for witnessing for his Lord, and at the same time feeling the inspiration that came from his own trusted utterance.

"He may be sir," smiled Bartlette, "but I am no theologian, and cannot discuss the and of your statement. We had better talk over our plans for disposing Miss Kathleen.

The pair held close confab for an hour or an hour and a half, then parted, Bartlette still pressing as "Fred Carlax," returning to the house of his professed sister.

CHAPTER X

AT MIDNIGHT

UT into the dark silence of that strange prison chamber the voice of its woman-occupant sounded, saying:

"My food is all gone, my water is gone, my strength is gone. No one comes near me now; it may only be days, but it seems like weeks since last my gaoler visited me!"

A low moan escaped her, then, with a deep-drawn sigh, she continued:

"I am young to die, and the world called me fair. My darling held me to be the fairest of all woman. But what is beauty when death draws near. * All flesh is grass, and the flower thereof passeth.* But behind death is God, and beyond death is immortality for those who are Christ's; and, bless His name, He has made me wholly His since all my sorrows came upon me."

There was a wistful cadence in her murmured tones as she sighed:

"And he, my darling, how has it fared with him? Has he found Him whom my soul loveth? Does he know the joy of possession of eternal life yet? Yes, yes, my heart assures me that he does, and that we are one in this, as in all else in heart, even though—"

A low sob broke from her, and her lips could not frame the whispered words: "Though we are parted in the flesh, and we never see each other again, yet—"

Just for a moment or two low sobs shook her frame, and made the crazy bedstead on which she lay crackle hideously.

Then out upon the black, sad silence her voice floated again:

"For surely this is death that is creeping over me. I am left to die alone. But Christ, my Christ, my Redeemer, will not leave me: His spirit-voice sounds in my soul now, saying, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end.' Oh, how wondrous is His Presence."

She was silent for a moment, then softly whispered:

"Though His Spirit be absent, yet I trust Him..."

A strange, ecstatic faintness began to creep over her, and in the darkness she smiled, as across her fast-failing brain there moved the memory of Pope's lines:

"What is this that absorbs me quite,
Steals my senses, shunts my sight,
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?"

"The world recedes, it disappears:
Heaven opens on my eyes; my ears
With sounds seraphic ring!
Lend, lend your wings"

She was murmuring the words aloud now, her strength failing her all the time, her mind, her brain, her senses, growing weaker each moment.

"Lend, lend your wings! I—mort—" she murmured out upon the silence. "I—mort— I—fly..."

Joan Bartlette—we must call her henceforth by her real name—was alone in her room, still weak and sick, but keen and alert to things. She had dismissed the servant, declaring that she was well enough to be left alone, that she would ring in the cook whenever she wanted a meal, and that she wanted to secure a good night, she was not to be disturbed by anyone coming into her room.

The moment the servant has disappeared, she took care that her orders had been obeyed, by quietly crawling from her bed and weak as the two was, and locking the door. That was an hour ago. She had given back to her bed again after securing the door, had lain outwardly quiet, though inwardly her brain was busy maturing certain plans. Now she slipped from her bed once more, and robed herself warily in several skirts, and drawing on two pairs of long woollen stockings, and thrusting her feet into some very warm, woollen slippers, she donned an enormously thick and padded dressing-jacket.

Two pairs of keen eyes watched her every movement from the balcony outside her room.

From a small cut-glass decanter, which she took from a polished cellulite, she poured herself out a small glass of brandy. Then crossing the room, she opened a large wardrobe that was built into the wall of the room. At the same instant the French windows leading on to the balcony, yielding silently to the touch of a hand outside, Stan Evans and Bartlette glided noiselessly into the room.

Joan had disappeared, the back of the wardrobe sliding back at a touch from her hand upon a spring that was fashioned like a hat-peg.

The wide oblong through which she had passed was open, and as the two stepped up they saw that a kind of antechamber lay beyond, and that Joan, with a vestal
lamp in her hand, was filling a large plate with thick
ship's-biscuits from a big, square tin. The plate filled,
she placed an enameled metal ever under a tap, and
filled the thing with water.

Just for one instant she glanced back at the opening
through which she had passed from her room, as though
she was debating whether to turn back and close it. Then,
half-aloof, she muttered:
"It won't matter, as my door is locked."
Carrying her lamp and the plate in one hand, and the
ever of water in the other, she crossed her foot against
a door in the wall of the ante-room, and a moment later
disappeared beyond.

The two men also passed through the door in close
pursuit.

CHAPTER XI.
WONDER UPON WONDER.
SILently as two writhes, Stan Evans and his
companion followed the weak and trembling
Joan. The way was a strange one, presently
descending through a dusky stairway that led
a clear twelve feet below the ground-floor of
the house, then along a vaulted passage some
decent length, to a room, opening to this room, she had added, "as quickly as
you, for this woman's sister has been nearly starred
to death by her, and is in desperate need of immediate
nourishment."

With one puzzled glance at Joan, the girl hurried away.
And Joan's voice, as Bartlette turned to his wife, saying:
"Whatever of these rooms is a bedroom, and you can
to use for the night, go into, and, mark you, don't
try to escape us. If you do, it will be the worse for you.
Joan, with sudden, savage face, passed across the land-
ing, opened a door, and, without a word or a glance at her,
slipped into the room.

She was just closing the door again, when the man
slipped his arm round the edge of it, and securing the
key, laughed mockingly as he said:
"It will be better for us to lock you in, than to lose
yourself.
He closed the door, and turned the key upon her, then
hurried downstairs to the kitchen, to accelerate the
preparation of the nourishment for Kath, and to treat the
wondering servants to a petty little story of jumbled
truth and fiction smelt the attacks of insanity that caused
their mistress to do strange things sometimes, and which
in this case, had prompted her to hide away her sister's
in a secret room of the house.

And while he was romancing to the two wide-eyed,
wondering servants down below, Kath was arranging her
sudden appearance, which had been brought by
the room above. Her eyes opened upon the
loved face of her fiancé, and with a little burst of semi-
hysterical tears, she cried:
"Oh, Stan, I believe I was crying, but your love, your
coming, snatched me back from the river's brink.
He drew her into his arms, her face, damp with her
ears, nestled against his; he held her close to his heart;
his lips, hot with burning kisses, were pressed to hers;
and in a voice choked with the intensity of his emotion,
he cried:
"To God be the glory, my darling!"

Then no other word passed between them until the
sounds of Bartlette's and the servant's returning to the
room made their way upwards through the open door.
A moment later the returning pair entered, the servant
bearing a small basin of soup and some dicked toast.
He curiously eyed were fixed upon Kath's white, beautiful face,
and as Stan supported the newly-delivered girl in his
arms, and began to feed her with the appetizing soup, the
watching servant jumped readily to the conclusion that
this lady must have been intended to have been the bride.

All through the night Stan watched by his darling's
side, and when the sun rose, and the light of a new day
filled all the earth, Kath awoke from a delicious sleep,
comparatively strong and fresh.

He had had a small bowl brought up to the room before
things had been settled for the night, and a tray laid for
a tea meal, with dainty, appetising food covered with
clots to keep it from the sleeping fumes of the room.

"Fear will lend wings and give temporal strength,
and fear of the smiling villain whose name she legally bore,
and who now ordered her movements, that strength by
Joan'..."
Now, after a few seconds of love's interchanges, he whispered:

"Lie still a moment or two, my darling, and I will make you a cup of tea."

As handy as a serving-maid or a girl in an A B C restaurant, he made the tea, and prepared the meal. There were two cups and saucers, and he was himself quite ready for a hearty meal, and there in the early morn they ate and drank together.

By-and-bye, when they had both made an excellent meal, and he had moved back the tray, he said:

"I must leave you, I think, for a while, my darling. I am up this morning—he may be up already—and will arrange with him to marry us this morning, very quietly. It is nearly seven now; would tea be too early for you, dear?"

"No, Stan, I —"

He stopped her with his kisses. Then, having explained his plans a little further, he took a tender temporary farewell of her, and made his way downstairs.

Both servants were in the kitchen. Neither of them had attempted to go to bed, contenting themselves with dozing in their chairs, ready for any sudden call.

With a word of explanation as to his plans, he thanked both the women for all that they had done, gave them each a five-pound note as an earnest of what would follow if they kept their tongues from gossiping about the strange incidents that had occurred during the night just passed, then arranging with the housemaid to go to Kath, he asked: "Where is Mr. Bartlette?"

"Mr. Carfax, sir, you mean," corrected the girl. "He is lying on the couch in the drawing-room. I will show you the room."

As Stan and the maid reached the head of the stairs, they came face to face with Bartlette, who, in the thick, husky voice of a man who has lain all night in his clothes, and slept but indifferently, said:
"I was just coming to enquire for Miss Kathleen and yourself, Mr. Evans, when I heard your voice on the stairs."

Stan sent the maid up to Kath's room, while he himself turned into the dining-room with Bartlette. Explaining what he had arranged to do, by marrying Kath on the strength of the already published books, he added:

"Take that wretched woman, who has so wronged both my darling and myself, out of the country, and I will give you a cheque for five thousand pounds, and pay you both, in addition, five hundred a year all the while she is kept out of the country. I am going now to try to see the vicar; after that I shall hurry home for a bath and a change. I will be back here soon after nine, and will bring the cheque with me. When I have taken Kathleen from the house, I shall not return here again, but having married my darling, I shall carry her straight away, first to London, that she may obtain an outfit, her sister having apparently appropriated all her wardrobe."

Bartlette consented to everything asked of him by Stan, and the latter shook hands heartily enough as he left the house.

"Mr. Evans."

"DEAR SIR,—The game is up with me; I am not what I have represented myself to be, except that I am Joan's husband by a bigamous marriage. You will read all about me and my past career, in the papers, in the course of a day or two. I have been wanted for a lot of things for some years, and have just been nabbed by the 'tocs, who were waiting at the inn for me. I came on here to make a change of clothes. My first wish put me away with the 'tocs. You had better see Joan and arrange to pay her the five hundred a year while she keeps away from England. The money is all at your disposal. If I have done in the matter of restoring your joanette to you, you might keep until I ask you for it some day—I suppose it will be five or seven years I'll get—as I may then be inclined to start life on the square.

"My kind remembrances to Joan, and with best wishes for the future of yourself and Miss Kathleen."

I remain, yours truly,
FRED BOLTON,
alias Ferdinand Bartlette, Fred Carfax, and a score of other names."

There was a postscript to the letter, saying:

"All that lamentation of the muffled marriage peal, and the death-knell, was worked by two pals of mine, who, unfortunately, have been nabbed here as well as me."

All this startling news necessitated Stan's interviewing Joan. It was a painful task to him, but he carried it through with the same magnanimity that quite drove down the pride and anger of the wretched, scheming, disappointed girl.

"Let me see Kath before she goes," she cried; and he granted the request.

Joan died a few months later, just after her final settlement in America. In her last letter she cheered the hearts of Kath and Stan by writing: "God hath found me, hath pardoned me, and like as He spoke to the dying thief, I hear Him say to me, 'Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.' Oh, the riches of His grace!"

(The End.)

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FOR WEEK ENDING.

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Select. No. 352. “Culled of God” by Mayberry Walker

19th—Thrilling. No. 355. “Temptation’s Hour” by Keith Richmond

Select. No. 352. “At What a Cost” by Mrs. De Winter Baker


Select. No. 173. “Neath the Dread Curse” by Hannah B. Mackenzie

May 3rd—Thrilling. No. 357. “Married Marriage Bells” by Grace Garland and Marie Morell

Select. No. 174. “For Another’s Sin” by Mrs. H. Kelly

10th—Thrilling. No. 358. “Between Two Women” by Hannah B. Mackenzie

Select. No. 175. “A Cruel Blow” by Hannah B. Mackenzie

17th—Thrilling. No. 359. “My Wee Girls” by Hannah B. Mackenzie

Select. No. 176. “Face to Face” by Hannah B. Mackenzie

24th—Thrilling. No. 360. “Her Secret Enemy” by the late Mrs. C. Hunt

Select. No. 177. “Her Atonement” by Hannah B. Mackenzie

31st—Thrilling. No. 361. “His Bonny Bride” by Hannah B. Mackenzie

Select. No. 178. “Fearfully Forgiven” by Hannah B. Mackenzie

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Select. No. 180. “Softly” by Mrs. S. Watson

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EAGLE'S POINT.

CHAPTER I.

HAT were you going to say to me just now, when I interrupted you?

"Only to ask you whether—whether you really were—a Christian?" The words were said a little hesitatingly, and Millicent Cardell looked away from her friend as she spoke. "And that was what you were afraid to ask, was it?" said Rose, smiling. "You needn't have minded one bit, because I don't. Of course I'm not a Christian—but in the way you mean that, it, but I suppose I'm not quite a heathen either. I believe the Bible stories quite as much as you do, I expect; isn't that all that is necessary?"

"No, I don't think it is. 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven.'"

"I don't see what that means," said Rose.

"I think it's like this," continued Millicent. "We were born on the wrong road—that is to say, born in sin—and when we are converted we turn right round, and leave our sins with Jesus Christ, and set out on the road to Heaven."

"Oh, well, I haven't done that yet," was the answer. "It will be soon enough when I come to die."

"Oh, Rose, don't say so," said Millicent. "How do you know you will have time or inclination then? I have heard people's hearts get harder as they get older, if they put these things away from them. Do—"

What she was going to say next she did not know, for she suddenly came to a standstill, and an anxious expression gathered in her face.

"I think we must turn back.
"Have Miss Rose and Miss Cardell come in yet?"

at once," she said, quietly; "the tide is coming in rapidly."

"I should just think we must," said Rose, hastily scanning the shore. "We shall have all our work cut out to reach Eagle's Point. We'd better run."

But to beat the in-coming tide at Denton would have needed an athlete of fleetest foot, and so the girls soon discovered. On—on came the cruel water, not in foamy, crested waves, but smooth and dark, each second lessening the width of that strip of golden sand, over which they had so carelessly passed not much more than an hour earlier. They knew if they could reach the jutting cliff,

"Make one more effort, darling; the Point is not covered yet, and we might reach it." Her voice was encouraging, and half-carrying her small companion, she pressed bravely on. But it was of no use. Long before they could gain the desired goal, hope was past—the tide had beaten them.

Rose sank down exhausted at the foot of the cliff, while a shudder of horror passed over her. "We are lost, Millicent, lost! What shall we do?" The big blue eyes were clouded with a terrible fear, and the round baby-face was haggard and white.

Millicent was calmer; there was no look of utter despair in her face. She did not want to die, she was young, and life was sweet with all its difficulties, but she felt she was not alone; above the moaning of the wind, which, just now rising, sighed along the shore, a voice echoed in her ear, "Be not afraid, I am with thee." It was a great testing time for her, but her faith did not fail; Christ to her was a living, bright reality.

"Stand up, darling," she said, tenderly, helping Rose to rise. "We can get a little way up this cliff—at least, you can. See, here's a ledge; I am fitter, so we shall stand on equal ground if I remain where I am."

"But it is coming—look how quickly!" said Rose, pointing to the dark waters, a thrill of agony trembling in her tones. "Oh, Milly, Milly, can no one save us? I cannot called Eagle's Point, they were safe, for rounding from there, the shore dipped inward for a long distance, and it would be some time before it was high tide there; but here it swept in a swift current, leaving a path of sand, still dry, a little out to sea, and rushing in an ever-deepening channel towards the precipitous white cliffs. No one could live many hours at their base, and to scale them was impossible. Faster and faster ran the girls, and faster and faster came the waters of death; it lapped about their feet now, and their shoes went heavily in the wet sand.

"Oh, Millicent, we can't do it," said Rose, with a great sob choking her voice. "My boots are full of water, and I'm so tired."
Oh, I cannot die! and he broke into a wail of sobs as her head sank on Millicent's shoulder, while she hid her face to shut out the sight of the hungry sea.

"God can save us, if it is His will, darling: and if not, He can take us to Himself."

"Oh, but I cannot die. I'm so frightened. Ah, Him—do ask Him to send someone to help us."

"I keep on asking, Rose; I have been, ever since I saw we could not get to the Point."

"But ask Him out loud; I can't think, or as a thing to say."

"O God," prayed Millicent, "if it be Thy will, send us help, oh. It seems almost impossible, and yet we know all things are possible with Thee. Calm our fear, and help us to trust Thee; and I—John Medhurst bent his haggard face upon his arms, and a BITTER GROAN burst from him.

Thy great love forgive us all that has been amiss in our lives, wash it away in the Saviour's blood, for Jesus Christ's sake."

She ceased to speak, and wound her arms more tightly about Rose's trembling form. For a time both were silent. Then the younger whispered:

"Milly, do you remember I said, only a little while ago, I would get ready when it was time to die?"

"Yes."

"There doesn't seem time now. Oh, I wish I had not put it off. Ask Him to prepare me. Must we die?"

"I—think so," answered Millicent, slowly.

"Oh, the water will be so cold," sobbed Rose; "and it's getting higher—I can feel it." A shudder ran through the girl as she spoke. "Milly, will you hold me tight—very tight?"

"Yes, darling, I won't let you go. Pray now that Jesus may hold you, too. I know He will."

Higher and higher crept the water; it was nearly up to Millicent's knees, and it was only by leaning hard against the rock behind her that she managed to keep a steady position. And always her eyes were set on Eagle's Point.

"Rose," she said, presently, "rouse yourself, dear, quickly. Shout for help, shout with me—now!" A wild, shrill cry rang out across the desolate waste of sea, which startled the gulls resting on the eerie peaks above. A second's pause, and then came an answering cry.

"Oh, we're saved! we're saved!" cried Rose, in a frenzy of delighted relief.

"Yes, yes, darling; but keep quite still, it is difficult to stand." How difficult none but Millicent knew. She was half-supporting her companion, and it was almost beyond her strength, with the water sucking heavily against her clothes.
“O God, I thank Thee for Thy great mercy,” she said, softly, to herself, as, with a few swift strokes, the occupants of an approaching boat drew near them.

Fortunately, it was a calm evening, and so they were able to row quite close up to the stranded girls. Then the latter of them stepped out of the boat, and waded to them. He held out his arms to Millicent first, but she almost thrust Rose into them, and waited her turn. There was no time for argument, so their rescuer accepted the trust, and carried her, very cautiously, then came back for her, and, with much difficulty, managed to get her into the boat, and climb in afterwards.

“Only just in time,” he muttered. “Pull hard, man,” he added, to the boatman with him; “they are almost exasperating.”

This was true. The fatigue, and still more the tension of that dreadful hour, had told upon them, and both dropped into silence; but their dripping condition and pale faces told a tale of distress. Large tears rolled slowly down Rose’s cheeks, her over-wrought feelings making it seem impossible to keep herself in perfect control.

At last Millicent addressed their rescuer. “We owe you, under God, a great debt of gratitude for saving us,” she said.

“Indeed; I deserve no thanks,” he answered. “I was just out for an evening’s row, and decided to come round the Point; at first I had intended going the other way, I don’t know what made me alter my course—the changeableness of human nature, I suppose.”

“I think God altered it,” she answered, quickly; “we had been so expecting to have your help.

“Ah, no doubt it was providential!” he answered, with a slightly sceptical smile.

They had rounded the Point now, and Rose’s spirits recovered, and her tears dried, as she saw the well-known shore again, with the anchored boats lying quiet on the sands, and the fishermen busy getting ready for the night.

“May we know to whom we are indebted?” she asked.

“Certainly,” he replied. “My name is Cecil Warren.

I have been abroad for some time, and have just come to settle down at the Manor House, Fullerton.”

Rose’s eye grew round with interest. “Then you are the son of my father’s old friend, Mr. Lawrence Warren?”

“The same,” he said; “and you must be Miss Medhurst, if I am not mistaken. I knew your father’s rectorcy was somewhat about here; I was not sure of the name of his parish—of course it is Deniton.”

“Yes,” and then seeing him look a little curiously at Millicent, she said: “This is Miss Cardell, an old school-fellow of mine.”

By this time the boat had run ashore, and the girls were helped into the boat by clanging garments indiscriminately aroused immense interest among the few people congregated on the sands. Rose, much of whose usual vivacity had returned to her, in a few words explained the situation.

As the rector’s daughter she was well known, and beloved, too, for her merry laugh and witching beauty had endeared her to the villagers among whom her father worked.

“Dear, dear!” said an old salt, rubbing his fingers through his hair, “it’s a wonder you’re alive, I’m sure. Shall I go on, miss, and prepare our passengers?”

All agreed. They were not the only ones who felt just like that; they had a feeling of proprietorship in him.

“No, thank you,” answered Rose. “As we’re safe, he won’t mind, you see.”

The rectorcy was not far off, and inviting Mr. Warren to land them, Rose set off for home, followed by her companions.

The rector’s reading-lamp could be seen shining through the trees as they approached. He was busy in his study, preparing Sunday’s sermon. Presently he rose, rang the bell loudly, and waited somewhat impatiently until Bridget (the only maid employed at the rectory) made her appearance.

“Yes, sir,” she said, standing in the doorway, with something of an anxious expression discernible on her kindly face as she looked at her master.

“Have Miss Rose and Miss Cardell come in yet?” he asked.

“No, sir; they’re later than usual.

Yes, it’s getting quite dark. Where can they be?”

The question was answered by the sound of familiar voices in the hall, and in a few moments more Rose was in her father’s arms, and the story of their dangerous adventure told. Mr. Warren made no comment, and stood simply waiting.

Cecil stayed to supper, and in spite of the danger that the boat was in when they got ashore, that evening was a pleasant one; and many times during the recital of traveller’s tales did his attention wander a little, as he watched Rose’s fair face, and saw how interest she listened to him.

Cecil Warren was not a very young man, he had just passed his thirty-eighth year. He was a bachelor, and until now had intended to remain one. His heart was not young, he argued; love and such nonsense had vanished with the days of his youth. But to-night, as he buried his coat more closely across his chest, and strode over the fields to the station, he felt his determination to support celibacy somewhat shaken, and he laughed at his own frailty in being touched by a pair of childish blue eyes.

CHAPTER II.

SPECULATION.

The Rev. John Medhurst sat in his study, in front of a lettered desk, and to judge from the expression on his countenance, the papers before him were not of the most pleasing character. A letter, as he trembled as he picked up an open letter, and read for the twentieth time this sentence:

“The water has got into the mine, and it is, I am sorry to say, unworkable.”

It seemed to be driven into his ears by a chorus of mocking voices, and those words of truth, which so often cause a stab of pain, “We told you so!” to echo through his brain. Had he not been warned by business men that this investment of his was a mistake, and how often had he refused to take their advice? The Storton Mining Company had promised their shareholders an enormous percentage, and Rose’s money, left to her by her mother, was to be doubled, and eventually his darling was to become a rich woman.

John Medhurst bent his haggard face upon his arms, and a bitter groan burst from him. Presently his lips moved as he muttered his thoughts aloud:

“I am rightly punished; the love of money has been growing upon me more and more, and the eager thirst for speculation has been drawing me away from God. My work for the Master is my life, and my duty has often been neglected. I was not content that my child should have a modest income for life; I would have had her queen it among the rich. And now—now there will be nothing but poverty for her.

The man paused in his communings, and except for the rustle of the papers among which his fingers wandered idly, there was silence in the room. Conscience-stricken, he sat motionless in his despair; he felt God’s favour to be withdrawn, and run for his child stared him in the face. He had nothing to leave her at her death; the living were girls, he had been too proud of them. Without the interest of Rose’s money, it would be a daily struggle to make both ends meet.

A tap at the study door roused him; he rose slowly and with some difficulty, as though he was stiff and dazed, and opened the door. “What is it?” he asked, and his voice sounded hoarse and unnatural.

“If you please, sir,” said Bridget, “Betsy Salter’s boy has been up to say his mother died this morning at dawn.”

“Died? Mrs. Salter dead?” he repeated.

Yes, sir, and there’s no further message.”

He closed the door, and followed the servant, as though it did not altogether interest him, and called Thy son, make me as one of Thy hired servants.”

No wonder his heart poured out an agony of prayer. He had been dearly loved by his parishioners, and had
laboured earnestly among them for many years, but during this last twelve months his heart had gone from them, and only he had known what an effort it was to keep his attention in sufficient control to perform his ministerial duties. The loss of money, which is the root of all evil, had enthralled him. Yesterday he had received disturbing news from the Stonium Mine, and the message asking him to call and see Betsy Saltern had been unheeded, put off until a convenient season; and now the words of conversation he might have uttered could never be said to him, and he, the pastor, had neglected his flock.

For a long time, totally absorbed in prayer, the coldness of his heart was laid at the Saviour’s feet, and not till then did a sense of forgiveness steal over his soul, and the words of comfort, “Go in peace, and sin no more,” came into his stricken heart.

“Daddy, I was Rose’s voice that roused him now. “Daddy, I want you.”

“Come in, darling,” he said, as he opened the door, and a radiant picture of youth and fun stood in front of him. The smile died on her lips as she saw his haggard aspect.

“What is the matter, daddy?” she asked, with a frightened shake in her voice. “Are you ill?”

“No, I’m not ill, little fairy,” he answered, trying to look bright and reassure her.

“You are in trouble then.”

“Come here,” he answered, leading her to a seat. “I want to tell you something.”

Rose did as she was told. He waited a little, and then clearing his throat, said unsteadily:

“You know I was guardian for—some money your mother left to you?

“Yes, what about it?”

“It’s—it’s lost, dear. I tried to make it more, to get a good investment, do you see?”

Anxiously he watched his child’s face now.

“Yes, I understand—and it’s all gone somehow. Well, never mind, darling, I don’t. As long as I’ve got you, nothing matters,” and flinging her young arms round his neck, she covered his face with kisses. “Now, don’t look serious any more. Just come in the dining-room, and see what a lovely bouquet Mr. Warren has sent me.”

“Flowers from Cecil?”

“Yes, such beauties,” and catching hold of his arm, she dragged him impatiently into the other room, where a huge bunch of roses lay on the table, the dew-drops still glinting on the delicate petals.

“Are they lovely?” exclaimed Rose. “The very best I’ve seen this year. I shall take half of them to Mrs. Saltern.”

A spasm of pain crossed her father’s face as he said:

“She is at rest now, I hear. God called her away this morning.”

“Oh, daddy, I am sorry,” said Rose, tears of sympathy rushing to her eyes.

CHAPTER III.

THE FACE IN THE WOODS.

If Rose Medhurst’s thoughts could have been spoken aloud, they would have been anything after this sort:

“There’s nothing half so sweet in life As love’s young dream.”

For Cecil Warren had got his way, and a few short weeks had transformed Rose from a child into a woman.onda week had touched her, and now a new light-shone in the big blue eyes. She was only seventeen, and life’s experiences had not taught her much. “The world and its sorrows had scarcely troubled her, the scarcity of money had not affected her; she was too young, too happy to understand all that her father feared for the future.

She stood alone at the end of the lawn, watching the row of drays driven in from the rectory paddock, but her thoughts were not occupied with the wildness of the animal, which did not seem very willing to leave the pleasant pasture. Rose’s face was blushed, and her fingers were busy pulling a stem of yellow hollyhock to pieces, and her ears attentive to every sound.

“Rose! The call from the study window reached her.

“Yes, daddy,” she answered.

“Come here, I want you.”

Slowly and with a palpitating heart she walked to the house, then down the hall to the study. The door stood ajar; she pushed it open nervously, and entered. By the fire slovenly covered the hearth, while the house smelt of dust, for it was the end of the holidays. Rose as she went in, and came across the room to meet her.

“It’s all right, darling,” he said, as he took her hand in his.

“Child,” asked her father, and although his voice trembled Rose fancied she detected a sound of relief as he spoke,

“Cecil has done away the honour of asking you to be his wife. Am I right in thinking you wish to consent?”

“I love him.”

“Her words were said under her breath, but there was no mistaking their meaning.

“Ah, I see you’ve stolen the old man’s darling, Cecil,” said Mr. Medhurst, with an amused smile. “But there! of course I might have guessed I could keep her better, but I didn’t expect this sort of thing so soon,” he finished, with a suspicion of a sigh. “Now, what are you going to do with yourselves?” she continued, pulling herself together.

“I suppose you think ‘tis a company, and three is none.”

“If Rose isn’t tired, I propose we go for a walk in Sephton Woods.”

Of course this pleased Rose; anything would have seemed perfect just then if it meant sharing her lover’s thought.

As they turned to go out, Mr. Medhurst said, laying his hand a moment on Cecil’s shoulder: “You’ll be very good to her always, won’t you? I have had to be both mother and father, and perhaps I spoilt her; I don’t know, though,” and he looked down fondly at his little daughter as he spoke.

“You may trust me,” said Cecil, earnestly; “her happiness shall always be my first thought,” and he meant it with all his heart.

Mr. Medhurst sat down at his desk again as the door closed. The burrows in his face seemed to have smoothed, and he looked younger: Rose had not been mistaken when she detected a sound of relief in her father’s voice. John Medhurst felt a new man, a great burden seemed to have suddenly lifted from his shoulders.

“Is he rich?” he murmured, and now my pet will be placed in a position of affluence for life. I could not have wished for anything better.

Cecil is a good fellow, too; I like him, and she loves him, and yet—there was a slight pause, and then the words came slowly—“I wonder—nothing, a question.”

That Rose herself had never found a personal Saviour she had never suggested itself to her father’s mind; he had taught her carefully from her babyhood all the dogmas of the Christian religion, and like many teachers who inwardly concern themselves for the education of their children, he had been content to remain in ignorance as to the immoral danger or safety of his own child. She must not be unceasingly yoked together with an unbeliever—that was his thought now, and although it required a little courage to risk spoiling Rose’s future and upsetting her happiness. John Medhurst decided to speak to Cecil upon the subject.

The weather had been particularly dry for some weeks, and the white dust lay thick upon the high-road. The clock on a post tarn had just come in, and after a few minutes slowly pulsed out of the station again. Only one passenger had alighted—woman, tall and graceful; this was very plain as she walked slowly down the platform.

“Which is the way to Denton Rectory?” she asked of the ticket collector.

“Straight down the road, and then first turning to the left, mark,” he answered, motioning with his hand. He watched her interestingly as she thanked him, and went on her way, a thick veil covered her face, but he had not failed to notice her easy carriage and high bred tones as she spoke to him.

“Cecil, will you ever tire of me,” asked Rose, as they sat in a mossy bank under the arching trees.

“Tire of you, darling—never!” and the look in his eyes as he answered was very convincing. “What could make you suggest such a thing,” he asked.
"Well—I was wondering," said Rose, "if you would find me childish sometimes—I mean—if you would vex me because I was not wiser, you see you're so much older than I am.

"Vexed with you?" repeated Cecil, "why, Rose love, I could never be vexed with anything you said or did, you would always be perfection in my eyes.

"But Cecil," continued Rose, apparently only half persuaded, "supposing some day—I mean," she hesitated a little, and then continued shyly, "after we are married—I should be cross, what would you say then?"

"I should be awfully ashamed to see you in a temper, and just smile at you until you got right again."

"And supposing," went on Rose, "I got miserable and cried about something. I don't often, but I might, you know?"

"You shall never cry, my darling, if I can help it. But if, in spite of all my love, you were troubled

about anything, why, I should just kiss the tears away," and his arm stole more readily about her as he spoke.

There was silence for a long time, both seeming content not to talk. Rose broke it at last by saying:

"Cecil, have you ever loved anyone before you loved me?"

A short laugh broke from the man. I can answer in all honesty, that I never have," he

answered, emphatically.

A distinct rustle in the leaves near them made both turn instinctively to see what intruder had disturbed their solitude. Nothing was discernible, and they were settling down again, when Rose sprang to her feet,

"Cecil, Cecil, someone is watching us through the trees."

"Where?" he asked, raising rather lamely, "I don't see anyone. You were mistaken?"

"No, indeed I wasn't. For one second I saw two big, black eyes watching us, pointing to a break in the bushes close at hand, "and the outline of a woman's face, but it was for such an instant I couldn't say what she was like, but the eyes weren't nice. It has frightened me, Cecil. Who could it have been?"

"There is nothing to be alarmed about, I am sure," he answered. "It was probably some curious gipsy girl, who, with a fellow feeling for lovers, wanted to have a personal visit, but you'll still look scared, love. Let's be going now, it's later than I thought," he added, taking out his watch.

Rose was only too glad to comply—the little incident seemed to have restored her. The sun had hidden itself behind a wall of cloud, and the woods seemed sombre and oppressive; however, she quite recovered her spirits before they reached the village, and the gipsy woman was forgotten. She parted with Cecil at the Rectory gates, and made her way alone to the house. Her father met her on the doorstep.

"Has my little girl had a good time?" he asked, drawing her arm through his.

"Yes," answered Rose, laughing, a flush dying her face.

"And where is Cecil? I hope he is staying this evening, I want to have a chat with him."

"Oh, he's just gone, daddy. He said he could manage to catch the six-thirty, if he ran."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Medhurst, in regretful tones.

"but there, a day or two won't make any difference. I don't suppose it will be long before he comes again, eh?"

"He said, perhaps he would be over to-morrow afternoon," answered Rose.

"Ah, well, I think we can last out till then," answered her father, laughing. "To-morrow will do for me."

Rose did not go to bed very early that night; she sat by her bedroom window, looking up at the bright stars which seemed to smile mock upon herSmith Kent.

Presently, she drew her writing-case towards her, and, taking up her pen, began a letter to Millicent Cardell.

"I am so happy," she wrote:

"Cecil is so good. Oh, Millicent, I do want you to know him well; he is so cute, and you will think so too, when you have seen more of him. You must be our first visitor when we are married. How strange it seems to write that word, 'married.' I can scarcely realise it refers to me. Do you know, I was afraid Cecil might get to think me childish some day—you see he is so much older and wiser than I am, but he says he never, never shall, and so I am quite happy about the future.

I can't tell you all he is to me, but you must be quick and give up that nasty teaching, and get a lover yourself and then you will understand.

There was much more in the same strain, ere the letter closed, and was sealed and directed, ready for to-morrow's post, and Rose laid it in her writing-case and prepared for bed.

Poor little letter! It was destined never to reach Millicent Cardell, but to lie heathend and

forgotten until years had passed away, and time had laid a changing grasp upon Denton, and the old rectory knew the Medhursts no more.

CHAPTER IV.

A STILL SMALL VOICE.

LUNCH was over, and Mrs. Cecil Warren repaired to her room to rest. She sank down upon the couch at the foot of the bed, with a sigh of utter weariness. She had never been a good walker, and climbing the hills round Batteley-Coed had been a difficult pleasure sometimes.

"I wish we hadn't come here," she murmured, "Brighton or some lovely place would have been better. I shall ask Cecil to leave to-morrow."

And with this uttered determination she closed her eyes preparatory to trying to sleep; but evidently Morphine would not favour her, and she tossed restlessly on the hard cushions.
There was a tap at the door, and her husband came in. "Why, you look very hot and tired, darling," he exclaimed.

"Yes, I am," she answered. "My head aches horrible.

"Let me make you more comfortable," said Cecil, and, picking up a pillow he gently exchanged it for the horsehair bolster. "Now some eau-de-Cologne," he suggested, and reaching to the dressing table, he took up a bottle, some of the contents of which he dropped upon his underwear. "There—now go to sleep like a good girl," he said, kissing her. "Good-bye for a little; when I come back I expect you'll be alright."

"You're never going out!" exclaimed Rose.

"Yes. Why not? asked Cecil, smiling.

"Why, where are you going?"

"Oh, for a climb somewhere."

"And you are going—to leave me—all alone."

The words came slowly, and the ready tears welled into Rose's eyes.

"I should have thought you had air enough this morning," answered Rose, irritably. "I'm only rather was fagged out, with the wind and the wind against the wind. You used not to be in such a hurry to go out. I suppose you're tired of me already."

She buried this last at him as he moved towards the door.

Cecil Warren was not the best tempered of men. A voice within him said, "Come back and talk it all over quietly a moment. Rose is done up, and out of sorts, and doesn't mean what she says." Pride said, "Assort yourself; don't start by being under pretext good." The last voice won the day.

"If you like to think I'm tired of you, de", he said, as he closed the door.

Then Rose buried her face in the pillow, and burst into tears, while suppressed sobs shook her. Swiftly the thoughts rushed through her mind, the remembrance of the courting days, so lately over, when she had seemed so dear to Cecil, and her lightest whim had been gratified, and he had promised, yes, actually promised, never to be cross with her, finding his pleasure in pleasing her. Poor Rose! Her ideal life of wedded bliss had received its first rude shock. "How cruel of him to leave me like that," she sobbed. "I never thought he would, and I loved him so much."

There was silence for a time, then she broke out into a renewed wall of distress. "Oh, daddy, if only you were here, your little girl does want you."

She made up her black mourning dress, and the tears flowed afresh. A feeling something akin to despair took possession of her, as a vision of those dark days in her life came before her, when. "At midnight there was a cry, "Behold the Bridegroom comes, go ye out to meet Him," and John Medhurst obeyed the call; and Rose, little Rose he had always so cherished, was left alone to mourn his loss. The quiet funeral over, a few weeks later came the quiet wedding. The wedding rang the bells, and sent blessings after their old pastor's little daughter, and then Rose Warren started for her honeymoon. She was glad she had her old friend with her, and the last sad associations; and with her hand clasped in Cecil's and his loving words in her ears, the world seemed bright again.

And now? She shutted at the question her heart uttered. Her tears had stopped at last; there was no use crying, besides, she said her head ache so fearfully, the throbbing in her temples was almost more than she could bear.

She lay quite still, a pensive pucker of distress wrinkling the small face, now white with agony. The little excitement and upset she had brought on of her worst sensible headaches, and here was nothing to do but just bear it. Presently there was a knock at the door, and a maid's voice said, "May I come in, madam?"

Rose answered in the affirmative, and sat up, trying to look as natural as she could. "Oh, thank you," she said, as a tray of tea and toast was set down by her side. The gentleman ordered it madam, before he went out, he said if you did not come down at half-past four, I was to bring it," she volunteered the news.

Rose murmured her thanks again, and then the girl withdrew.

A little thrill of joy shot through her heart. Cecil had remembered her then, perhaps he did care for her after all. Why, now, he must have seen something in the morning about bringing a cup of tea and toast for Millicent while she was resting, and she had not objected then. How she wished she had considered that before. Cecil must have thought her so cross and unreasonable.

May I come in? It was a familiar voice that broke in upon her meditations, and with a little cry of delight she welcomed her old friend Millicent.

"Where have you come from?" exclaimed Rose, "and how did you know I was here?"

It was considered that fact from the visitors' book. You did not write to me and tell me of your wedding, but of course I was not surprised that I did not hear from you, as I knew of your great trouble. Millicent's voice sank sympathetically as she spoke. "I was so grieved for you, and for myself, and a very dear friend."

"It was a relief to Rose to speak to someone of her sorrow, and it eased her overburdened heart.

After a little she remarked, "And you are married, too, Millicent. I saw it in the paper. I am so glad."

"Yes, and Arthur and I have been at Hestning, but we have come on here for a couple of days before going home."

"Oh, I do want to see your husband, Milly!" said Rose, rising. "I will dress at once and come down."

"It won't be any good, dear, he's out for a climbing tramp."

"A-climbing tramp, without—you," repeated Rose, the conscious colour rushing to her face.

"Yes, without me," repeated Millicent, laughing.

"It's better so. I expect you are finding what I do—that one can't possibly keep up with one's husband; and of course we couldn't possibly keep them in with us, it would be too selfish."

"Yes," assented Rose, slowly. Then, wishing to be very honest with herself, she added, "I didn't much like Cecil going, but I knew it's better for me."

Yes, I'm grieved for you, I want Arthur to get all the air and exercise he can. He's been used to athletics, and he really wouldn't keep well if he lived an indoor sort of life.

"Cecil says the same thing," admitted Rose.

"We have a large parish," continued Millicent, "and Arthur works so hard, and so seldom can get away, that this honeymoon-holiday is a great treat for him, at least I hope I don't spoil it," she added, laughing. Then more seriously, "It seems such a sublime thing to be married, doesn't it? One feels God has given us a new post of trust. I do want to be a help-meat for my husband."

I am sure a woman can do so much to make or mar life and happiness; of course troubles will come sometimes, but if we can just steer together, the course won't look so overwhmingly stormsy.

Yes, I'm grieved for you, and then Millicent said, "I must go and rest now, or I shan't be very fresh when Arthur comes in. Good-bye until we meet at dinner. I hope I haven't made the headache worse."

"No, you've done it good," said Rose.

The door closed on Millicent Eden, and then Mrs. Warren bathed her face, changed her dress, and put on her hat, preparatory to going out.

"I will miss him," she whispered to herself.

Rose's anger and misery had somewhat passed away now, and she was only anxious to alone for her own thoughts. She looked up and perceived to see Cecil again, and hear him say he forgave her. She was dissatisfied with herself. Millicent had made her feel that she had a duty as a wife, as well as Cecil as a husband.

The sun was low in the heavens when she left the hotel, and turned her feet in the direction of the Swallow Falls. She remembered he had spoken in the morning of taking that boat.
And Cecil? What of him? As he closed the door upon his wife and went downstairs, a rush of anger was in his heart, and the sentiment that possessed him just then, if it had been uttered aloud, would have been as follows: I hope to goodness she isn't going to be often like this.

Unreasonable and childish; that was what he thought her. He had forgotten for the time being her age and experience as compared with his own. But he had not taken many steps up the road, when the remembrance of his girl-wife, tired and pale, came to him, and with a quick intake of feeling, he returned to The Oak, and gave her the order to be taken up to her, if she was still resting at half-past four. Then he felt more satisfied, and set out to enjoy his trumpet.

The air was warm, and humid with moisture which hung about the valley, and a longing for freedom possessed him. He was a good walker, and therefore off did not mind a long tramp, but hearing the sound of horses behind him, he decided he would get a seat if possible, as far as the Pen-y-Gwryd Inn, and then have a mountain climb from there. The idea excited his mood and fascinated him, and without waiting to consider the time which must elapse before he could be back, he at once put the plan in execution.

It was a delightful drive past wood, rock, and stream, the falling heavy duty-Gygev making merry music, while Moel Siabod frowned from his distant height upon the fair valley scene. In due time Cecil arrived at Pen-y-Gwryd Inn, and without waiting to tell anyone of his movements set out for Snowdon.

It was getting late now, later than he knew; but all thought of time vanished, as, with a mountaineer's excitement thrilling him, he commenced his walk. He had done a good deal of climbing in Switzerland, and a little up on the Andes, but this was his first visit to Snowdon. He soon left the road behind, and started his scramble among the loose boulders. It was a long, rough stretch before he began the real ascent, but at last his face was set steadily upward, although he did not know the right route to follow. He presently struck into the pony track which leads from Llanberis to Snowden's summit, he was right out of his boot as far as his starting point was concerned, and had lost much time, but, utterly oblivious of its flight, he bravely struggled on.

Finding the road smooth and easy at places, he paced for a little, and paced with delight at the magnificent scene spread before his eyes.

Far down the rocky hollow lay the fair vale of Llanberis, and rising beyond it in imposing grandeur, were the purple heights of Lllydfawr, Ynys Fawr, and the Glyder mountains. As the moon rose, and began its slow and sinuous march, the afternoon light faded, dark shadows hovered in the crannies of the rocks, and then a thick curtain of mist fell over the valley, and blotted out the view. This should have warned him to return, but, unmindful of his danger, he still continued his ascent, and over the white cloud from below crept unperceived after him.

Up and up he went, until presently he put his foot upon a loose stone. He struggled for a moment to regain his feet, and then fell heavily; he lay still for a little, and listened to the weird rush of the boulder as it tumbled behind him, and the muttering of his blood in his head—"must he be on the track! He had not realised this before, and the darkness had come so swiftly it seemed to have engulfed him. He must hurry back at once. He attempted to rise quickly, and then with a groan of pain and dismay sank heavily on the ground.

His ankle was sprained—sprained badly he feared; he quickly unjackled his boot and relieved his pressure, and then thought about his mind to what to do next.

Below him wrapped the darkness and the mist, heavy, overpowering—shrouding tarns and precipices encompassing his feet.

He must shout, there was nothing else to do. Someone might be near enough to hear, or if he had been noticing leaving the inn, guides might already have been sent out to find him.

Putting his hands to his mouth he gave one long cry for help, and the rocks took up the voice and tossed it mockingly from crag to crag; but no answer came, and again the awful silence and utter loneliness assailed the man.

He had been in danger many times in his life, in his wanderings abroad, and had faced them carelessly; but a death-bed was this one was to him! Brave man as he was, he shuddered at the thought.

The damp mist seemed to be clearing a little, a breeze suddenly sprang up, but heavy clouds obscured the sky, and the darkness was complete; then in the distance came the ominous mutterings of thunder, and a few heavy drops fell on the man's hands. While some pain, he dragged himself a few inches into the greater shelter of the rock, and there waited for the coming storm.

The wind rose and rushed wailing along the side of the mountain, then the whole earth appeared lit up in one lurid flash of lightning. But, as the flash of lightning, the man's heart began to thump, and his face to turn pale. And is the awfulness of the awful night, Cecil Warren's life lay bare before him in its true colours; that careless, easy, self-seeking life, which had said to itself, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

And the word which came to Elijah in the loneliness of the wilderness, came to him, with a flash of lightning, the words, "If the Lord be with thee, wherefore art thou gone to prayer?"

The question which must be answered repeated itself in his brain: "What dost thou here?"

What, indeed? If the call came now to meet his God, what answer would he have ready to give? What God to whom would he have to explain that all his words had been disbelieved, and redeeming love unaccepted? For the first time in his life, Cecil Warren was afraid. Was he to die like this, alone on the mountain? Never see his Rose again, and his last words had been those of taunting angels.

How bitter was that thought now. In his duty to her he had failed, but what of his duty to God? Could nothing save him, no one hear his cry?

Yes; something. Someone; he knew what, and Who. He had learned it all at his mother's knee when he was a child. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," that would cleanse him, then, "Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost." He was that—lost! He had never really prayed since his boyhood; he had, said, the moment was characteristic pause, and a crash broke overheard, so near, so awful, in its close proximity, it seemed to hold Warren in a close embrace.

And this man had secked at times at the power of God, boasting that his intellect could best gauge the strength and wisdom of the faith of others. Faster and faster sped the storm, the lightning danced upon the rocks like phantoms rolicking in play; the thunder echoed from height to height, until it died in the distance to be met and curtained by another crash; and the flash of lightning, which in the early part of the ascent, seemed once to have something of a meaning, was now, in the close proximity, it seemed to hold Warren in a close embrace.

CHAPTER V.

MARRIED LIFE.

OSS walked lightly along the Llanberis Road in search of Cecil—of course he would not have gone very far, for he knew where he was. The one thing theught sight of a man's figure in the distance, her heart beat nervously.

This had been their first quarrel, how she hoped it would be the last. She was quite sure she would never be cross with Cecil, or distrust him again. That she would need a strength greater than her.
own to enable her to keep this resolve, she did not realize.

Rose had still much to learn, in spite of her terror when she feared she would be swept away by the Denton tide. She did not know God, and had never yet given her heart into His keeping; her religion was a superficial one, and without emotion or trouble should assuage it, it would be found wanting.

At first she walked along contentedly enough, anticipating the joyful moment when she should see her husband coming towards her with the love-light in his eyes. But gradually, as time passed, and she got farther and farther from Bettws, she grew afraid.

"Why doesn't he come?" she murmured to herself. The road seemed lonely now, and she was nervous at being without a companion; the thick mist in the valley had begun to fall, and the damp, clinging moisture depressed her.

She retraced her steps quickly, tears of fear and disappointment trembling in her eyes. What she passed through that night she never enjoyed thinking about in after days.

Until early dawn she sat with Millicent's arm round her, praying to the rain beating on the windows, and the thunder rolling overhead.

"Oh, where can he be?" she cried, as a blinding flash of lightning lit up the room.

"Try not to be so distressed, dear," replied her friend.

"You have no right to feel, dear. You are caught in the storm, and have put up somewhere until the morning; you are certain to have a message from him then."

But even Millicent grew afraid when the early hours of the following day went by, and no message arrived so to Cecil's whereabouts.

Rose had refused lunch, and gone to her room to be alone with her misery, when at last a note was brought her with these words:

"Am at Pen-y-Gwryd with sprained foot and heavy cold. Come to me."

She rushed to find Millicent with the good news, and then without waiting for anything, she took a trap from the hotel, and drove off to Pen-y-Gwryd Inn.

Cecil lay on his bed, watching and listening. How he wanted his wife now. It seemed so long since he parted with her, and what a parting it was!

Supposing he had died on the mountain, or anything had happened to her. The thought was a foolish one no doubt, but as the hours passed and he waited, he grew nervous with undefined dread.

Presently sounded the rattle of a horse and trap; a little more waiting, then a light step came up the stairs, the door opened, and Rose stood before him.

Was this little, white-faced girl his wife? He stared at her speechlessly for a moment, then, opening his arms, he said:

"Why, how you must have suffered, darling. Come."

And Rosé came, and poured out all the grief and anxiety and repentance; and Cecil hurried it with a story of his remorse, and a new compact was made—never to spoil another's life again.

Then Cecil told her story of the storm, and how guides had been sent to his rescue, and he had, early that morning, been brought safely to the inn.

Not only that did he tell her, but of the wonderful revelation of God's mercy and love, that had come to him in the hour of danger; and Rose listened, and sighed a little wearily, and feeling it to understand, hoped the strange experience might enable Cecil talk religion would pass—was not nearly so interesting as when he talked about her. And Cecil felt she did not understand, and a feeling of cold disappointment touched him; his heart was so full of his new-found joy, he wanted her to rejoice with him.

For a few days Rose had to act as nurse, and after nately scolding and coaxing her patient pleased her immensely; and Cecil watched her pretty little figure admiringly as she flitted about the room, murmuring to himself:

"What a child she is still.

But care and rest soon put him right, as far as his general health went, although the foot showed signs of being troublesome for some time. Then the honeymoon was over with its mixture of sweetness and pain, and Rose went to Fullerton to take up her new duties in her new home.

She knew something of the district, as The Manor—her husband's country seat—was only about thirty miles from Denton, but the people of Fullerton were strangers to her.

The first person to greet her upon her arrival from Wales, was the faithful nurse, Bridget, who was now to take up the role of maid to her young mistress.

Bridget almost forgot her fresh post of dignity as she stood with the other servants drawn up in the hall, to receive the new vale.

"Oh, my dear Miss Rose, I am so glad to see you!"

she exclaimed; then catching the quiver of a suppressed smile on the footman's lips, she stopped short, stepped back, and murmured with a very red face:

"Welcome home, madam.

"Alright, Bridget," said Rose, laughing, "I like the old name best now."

Of course there was a lot to do in the way of examining her new quarters, re-arranging some household details according to fancy, and putting out the wedding presents; and in those first few or three weeks of home life, the little matron was full of importance and very happy in her new role of chatelaine in a big house, and wife of the richest landowner in Fullerton; and many envious eyes followed her the Sunday she put in her first appearance as a bachelor's wife.

Then she settled down to receive her callers. They came in scores, and smiled amiably upon the young bride, and she thought them delightful, and open and sincere as herself, for she did not hear the critical remarks passed upon her as they went out of the parlour gates.

"Never been out, evidently," said one. "Not in the least good-looking; I pity his taste," remarked another.

"empty-headed, and childish," throw in a third. "I suppose we must take her up because of his position."

And this last one said to Rose at parting:

"We are so glad Mr. Warren has married, especially now," with a smiling inclination towards the little hostess, and Rose's heart had gone out to her instantly.

Such a sweet woman," she said, as she told Cecil of her caller later.

"Mrs. Featherstone!" he repeated, smiling quizzically. "Don't make too much of a friend of her, wife," he added, "she's rather a fraud, I fancy."

"Oh, Cecil, how nasty of you. You don't know her well, evidently."

Perhaps her did rather too well.

"Who else came?" he asked presently.

"Oh, a Miss Egerton."

"Egerton! What Egerton? Where from?"

She said she used to live at Finstede, but she had just taken the Bungalow, near Captain Hart's, and come to settle here.

Cecil made no reply to this, but he got up—apparently to look out of the window, but really that Rose might not see the dusky colour he felt rising in his face.

"She's awfully good-looking, Cecil, isn't she?" queried his wife.

"Who?" he answered, indifferently.

"Why, Miss Egerton. We were talking about her. You know her, don't you?—of course, I remember she said she was an old friend years ago."

"Ah, yes," he answered. Then, "By the way, Rosie," he continued, "put dinner an hour later tonight, will you? I'm going to the golf ground."

"Oh, Cecil, must you?" said Rose, her lips quivering a little. "I thought you were going for a drive with me this evening.

"Sorry, darling, I can't, you see I've promised to play a fellow at the club."

"But you promised me before him; now didn't you?"

"Ah, well, you don't mind. Kiss me and be a good girl, I shan't be gone very long. We'll have a stroll round the park after dinner. You go for a drive now, it'll do you good."

"But Cecil—"

"Good-bye," he said, giving her a final kiss; and then, opening the door, he made his exit, and Rose was alone.

She sat for some time motionless, while a look of disappointment crept into her face. She should have run
after him, and finished what she had intended to say, but she wouldn't do that. She felt sure he meant golfing, and yesterday he had said it was childish of her to make a fuss when he was going out. She had heard him say something to Henry about his clays, then shoulder his bag; and the door was opened, closed, and he was gone.

"That horrid golf?" she exclaimed, stamping her foot on the floor, while the hot tears stood in her eyes. "That's three evenings this week. Oh, when will he get tired of it?"

Two months passed away, in which Rose Warren returned her calls, played with her dogs, read the latest novels, and got a little used to married life; and Cecil did some planning about new cottages on his estate, a certain amount of shooting, and a great deal of golf. The latter was so healthy, he said, "it was a necessity."

The links had only been opened at Fullerton this year, but he did not take that fact into consideration, or try and analyse how he and others got on before they learned to drive or put on a green.

"Truth to tell," Cecil had got golf fever badly. It was consuming him, practically speaking, threatening the happiness of his home, and he was utterly regardless of this effect.

CHAPTER VI

A FALSE FRIEND.

POOR child! How tired you look," and Phyllis Egerton stroked her friend's face with cool, white taper fingers as she bent to kiss her. "All alone, little one, as you are," she murmured, in low, sympathetic tones. The words went through Rose's heart like a stab, and tears of mortification sprang to her eyes. "I'm tired," she answered. "It's been so hot to-day."

"Mr. Warren is golfing, I suppose?"

"Yes," a little reluctantly; then, with an effort, "I like him to go, it's so good for him."

"Oh, of course; and the society is so pleasant.

"Yes—he has so many men friends in the club."

"Ah, and lady friends, too," added Miss Egerton, with a little silvery laugh.

"I dare say," assented Rose. "He knows everyone of course, and plays in the doubles sometimes, but I don't know who he gets for partners."

It is not a question of partners, but a partner, I fancy," intimated Phyllis.

"What do you mean?" asked Rose, the hot colour rushing to her face.

Miss Egerton looked a little frightened for a moment, then she said, in a low, soothing tone:

"Nothing particular, of course, dear. Your husband is one of the best golfers in the men's club, and Agnes Hetherington among the ladies. What more natural than they should practise together?"

Then, as Rose looked more satisfied, fearing that her work had been undone, she added:

"But you are not such a goose as to suppose golf was the only attraction. It's all very well before marriage, but afterwards it gets a little tiresome to the restraints of married life, afterwards, don't they?"

This shaft went home; and putting her hand down on her friend's shoulder, Rose burst into tears.

"You think—he has ceased—to care for me—then?" she sobbed.

There was no one to see the look of triumph and hatred in the woman's eyes as she looked down upon her victim.

"Poor darling," she said. "Cry, it will do you good. Of course I've seen how matters stood for some time, but you must be brave; you're a so-

Looking pertly over her shoulder, she crept down the wide oak stairs. 
ship had been ripening for a year, and although Cecil knew they were acquaintances, and would have given much if this woman had never crossed his wife's path, yet he had been so engrossed in his own life interest, that he had failed to see the evil influence that was at work in his home.

And Rose, sitting in her handsome drawing-room alone, thought Miss Egeton her only friend. She did not know God, and so she could not take her trouble to Him.

For a little, a voice within said, "Wait until Cecil comes in, and then tell him everything. Perhaps you are mistaken."

Then the remembrance of the long, lonely evenings, and the answers to her requests to be taken out—"I have no engagements to-night," he had said, "I'm booked for a match," came back to her mind and stilled conscience, and as she closed the dressing-room door and made her way upstairs, the bitterness of despair had taken hold up on her heart, and her resolve was taken. She would rid him of his presence; then she would no longer be an incubus upon his life, and perhaps sometimes he would remember her kindly, and those sweet, sweet days when he first asked her to become his wife.

First of all she went to her cash box and counted out £20 in gold. It would suffice at first, and it would keep her afloat when she would have to go to the country.

It was a hot August day, and yet she shivered as she busied herself putting a few clothes in a bag. She could not take much, as probably she would have to carry it herself. She picked up her long gold chain with one hand, and hung it round her neck beside her dress. It had been Cecil's latest gift, and in the locket attached was his photograph, that she would never part with; but she would not look at it now, it might unnerve her, and make it harder to take this present step.

She remembered how unexpectedly she had listened to his accounts of Miss Hetherington's brilliant play. Yet Phyllis must be right, she was his friend, and so full of sympathy for her, probably she could have told her note if she had asked her, for she must have advised her to the best of her ability.

What a miserable, miserable world it was! That was Rose's thought, as, looking furtively over her shoulder, she crept down the wide oak staircase and into the hall.

A step sounded from the kitchen regions, but before anyone could approach, she had opened the front door, passed through, and then closed it after her.

Henry thought he heard a sound, and listened a moment wonderingly, then went to the window facing the staircase and looked down the drive.

An exclamation of surprise broke from his lips as he espied Phyllis, and then, as he hurried through the park, evidently burdened with a bag much too heavy for her. Where was she going? And why had she not sent her luggage to the station?

The questions found no answer in Henry's puzzled brain. But of course, as he argued, it was no business of his.

Phyllis Egerton, after leaving the Manor, went home and ordered her pony. She felt somewhat excited at her afternoon's scheming; it made her restless, and perhaps a sharp drive across country would relieve her feelings.

But she had been so engrossed all day that she was just giving place to a delicious freshness which had sprung up.

The cool air fanned her heated brow as her horse trotted briskly past the Manor park. What a noble looking palfy it was, with its massive white towers gleaming through the beech trees.

She drove her ten in sharply, her steed plunging a little at the sudden jerk.

"Stand still, Prince," she ejaculated, feeling his mouth, then, sitting up in the dog-cart, she put her hand to her eyes, and peered eagerly across the park.

"Yes, it's Rose," she murmured. "The plan has worked."

Then, cutting her pony with the whip, she sat down, a bitter sneer curling her handsome face. "Cecil Warren," she hissed, softly, "revenge is sweet!"

CHAPTER VII.
REMORSE.

It was after eleven when Cecil left the club house. He was very tired, and as he got on his machine, he inwardly made up his mind he would forsake golf, at least for the present, and take Rose for a holiday.

For a few minutes, he realized he had neglected her. It was a strong word, and he disliked it, and in his thoughts tried to soften it, but it refused to agree to terms, and reluctantly he was obliged to accept the position.

"I've been a selfish brute," he muttered savagely, as he put on more speed.

"Quite true, Mr. Cecil," acquiesced conscience, "but why didn't you think of that before?"

As he drove up the drive the Manor looked dark, except for the glimmer of the lamp in the hall and library, all lights seemed to be out.

He rang the bell sharply, and immediately Henry opened the door. Cecil left him to bring in the bicycle, and without a word went to the library and looked in.

Rose sat up for him sometimes, but she was not there to-night.

"You can put out the lights, Henry, I'm going to bed at once," and not waiting for a reply, with a few strides he reached the bedroom.

A lamp stood on the table near the door, flickering faintly. It evidently must have been for the lady. He turned it up, with a suppressed word of disgust at the smoky atmosphere of the room, then an explanation of utter surprise escaped him. Rose was not there, and the bed was undisturbed.

He went to the bell and rang it violently. In a moment, Henry was altogether surprised at the summons, was at his door.

"Where is your mistress?" he asked, in quick, impatient tones.

"I don't know, sir."

"Don't know!" The words were repeated irritably. "No sir. I saw her go down the drive about six-twenty, carrying a small bag. I never noticed her leave the house, and she left no message."

Send Bridget here," ordered Cecil, turning away.

Now Bridget had just discovered Rose's absence. She had been waiting for her ring summoning her, and she had mentioned to Henry that it was getting late, she wished the mistress would go to bed. Cook said she must be out; she had not been in to dinner, and she had left no orders.

And then Henry had been getting anxious, and wished he had tried to see her before she went, confided a dread fear to Bridget. So she was not surprised when the order for her immediate presence came from the master.

Of course she could tell him nothing. Henry thinks she must have gone to London, sir; he fancied she must have caught the six-thirty train, she volunteered.

Was there a look of reproach in Bridget's eyes, as she wiped the tears away with her apron? Had even the servants dared to think he had neglected his wife? It was indeed a bitter idea; it touched his pride.

He, the master of the Manor, the last descendant of a chivalrous ancestry, was to have himself open to servants' hall gossip.

Presently he saw the point of an envelope peeping out from under the glass on the dressing-table. He picked it up carefully.

"This will tell me where she is," he said, hastily tearing it open.

But in this he was doomed to disappointment; there was no trace here to be discovered as to where she had gone, and those sentences in the words of parts were wrong his heart with agony.

"I have seen for a long time that you were tired of me, and so I am going far, far away, where you need never fear meeting me again. It breaks my heart to leave you for I love you so. I know I have been too childish to be a fit companion for you, but try to think kindly sometimes of your little girl-wife."

The note flitted from his nerveless fingers, and he stood as though turned to stone, looking down upon it.
HER SECRET ENEMY.

The minutes passed slowly, then he stopped and picked up the letter, and put it in his breast pocket. It was too late to go to town that night, he knew that; so there was nothing for it but to wait until the morning.

All through the sleepless hours, he lay on the bed, thinking, and his own thoughts, his own conscience, nearly drove him mad.

At first, a dull rage against some person or persons, who might have influenced her, seized him.

"Those scandal mongering women have set some gossip going about Miss Hetherington, and she's heard it."

Quickly he jumped to this conclusion, but later, a remorse, deep and sincere, possessed him.

How much had he sought to make this girl happy, when before God he had promised to love and cherish until death?

At last the morning broke, and the first train from Fullerton bore him away to London to search for Rose.

He immediately set private detectives to work, who succeeded in tracing her to Holborn, where she took a cab to King's Cross, but after that, the trail ended.

At the end of ten days, Cecil came back to the Manor a sadly changed man in one respect; the anxiety had taken upon him, and his face looked white and drawn.

He had not been in the house half-an-hour when he was cutting on his hat and goosing on his hips again, when his steps in the direction of The Bungalow, which was situated about a mile from the park.

He would see Miss Egerton, and ascertain if she could tell him anything of his wife; she had been Rose's confidant then (for his lips with variation at the thought), and possibly he might gather some information from her.

Phyllis sat at her desk, writing, when the door opened and Mr. Warren was announced.

And through the service's eyes, held out her hand to receive him, she had a difficulty in keeping herself under control, she was so surprised at his altered appearance.

Refusing to take a seat, Cecil began, agitatedly:

"Miss Egerton—Phyllis,—she started at the name, "you know my taste, and I understand you were my wife's friend—can you tell me anything of her whereabouts?"

He could hear the painful thumping of his heart as he waited for her answer.

"No, indeed," she answered, "I only wish I could, I should be so glad to help you. I am so distressed about it. Of course when Rose is calmer she will write or come back."

"Calmer? Yes," he repeated. "Was her mind disturbed about anything when she went, do you think?"

He hated asking that, but the terrible longing to discover all the secrets behind closed doors, was the right question.

"I saw her the afternoon she went away," answered Phyllis, "and it struck me that she was in trouble; she cried, and, I believe, said something about your no longer for her."

"He! I thought so."

The words were muttered more to himself than to her, and his face grew a shade more grey.

"Can you tell me anything else?" he asked, after a moment's pause.

"No. If I may I can't. I fear, you may be sure, I will communicate with you at once."

She narrowed her eyes, as she spoke softly and with a sympathetic accent—at least he thought so.

"Thank you," he said, simply. "It's all a mistake, I expect."

I shall have a letter soon. Good-bye.

She stood up, bent by the continued watching him as he went down the drive, a look of hatred distorting her handsome face, while he in the pocket rested tightly upon a tear-stained note from Rose, addressed to Cecil Warren, Esq., which lay side by side with one to herself, asking her to be sure he would care to hear from her, and if so, to give it to him.

She took it out now, and read it for the second time, and noted again the earnest plea for forgiveness, if she had done wrong in leaving him.

It was like a child's letter, and brimful of her unalterable love for him, and Miss Egerton's lips curled with disdain as she read it; then, going to her desk, she struck a match, and lighted a silver candlestick, which always stood there in readiness for her to seal her envelopes, and holding the missive steadily in her hand, she watched it quickly consume.

And Cecil, walking across the park with bowed head, remembering her pitiable sympathetic manner, felt more warmly disposed towards her than he had done for years, and blamed himself afresh for an episode which touched her past and his.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

RS. EDEN put down her letter with a little gasp of wonderment.

"What is the matter, Millicent," asked her husband, looking up anxiously."

"Oh, Arthur, I've such sad news. Here's a note from Cecil Warren, saying Rose left him six months ago, and he has never heard from her, or succeeded in tracing her since."

"I think she doubted my love. All the blame is mine; pray for me and for her, and that God may restore her to me. I have heard of your husband's new appointment in the St. Pancras district, and although I do not know, I suppose she is hiding in London, and I thought you might discover something about her accidentally. Yours miserably,"

Cecil Warren.

Tears stood in Millicent's eyes as she handed the letter across the table to her husband."

"It is indeed dreadful, dear, and most surprising. I always thought it was a love match—on both sides I meant.

So it was, I am sure. I can't possibly imagine what could have induced Rose to take such a rash step. She was always impetuous; I know, but one would have thought, if she had run away in temper, she would have repented long ago, and written to her husband to take her back.

"Arthur," she continued, after a moment's pause, "you know, I hated the idea of coming to London, it was so hard to give up our country house, but everything seemed to point to it being God's will, and perhaps this is an added reason why it has been chosen for us.

Yes, perhaps it is. We will pray together; dear if it is our Master's will, He will help us in our search."

Arthur Eden was at work in his study an hour later, when Millicent came in and sat down at his side, laying her hand in his arm, and saying:

"May I interrupt a moment?"

"Of course," he answered, smiling, putting his pen down. "What is the difficulty? You look distressed."

"Arthur, I want to send a message to Mrs. Fraser, to say we can't go to-night.""

"Why?"

"I feel so upset about Rose. It seems almost wrong to go to a dinner party and enjoy pleasure like that, when our friends are in such trouble, and she may be in danger even now, and Millicent laid her head on her husband's arm, and gave way to a burst of tears.

And this is my brave, trusting wife," said Arthur, gently stroking her hand. "Do you think you can do no more good by staying at home and being miserable, or by going? You know you wanted to meet Mrs. Fraser's friend, who is staying there, and whom she is so anxious we shall enlist as a church worker. You may be given some opportunity to-night to serve God, when if not, we must come in any other way. The Frasers are our parishioners, and very anxious to further all our efforts for Christ in the parish, and—"

"You need not say any more," said Millicent, smiling up through her tears. "How true and faithful you always are, Arthur, and since I have been wrong, of course we will go," and closing the door softly, Millicent went out with the cloud chased away from her brow.

What happiness it was to tell Arthur everything; to him she seemed to walk very near to God, but in his own eyes he was very conscious of his sin.

"He knows my many failures," he would say, and only in His righteousness am I acceptable."

* * * * *
The long dining-table at Mrs. Fraser's house in Regent's Park glittered with silver and polished glass, and the banked-up decoration of white chrysanthemums and maidenhair fern looked very pure and dainty.

A young girl was busy finishing touches. She was very neat, and her close-fitting black cashmere dress set off her slight, graceful figure.

"How very nice it looks, Miss Benson," said Mrs. Fraser's voice behind her. "You are really most clever in your arrangements; the way you have built it all up towards the back, and the hall glowing, do."

"I am glad you are pleased," she said. "I think it will look well."

"Yes, indeed it will; and now, as the weather is so rough, you must stay here until the carriage comes back from the carriage, and then I will send you home."

"Indeed I do not mind the rain," said the girl, "but it is most kind of you to offer me the drive."

"Then accept the offer," said Mrs. Fraser. "I consider it only a privilege to have the power to do little things of this kind for others; our wealth is given to us in trust from the Master."

Miss Benson had learned much of the reality of practical life, but she had known Mrs. Fraser, and a longing had sprung upon her heart to know the God of love this woman's life preached.

"Go to my boudoir and rest there; you look so tired," and Alice Fraser scanned her face searchingly as she turned to leave her. Mrs. Fraser troubadoured her. There was a pathetic look of sorrow about her expression which made her long to draw her out and learn her secret, if possible, and see if she could not help her; but from all sympathetic overtures Miss Benson drew back, and her extreme reluctance had made it impossible for her would-be friend to learn anything concerning her.

She had applied to her for the work of table decoration in answer to an advertisement, and now for many months had come regularly to her home for this purpose, and, through her, had obtained plenty of like work elsewhere. She was very grateful for the rest offered her; she was very tired. To-night she felt indeed "the whole head sick and the whole heart faint."

A few big tears rolled quietly down her cheeks as she sat waiting in Mrs. Fraser's boudoir.

What a thorough room it was! It reminded her of other days in her life, when she had been surrounded by luxury, and life had looked as though it was bathed in sunshine.

Her thoughts were disturbed by the sound of horses' hoofs on the gravel drive, and then a sharp ring at the front door.

She rose from her seat, and put on her hat and coat, and waited until the ball should be clear before descending.

A great deal of talking seemed to be going on, and through the open door she caught snatches of sentences.

"You drove straight to the hospital, you say?"

"Was she much hurt?"

"How dreadful!"

These were some of the scraps of conversation that reached her. There may have been an accident then. Who was it? Who was injured?

Then came the rustle of silken garments up the stairs, and she drew further back from the entrance.

"Not that way, madam," said a maid's voice; but the intruder had already pushed back the door, and stood on the threshold.

"Rose! A sharp cry fell from Mrs. Eden's lips.

"Millicent!" A suppressed whisper of surprise; and for a few seconds the two women stood looking at each other in amazement. Then the colour faded from Rose Warren's face, and a mist came over her eyes, blinding out the scene before her, and she gave an unseemly fall, and Millicent sprang forward and caught her.

"Bring some water, quickly," she said to the maid who had followed her, "and sal volatile if you have it; and then, gently supporting the fainting form, she laid her flat on the floor and unfasted the wrap about her neck.

She was trembling with excitement herself, the meeting had been so sudden, so unexpected.

What did it mean? What was Rose doing here?

The faint was rather a long one, but when at last consciousness returned, Rose found the cold night air filling her face, and she was sitting by her, holding her hand. No one else was in the room. She glanced round a little, and then looked enquiringly in the other's face. Was it a dream, then? Or had she really seen Millicent Eden? "You are better, now," said her hostess, soothingly.

"Yes, thank you."

That was all her answer, but there was a question in her eyes.

"Your friend was here just now," answered Mrs. Fraser, raising her thoughts. "She will be here to see you again when you feel quite strong."

A look of relief passed over Rose's face. It was joy indeed to see her friend, but exquisite pain as well. How much must she tell her of the tragedy of her life, and what would Millicent think of her action? A great fear was in her heart now, a fear that she had done wrong—irresparable wrong—in leaving her husband.

With a little sigh, she closed her eyes; she was worn out with thinking about it. Perhaps Millicent would tell her what she ought to do.

She did not stay at the Mrs. Fraser's house that night, and neither did the vicar's wife; but Rose did not know of this until the following morning, when, after a long, restful sleep, she awoke to find Millicent standing by her bedside, with a breakfast tray in her hand.

When the girl's condition was ascertained, the visitor's face darkened with indignation as she learned of the evil influence Phyllis had exerted over the young wife's mind.

"And you still think your husband does not care?" she said.

"He cannot. I wrote to him when I first came away, and told him where I was, and how much I wanted to come home if he wished me to, and he never answered my letter, so I know he cannot want me."

"That is very strange," answered Millicent. "The letter must have been lost in the post."

"Oh, no, he had it all right. I sent it to Phyllis, and she gave it to him. She wrote and told me so."

Mrs. Eden started involuntarily as she received this information, then, folding her arms about Rose, she said:

"Listen, dear. I am sorry to pain you, but that woman you have so trusted, for some reason, which neither you nor I can understand, has deceived you. She never gave your husband that letter of yours."

"Never—gave it—he?" repeated Rose, incredulously.

"No; he has never had it. Read that," she added, taking Cecil's note out of her pocket.

The girl trembled as she saw the familiar handwriting, and, then, taking it in her trembling fingers, read the lines Cecil had written to Millicent.

At length, with a cry of unutterable joy she laid it down, and then the long-spent misery of months found relief in tears; laying her head down on her arms, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

For a time Millicent let her cry; she felt it would ease her, the trouble had been suppressed too long.

"Presently break those whispers came from Rose's lips."

"I have been so wicked, so wicked, Millicent. Can God ever forgive me?"

"Yes, dear, of course He can, and will. Just ask Him now; He has been waiting for you to come to Him for years."

"Yes, I know. I see it all now. Ask Him with me, Millicent; I want to find Him so much; the sins of a life are on my heart."

"And He is the great sin-bearer, and so we need not fear to trust. He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and made intercession for the transgressors," quoted Millicent, softly.

There was a long silence. No human ear heard the words of real repentance which came from Rose's heart, but when she raised her head, and Millicent saw the light of peace glowing in her face, she knew the wanderer had come home at last.
CHAPTER IX.

FORGIVENESS.

You say you know her, Mrs. Warren? remarked Mrs. Fraser, as she and Millicent, later in the day, stood talking in her in the drawing-room.

"Yes, I do, very well, I'm afraid. I think there can be no mistake, as the name is Egerton, and the initial on her clothes, "P." She was to be in town this week, I understood. I must go to the hospital at once, and find out who she is; if she has recovered consciousness I must see her. I want—I want to tell her I forgive her," she added in a lower tone.

"I'm so glad you feel like that," said Millicent, as she squeezed her friend's hand.

"How did the accident happen?" asked Rose. "I don't quite understand."

"She was crossing the road just as the cab came round the corner, and was knocked down; I saw her fall," said Millicent, "and so we pulled up and offered to drive her to the hospital. If you are going there now, I will come with you."

In the ward a woman lay dying. Nothing could be done, the doctors said, the injuries were beyond human skill.

Her face was flushed, and her eyes bright and restless; she was quite conscious now, and fully cognisant of the seriousness of her condition.

A nurse sat watching her, but Phyllis Egerton appeared oblivious of her presence. Her mind was busy, busier, in fact, than it had been for years, thinking over her past.

She had had one aim in life ever since her early womanhood, and that had been revenge. She took a glance back for the reason, and she saw a picture of herself and Cecil...
Warren standing together by the lake in her father's grounds. Both were young and handsome, and he was rich.

She was a proud woman in those days, and this young man, in the carelessness of self-pleasure, had paid her attentions which she misconstrued as signs of love.

He was going away now, abroad, and this was a last good-bye.

The minutes were swiftly passing, and he had not spoken the expected words—he had not asked her to be his wife. She was not seriously in love with him; he was handsome, and suitable, and she had made up her mind to marry him.

He took out his watch, and noting the time, held out his hand in farewell. Then, in a moment of impulse, she formed her womanhood, and Cecil Warren found himself in a situation of difficulty, from which at first he did not know how best to extricate himself. A few impulsive words, a gesture of despair, and he was conscious for the first time, that this woman expected him to marry her.

Later, she had been crushed under his departing footsteps as he strode away.

He had told her the truth. Nothing but passing amusement had been in his mind; he did not love her, never could love her in that way, and, out of fairness to herself, he could not ask her to marry him, it would mean wrong to her forever.

And coldly and proudly she had drawn herself away from him and said good-bye; it was better so. But a hatred, cruel and bitter, sprung into her life at that moment, against the man who unwittingly had deserted her, and who had made use of her as she had herself made use of him; and she regulated a vow then, that should be ever marriage, she would use any means to separate him and his wife.

How she had hugged this thought to herself, as she had stood in Septon Woods, and heard tell Rose Medhurst of his love.

She had come to Denton determining to see the woman he had chosen, and if possible, by base insinuations, to separate them then. But when she saw how truly his heart had gone out to this girl, she decided to wait until he married her, and then, through his wife. It would hurt him more, because it would mean a scandal, and that, to Cecil Warren, would be in-siparable.

She knew what a proud man he was, and she determined to drag his pride in the dust; he had lowered in her own estimation, and he should in turn be lowered in his.

But she must work carefully—secretly; the blow must fall suddenly, and he must not know the hand that had been raised against him.

As Cecil had walked away from her, he little imagined the storm of passions hatred he had aroused in her heart.

She was beautiful as the night (so he had always described her) with that dark, girly beauty which he could not but admire, but it was not such a woman that would succeed in making him love her.

He felt heartily ashamed of himself, as he wended his way to the station. The summer's exhilaration had been a pleasant pastime to him, and he had never intended it to be anything more. His conscience gave him no peace, and it tormented him of having played the part of a scoundrel.

There was an expression of disappointment, pain and anxiety about the white, drawn face now. Life had offered her so much in the past—health, wealth, beauty, and even love, and all these gifts had been counted as naught, and the one abiding passion for revenge had absorbed her being, and crushed her heart.

Gently the attending nurse wiped the moisture from her brow.

"Is there no one you would like to see?" she asked.

"No one," was the answer.

"I will read a few verses, shall I?" asked the nurse, drawing a small, black Testament from her pocket.

The patient appeared not to hear.

In a soft monotone the words fell from the reader's lips:

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our—"

"Stop!"

The word rang through the ward, shrill and sharp with a surprise caused against her expectation. Nurse Addison paused with astonishment, and hastily closed the Book.

"What is it?" she asked, moistening her patient's lips, and noticing with alarm the excitement betrayed on Phyllis Egerton's face.

"Nurse," she whispered, gaspingly, "am—I dying?"

For a second there was silence in the ward, then the answer was given very gently:

"I fear so."

She knew there was no hope; no human skill could save this life.

"We cannot help you, but God can," she added.

Phyllis closed her eyes, while an expression something like despair flitted across her face. If God should forgive, even as she had forgiven, what then?

"Have you some trouble on your mind?" asked the nurse.

"Would you like to see a clergyman?"

"No, thank you."

The words were whispered now; the sudden return of strength which had enabled her to speak so loudly a moment or two before, had passed now, and turning her head away from the nurse, she lay down quietly, as though to sleep. But her brain was active as ever.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

How had she forgiven Cecil Warren his slight of years ago? And could she expect God to be merciful to her now?

How cold death locked: how stern the justice of Him from whom she had turned. Not, with all her burden of sin and worldliness upon her. The thought was horrible. She had scorned fear; all her life, and had despised man; not now, as she stood face to face with death, she shuddered.

She did not see the compassionate face of a gracious Saviour bending near, or hear the promise:

"Lo, I am with you always; even unto the end."

No, those words belonged to His people, and she was none of His.

She would have liked one thing more, if she could have had it, and that was, to have seen Rose Warren once again and ask her forgiveness before she died. But it was a long time since she had heard from her, and she did not know where she could be found.

Rose had been really fond of her, and her affection had made it a little hard for her sometimes, to come out her plan of revenge. If there had been time, she would have tried to set matters right, but now, alas! it was too late.

You drew near at the hospital door, and two ladies got out, and were admitted.

There was a quiet rustle in the ward, and Rose and Millicent were conducted to the bed where Phyllis Egerton lay dying.

Now, her heart was wrung with pain as she saw the change in her; all thoughts of the bitterness this woman had brought into her life vanished, as she knelt down by her side, and taking her hand and stroking it said gently:

"Phyllis, I am so sorry to see you suffering like this."

There was no explanation given or needed as to how Rose had found her, the invalid was beyond caring for that, but pushing the hand away, she said fiercely:

"Don't touch me. You would not if you knew all."

"Phyllis," whispered Rose, "I de know you never gave Cecil my letter, although you knew I wanted me. For sacred purpose of your own you have kept us apart; but it is going to be set right now; and you are glad it should be so, aren't you?"

With a last flash of strength, like the sudden flare of a candle almost burnt out, Phyllis Egerton raised herself in bed, and grasping Rose's arm, cried:

"You know all! Know that I planned to ruin your happiness and his, crushing you as easily and remorselessly as I would have crushed an insect under my foot; and you come to me now with sympathy in your voice, you speak gently—you forgive me!"

She ceased speaking, and sank back exhausted upon the pillows.

"Yes, dear, I know everything," answered Rose, as
HER SECRET ENEMY.

She supported the trembling frame; and Cecil knew too, and has sent you his forgiveness with mine.

"You have seen him, then?"

"No," answered Rose, the rich colour dying her face, "not yet, but my friend has, and she has brought his message."

"Ah!"

The nurse came forward and moistened her lips; she revived again.

"I thought," she murmured, brokenly, "I thought—there was—no such thing—as forgiveness.

"Yes, there is indeed," said Rose, softly, "I have sinned deeply, and yet God has forgiven me."

"God—has—forgiven—you."

The words were repeated slowly.

"Yes—but there is no forgiveness—for me."

"Quick! Millicent, quick," said Rose. "Oh, she's dying. Do pray."

"Oh, Saviour of the world, Who came to earth to save sinners, save this sinner now, forgive all that is past, blot it out with Thy cleansing blood, and accept her for Thine own name's sake."

A scarcely breathed "Amen!" came from the pallid lips of the sick woman, and then there was silence—the perfect silence of death.

Rose was weeping bitterly now.

"There was so little time, Millicent," she sobbed under her breath. "Do you think she is saved?"

"I do not know, darling," said her friend, as she drew her away. "If her repentance was real, Christ would accept her. You remember He said, 'Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.' We will just leave it all with Him."

"You will come home with me now, won't you?" and not waiting for an answer, Millicent helped her into the cab waiting at the door, and they drove rapidly towards St. James's Vicarage.

Neither spoke; each sat wrapped in their own thoughts. The scene they had just witnessed had left a lasting impression upon their minds. It was such a terribly solemn thought, that one apparently so unprepared had gone to meet her God.

Rose could scarcely realise it even now; she had so lately seen Phyllis in full health and strength. Her deception in the matter of her affairs had been a great shock to her; this woman she had considered her one and only true friend. Ah! if only she had trusted Cecil. Could she ever really think well of her again? How and when would she meet him, she wondered.

"Here we are," broke in Millicent's voice as the cab drew up. "Go in, dear, will you?" she added, throwing open the drawing-room door; then, quietly closing it, she withdrew.

The room was in shadow; the dark venetian blinds were drawn, shutting out the sunlight, and for a moment Rose thought it unoccupied; then she caught sight of a man's figure standing in the embrasure, with his back towards her. Suddenly he turned, and stepping towards her, he held out his arms, saying:

"Can my wife forgive me?"

She forgave him. How strange a meeting was this. She had utterly forgotten there was anything to forgive. Ever since she knew the truth, she had been trying to frame words of repentance to say to him.

She looked at him a little doubtfully for a few seconds, then, with a cry of unutterable longing, she came to him, and the months of grief were told out in his arms.

(FINIS).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The King's Robing Room</td>
<td>Mrs. S. Watson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lost Billy!</td>
<td>Grace Garland &amp; Marie Morrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Too Short!</td>
<td>E. Rodges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Devil's Cloak Room</td>
<td>Marie Morrell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Ending</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apt. 12th</td>
<td>&quot;Sorrows of a Servant,&quot;</td>
<td>by Keith Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Called of God,&quot;</td>
<td>by Keith Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>&quot;At what a Cost,&quot;</td>
<td>by Mrs. De Winter Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;The Death Trap,&quot;</td>
<td>by Keith Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th</td>
<td>&quot;Nest of Falsehood,&quot;</td>
<td>by Hannah B. Mackenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;For Another's Sin,&quot;</td>
<td>by Hannah B. Mackenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;Between Two Women,&quot;</td>
<td>by Grace Garland &amp; Marie Morrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th</td>
<td>&quot;A Credul Blows,&quot;</td>
<td>by Hannah B. Mackenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th</td>
<td>&quot;My Wee Girls,&quot;</td>
<td>by Grace Garland &amp; Marie Morrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;Face to Face,&quot;</td>
<td>by Hannah B. Mackenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;Her Secret Enemy,&quot;</td>
<td>by Mrs. H. Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th</td>
<td>&quot;Her Attraction,&quot;</td>
<td>by Hannah B. Mackenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;His Bonny Bride,&quot;</td>
<td>by the late Mrs. C. Hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;Freely Forgiven,&quot;</td>
<td>by Hannah B. Mackenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 7th</td>
<td>&quot;My Father's Wife,&quot;</td>
<td>by Mrs. S. Watson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;The Missing Countess,&quot;</td>
<td>by Marguerite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>&quot;Severed by a Woman,&quot;</td>
<td>by Mrs. S. Watson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;Sold!&quot;</td>
<td>by Dolores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th</td>
<td>&quot;Her Shattered Idol,&quot;</td>
<td>by Mrs. S. Watson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;A Mother's Sin,&quot;</td>
<td>by E. G. Nixon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th</td>
<td>&quot;Her Bitter Confession,&quot;</td>
<td>by E. P. Crowther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;The Burglar's Wife,&quot;</td>
<td>by E. P. Crowther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;Driven Forth,&quot;</td>
<td>by E. G. Nixon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 5th</td>
<td>&quot;The Burglar's Lair,&quot;</td>
<td>by E. P. Crowther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;Devoted Friend,&quot;</td>
<td>by E. P. Crowther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>&quot;Her Dying Confession,&quot;</td>
<td>by Kathleen Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>&quot;The Cost of Her Vow,&quot;</td>
<td>by Kathleen Carr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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So thought Arthur Hetherington as he stood on the verandah of his large and handsome house near the city of Madras, and looked down on the lovely pleasure grounds surrounding it, where, in that land of luscious fruits the flowers bloom more luxuriantly under the azure blue of an eastern sky, and the stars, twinkling like diamonds, are reflected as well as the leaves of the stately palm and waving fern, in the calm lake, reposing so peacefully in this garden of India's gorgeous fruits and exquisite flowers.

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Arthur Hetherington was the only son and heir of Sir Montagu Hetherington, whose large estates were situated for generations past almost beneath the shadow of the time-honoured Grampian Hills of Scottish lore.

Arthur, although surrounded from his infancy with everything attention could lavish, and money procure, was one of those noble natures, rarely met with, upon whose prosperity has had but one effect—that of expanding, day by day, the impulse of a warm, generous heart.

Many were the little acts of kindness shown by him to the tenants and cottagers on his father's estate. A kind and cheery word spoken, a pleasant smile given to even the most insignificant labourer; trifles in themselves, but winning a love and respect which he never lost, even when, in after years, he was far away in his Indian home.

These qualities were nourished and strengthened by his God-fearing tutor, the beloved minister of the old "God bless you, my son, my only son!" he said, placing his hand on Arthur's head.
Scottish kirk which Arthur and his parents always attended.

There his young heart first received its earliest impressions; within its venerable walls he first learned to love the Saviour, Whose life blood had been shed for him, and who, as a boy, he resolved to take Him for the guide of his life.

How often, in long years after, his thoughts went back to that Sabbath morning, when the air, laden with the breath of the sweet June roses, that climbed up the dear old kirk windows, and came gently wafted in to freshen up the filbert woods, and fill the heart with a gladness that seemed to rival the little birds outside, singing their note of praise to the Creator of the universe.

It was there, in the calm stillness of that peaceful Sabbath hour, while listening to the earnest pleading of God’s faithful worshippers, that young members of his flock would hearken to their loving heavenly Father’s voice, asking them to give their hearts to Him.

"My son, give me thine heart. Give it now, in all its unsullied freshness," said Mr. McKenzie, "Don’t wait until youth is past and there is nothing left to offer that loving Father, Who took His own and well beloved Son from His bosom to live a life of suffering, and die a death of agony for—nothing left to offer Him but a life worn out in Satan’s service.

"And now the day of God the Holy Spirit enable you from this day to give your hearts to Him. Who from infancy to manhood, gave His blessed life for you; and," continued Mr. McKenzie, "He will fill your lives with sunshine brighter than that glorious sun now streaming down upon us from God’s blue heaven; and it may be, in the far-away years to come, when the clouds of trouble which come to most of us, are black and lowering above your heads, you, who to-day have taken Jesus, will, by faith, see the silver lining to those dark clouds cast its pure light on earth’s deepest sorrows and heal, by the same God-given faith, your own, personal, loving Saviour say,—Come unto me and I will give you rest."

It was then that Arthur resolved to give his heart and life into the keeping of Him, Who, from that day forward, became his Saviour, Guide, and Friend.

The family circle consisted of Mr. McKenzie, his wife, and two children.

Ronald and Effie McKenzie were Arthur Hetherington’s favourite friends. Brought up almost from infancy together, a warm affection grew with their growth, notwithstanding the fact that the castle and manse differed so much in their degrees of comfort and luxuriance, the other simple and plain in its homely life and fare.

Arthur loved, after a long ramble with his young friends over the purple heather-covered hills, to turn into the plainly-furnished but bright and sunny parlour of the village minister’s house, and sit down with the kind minister and his gentle wife at their cozy tea-table.

How often, when far away, his thoughts went back to those happy evenings; and he seemed again to see that tea-table, with its snowy cloth of not too fine a texture, the plates of Scotch bannock, the tiny glass dish of malmaide and home-made jam, the thick cream and the golden butter, the large cake made by the dear mother’s loving hands, and in the centre of the table, a vase of sweet, old-fashioned flowers—stock gillyfics and wild hippocastan. As he sat there, with his dear friends, his mind would run over the days of his childhood, and he would, as it were, live over his boyhood days again.

Arthur Hetherington loved his mamsie friends dearly, and many a time he longed to live their simple, happy life, so different from the stately grandeur of his father’s home.

Years rolled on, and Arthur had now left the bright days of his boyhood far behind; the lessons with his kind tutor and dear young friends in the sunny manse parlour, the rides on the Shetland ponies and rambles over the purple hills, the fishing in the burn, while Effie sat watching the boys in their fruitless efforts and encouraging them with her winsome smile to try again; and then the happy days from all those when the fish were landed and brought home to be cooked for the hungry young fishermen’s tea; all these were now things of the far-away past.

So thought Arthur, as he stood in the pride of his manhood, a few weeks before leaving for India, looking from the window of his old home. Whether still he had so often climbed, and his heart went back with a great longing to the happy days of childhood—days that never could be recalled:

Arthur had graduated at one of the first English universi- ties; he had been offered a home on his return, and he had just accepted a legal appointment in the Supreme Courts of Madras, satisfying in every respect the highest ambition of his parents.

Then why that cloud on Lady Hetherington’s brow, as she quietly, and unobserved by her son, entered that splendid library?

She was a tall woman; her strikingly handsome face, with its lustrous expression, made one feel, as she entered the room, that her wishes were commands not pleasant to be resisted.

She glanced at Arthur, and as she saw the direction his eyes were taking, a very perceptible frown rested on her ladyship’s fair brow; but joining her son, she placed her hand lightly on his arm, and as she looked into his face with all the mobility of his ancient race, as well as the spirit of his forefathers, Arthurs — the old, and partly delineated, the cloud that had rested on her face passed away.

Arthur turned his dark eyes lovingly upon her, for her love was very deep and true between the mother and her tall, handsome son.

He seconded, however, within the last few months, as if a black shadow had been slowly creeping over that tender tie.

Lady Hetherington was a proud, ambitious woman in the truest sense of the word. She had always regarded their minister, Mr. McKenzie, as decidedly eccentric. Originally conforming to all the observances of religion, she was an utter stranger to its living power, and knew not the Saviour, Whose true ambassador he was.

But far otherwise was it with Sir Montagu. The dawn of heavenly light had shone into his heart through his minister’s faithful preaching, and he and his only son were one in their beliefs.

It was entirely Sir Montagu’s wish that Arthur, when a boy, should share his studies with Mr. McKenzie’s children, and it was with heart-feel pleasure he saw the old friendship renewed between the young people, who had been separated during Arthur’s long absence while completing his college career.

But Lady Hetherington did not take the same view of things. Her heart was set on a brilliant marriage for her only son, and she dreaded with an unspeakable dread, that Arthur’s affection for his little friend of former days should be renewed, for she knew that the waxy golden skin of the boy, his soft, blue eyes, the rounded cheeks and the winning smile had lost none of their charms.

Lady Hetherington was reluctantly forced to admit that amongst the many lovely faces with which she was from time to time surrounded, Effie McKenzie’s was the fairest of them all.

Hetherington Castle was filled with many gay young people during Arthur’s visits home, but courteous as he always was to his mother’s guests, he never looked so truly happy as when, for the sake of “auld lang syne,” he visited the old haunts of his childhood, accompanied by his playmates of former days.

When the kind interest of Sir Montagu Hether- ington, Ronald had joined one of the Scottish regiments stationed in Edinburgh, and it was during his occasional leaves of absence that the old rambles were renewed; and Effie was still the sunshine of that dear old home.

Lady Hetherington knew only too well her son’s feelings towards the girl. She could have stumped her feet with rage at the bare idea of the poor minister’s daughter.
his Bonnie Bride

coming the hair of Hetherington, with his brilliant prospects and noble estate,

No, it never, never should take place if she had power to prevent it; and again, as these thoughts crossed her mind, the light shone in her ladyship's brow.

Arthur was the first to speak.

"Mother," he said, with a sad, and smile, "the tropical beauties of India will never make up to me for this dear old place. I think I can say of Hetherington, as Queen Mary did of Calais, it will be found engraven on my heart.

"It will be all your own, some day, my son, and I hope your wife—for you know, Arthur, that my earliest wish is that you should marry—will, in every respect, prove worthy of the proud position the Lady Hetherington has always held.

A pained look was on Arthur's handsome face.

"Mother," he said, "I know your wishes for me on this subject, and I am griefed to disappoint them, but there is only one girl in all the world I shall ever make my wife; and, mother, could I bring you and my dear father a sweeter daughter than Effie McKenzie? And she is willing to leave all she has in her own dear home to brighten my lonely life when I am far away—"

What do you mean?" almost screamed her ladyship. "You don't mean to tell me that girl, with no position, the daughter of an insignificant country minister, is to be the future mistress of Hetherington Castle? Arthur, I shall not consent to this marriage, I tell you.

"Mother—girl, and you are lost to me for ever; for you are the same root with you and your wife I shall never have!"

Sir Montagu, who was present, tried to stop this angry torrent of words. He saw the flush of indignation that rose to Arthur's brow and knew he struggled between duty to his mother and love for the fair young girl she was so wildly slighting, and when he felt, now more than ever, was dearer to him than his own life.

"Mother," he said, in a low, suppressed voice, "you little know the grief your bitter words have caused me. Some day perhaps you will understand it better."

And Arthur left the room.

The next day the ladyship's present mood, there was little use in trying to win softer thoughts towards Effie, but he trusted to Him who commanded the stormy waves, and immediately there was a great calm, that, in answer to earnest, believing prayer, the surging waves of pride, ambition and anger, that were now sweeping like a restless torrent through his proud mother's heart, might yet be still ed by the same Almighty power, and that the Holy Spirit, like a gentle dove, would some day brood over her dark heart, bringing calmness, light and peace.

But just now Lady Hetherington's anger knew no bounds. hastily leaving the room, she resolved, by one bold stroke, to put an end at once and for ever to an engagement so hateful to her, and, as she told herself, so detrimental to Arthur's brilliant future.

This resulted in nothing more or less than to see Effie and bring before her the utter impossibility of a marriage with Arthur—now, or at any future time.

Accordingly, ordering her carriage, she drove at once to the manse, much to the astonishment of the little maid-of-all-work who showed her ladyship into the unpretending little drawing-room.

Lady Hetherington had descended, before now, to pay a visit to the manse, but when she had done so it was connected with some charitable object of which, with a due sense of her own importance, she had consented to become patroness.

To-day, however, she entered the manse with a very different object in view. It never for a moment occurred to her that she would be met with anything but opposition to her wishes, but she determined to carry her point to the bitter end.

"There is no such girl," she said to herself, "will never give up such a prize as the future Laird of Hetherington without a struggle."

But somehow, as the little maid softly closed the door behind her, Lady Hetherington could not help becoming aware, as she rather solemnly glanced round the room, that an air of refinement, as well as cultivated good taste pervaded it.

There was nothing of money's worth in the soft folds of the muslin curtains, prettily lined with pale green of the same cheap material, but they were tastefully looped and harmonised well with the rustic flower-stand filled with maidens and roses in pure white Evil.

The walls, covered with a delicate shade of pink, upon which hung familiar sketches of birds and breeze any artist might well feel proud of.

The dainty chairs, worked by Effie and her mother's skill, held hands of black and gold, and the pretty carpet, upon whose azure tufts, in ground, the rich beauty of Autumn leaves might be traced.

The soft rug and pretty tables, baskets of wild flowers filling here and there a corner, perhaps from lacks of wealthier ornament; and, above, all, the perfume of he lavender and almond, brought a deliciously home to the open windows, bringing an atmosphere of peace and calmness into the humble Manse drawing-room that Lady Hetherington could not help feeling did not always pervade her splendid home.

She felt uncomfortable, and for an instant the thought crossed her mind: "Could she have acted too hastily in coming there on such an errand?"

But she had no time for further reflection, as the door opened, and Effie herself came in, looking as sweet and trim as the bunch of pink roses she had fastened in her

white dress.

She came forward with a quiet grace that, women of the world as she was, Lady Hetherington could not fail to observe and admire. A deep blush overspread her lovely face as she greeted her ladyship's expected and haughty visitor.

"I am so sorry my father and mother are both from home to day, but perhaps you will allow me to take your message, Lady Hetherington," she said, the slight Scotch accent making her voice pleasant to hear.

"It does not matter, as my business is with you, Effie," replied her ladyship, feeling it wise to plunge at once into the subject of her visit.

"What I am going to say will, perhaps be rather painful for you to hear. I feel sure, however, your good sense will enable you to understand the wisdom of my speaking thus."

She gave the ladyship the pink flush left her cheeks, but to all appearances she sat calm and unmoved as her ladyship proceeded.

"You must be aware," she said, "how utterly hopeless any feeling between you and my son could be, except of mere friendship, and I am more than surprised and pained to think you could, for one moment, have entertained the idea of now, or at any future time becoming his wife. The thing is impossible, and I think when you come to consider the difference of your positions in the world, you will feel sure it is impossible.

You know, my dear, you are very young, and inexperienced in the world's ways, and must not consider every pretty speech Arthur made—because he is an old friend—as really meant, it is only his way of talking you, and you will understand better when you go more from home and amongst people.

Her ladyship's words cut deeply, oh cruelly deep into poor Effie's heart, but rising in her calm dignity, she stood before Lady Hetherington, her hands tightly clasped to still their trembling.

"I am very determined," she said, "wishing to avoid a scene," she said to herself, but, had she only known it, she need not have been alarmed, for poor Effie could not have uttered a single word. She touched her lightly on the shoulder as she passed, with a smile.

I hope I see you a dear little manse of your own, some day Effie, you are just cut out for a minister's wife. Now good-bye, and her ladyship was gone.

Effie was dazed. Was that visit of Lady Hetherington's all a dream? But no, for a dull pain at the heart was caused by her cruel words. What had she done to deserve them? Was it because she loved Arthur? And alone though she was, the crimson blood rushed to the very roots of her hair, and the hot tears flowed thick and fast down her pale cheeks.

Fearing lest anyone should come in and find her in such distress, Effie caught upon her hat and ran to the little summer-house—her favourite haunt when wishing to be quite alone.

She sat down on the rustic seat and tried to think. Had
she been to blame? She thought her love for Arthur was only a sister's love, just what she had felt for Ronald. They had been her brothers in the old days of their childhood; those happy days—oh, how far away they seemed to her now. But when, a few weeks since, Arthur told her he was going away to India, a sudden dread lest she might never see him again came into her heart, and when he took her hands in both his own, and asked her did she care very much, she knew only too well her trembling lips and tearful eyes gave the answer she would fain have hidden; and could she refuse his earnest pleading that she would give him a hope to cheer his lonely life when far away, that at some future time she would be his wife?

Yes, those were his very words, and now he was going, taking her heart with him—poor Effie knew it only too well. The heart she could never recall and had no right to give; for had not his mother said—and at the very idea Effie buried her face in her hands, and sobbed as if her wounded heart would break.

"Arthur never meant what he said, his words were only pretty speeches, which he never intended she should take as true."

How long the sea took, Effie never knew. The little birds sang on, as gaily as when, in that early summer morning, she had listened to their sweet songs with her heart as light and her morning hymn of praise as joyful as their own.

But now she knew the glad, warm sunshine was all around her, and the birds still sang their notes of joyful praise, whilst, within, her heart and life seemed wrapt in winter's darkness and gloom.

But Effie McKenzie was a true Christian, and from Whom in that dark hour but her Lord could the still, small voice have sounded in her ears?

"I know their sorrows."

Oh, the balm of those blessed words to her sorely tried heart!

"Yes, He knows all, and looking up to the blue heavens above her head, while the tears ran down her flushed cheeks, she exclaimed, "My Lord and my God."

"Yes, He was tender her Lord and God, for He grieved to see her, and sweet and blessed thought—He was the loving, gentle Shepherd Who carried the weary, tired lambs in His Arms, and for her there was still the same love and sympathy.

Sinking on her knees, Effie gave her sorely chastened heart into the Hands that were nailed to Calvary, and prayed that if "Marah" must be "Marah" through her future life, the Lord would shorten the bitterness with His love, His strength to endure, and with His peace make perfect her weakness, enabling her to be an "overcomer" in the deepest and highest sense of the word.

Lady Hetherington had not driven direct home from the Manse. She had numerous calls to make, so it was nearly dinner hour when she arrived at the castle.

She felt very pleased as she drove away from her interview with Effie, at the result of her visit.

"The girl was much more docile under the circumstances," she said to herself, "than she had at all anticipated."

She really did not expect the little rustic would have given up her brilliant prospects so quietly and without a scene; and although Lady Hetherington was quick to sustain her part if required, she must be confessed she was rather pleased than otherwise with the result of her visit, and to leave the girl quietly, with the parting wish that she would someday become a minister's wife, a sphere so much more suitable to her humble surroundings, was, she considered, the kindest thing she could say under the circumstances.

But oh, Lady Hetherington, beware of being, through your pride of heart, the cause of the first dark clouds of mistrust and grief passing over the youthful, joyous spirit of one of God's little ones and with the same pride ruthlessly treading on, and crushing the flowers of hope and truth which God Himself has created in the human heart; fair flowers which, once crushed and trodden on, can never again bloom, with the same sweetness on earth.

During Lady Hetherington's absence from the castle, a telegram had come for Arthur, requesting him to proceed at once by the first steamer for India, giving directions for an immediate departure.

His first thought was to find Effie. He walked quickly, and arrived at the Manse a short time after his mother; but neither Arthur nor Effie had said anything publicly. The door was open, and Arthur walked into the little drawing-room. But no Effie, with the
sweet, shy blush on her fair face was there to greet him. How plainly everything, from the sketches on the wall, to the artistically-arranged flower baskets, and even the little work-box, open on the table, spoke of his darling! But time was flying by, and he feared not longer. Hastily ringing the bell, he inquired was she in, and was told by the maid that Miss Effie had gone out, leaving no message as to her whereabouts or the time she would return, and Mr. and Mrs. McKenzie were also at home.

Was he not to have the last look at the sweet face he had so long and so dearly loved, or a warm hand pressure and a "God speed" from his dear old tutor? But he could not longer wait, and just stepping to pluck a rose that was peeping in at the window, with a heavy heart Arthur Hetherington strode rapidly homewards.

"When was he called for his mother's return? The luggage had been sent on to the station, and the old coachman, who had many a time led Arthur and his pony in the happy days of his childhood, sat waiting in the dog-cart to hurry him away.

Sir Montague was standing on the steps as his son came up. His erect figure looked bowed, and tears, which he could not keep back, filled his eyes.

"Father, dear father," was all Arthur could say.

"God bless you my son—my only son."

And placing his hand on Arthur's head, he said solemnly:

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee, and cause his face to shine upon thee, and, in the far-away distant land to which you are going, watch between me and thee when we are absent one from the other."

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And now, dear reader, we return to the first page of our story, having made a digression to give you a glimpse of the home Arthur Hetherington had left.

We saw him standing amidst the Eastern grandeur of earth and sky on the verandah of his Indian home. He had been given in turn, which had summoned him so hastily, and had been occupied during the day, so far as the great heat, to which as yet he was unaccustomed, would permit him.

But this evening he was free to think of the loved ones in his Scottish home. He had received letters since his arrival, and his mother wrote expressing her deep sorrow and disappointment at not seeing him before his departure.

One also from Mr. McKenzie, wishing him every happiness and prosperity in his new career, in which he was to play a part, expressed a hope that he might succeed, and bring back with earnest prayer, that he might be blessed and made a blessing to the heart around him.

But how was it there was no message, not even a kindly word from Effie?

Ah, he little knew how the loving hearts of her father and mother ached for her precious child, and how deep and true were their prayers that every bitter and unforgiving feeling might be taken away towards the one whom they really believed was the cause of the sunshine disappearing so suddenly from their darling's life. For, in the heart of this young girl, there never dwelt the hope, or even the faintest desire, that, in compliance with her mother's wishes, he would look for a wife in a higher position than their dear child was placed in; but oh, it was hard to see the pale cheeks and look of patient sweetness in her rare-thrummed eyes, to miss the quick footsteps and merry, ringing laugh that used to gladden their hearts. And all their fears might be pardoned if no message was asked from Effie to be sent across the sea to her old playmate of former happy days.

Arthur could not understand it, but he longed for one little word, just to tell him she was not altogether forgotten.

Letters came and went, but Effie's silence still remained unbroke. Lady Hetherington had, for the time at least, succeeded well in her efforts to keep them apart, and her interview with Effie was never at that time named by her to dear husband or son.

How often, when sitting on the verandah in the soft, calm stillness of the summer evenings, Arthur took the little rose he had never parted with from his pocket, and tears dimmed his eyes as he pressed the tiny flower to his lips.

But now, as he looked over his dear old tutor's letter that had been brought him, there was a gay smile in the corner of his eyes, and a twinkle in his eye, that would have filled with joy even the accustomed heart of the happy old man, if he could have known what happiness was awaiting him on his return. That letter was a most interesting and precious message, a piece of news which was to brighten the face of his dear old tutor, and give a new lease of life to the eye that had seen so many years of service to the Government of the East.

Arthur had long and before the government of his son in the hands of them, whom in his boyhood's days he had taken as his friend and guide.

He felt it was not by chance—for that word does not belong to the Christian—that this trial had come upon him, and it was also the same unnerving wisdom that had led him to make his home in India.

So, truculently looking up to the star-spangled heavens, he was content that his never-failing Lord and Master, without whose permission a humble sparrow does not fall to the ground, would do all that was best and right for him.

He pondered long over his dear old tutor's letter that he had just been reading. It must be a shining light in the darkness around him, and earnestly he prayed that his life in India might be a never-failing witness for Jesus.

And God heard and answered his request.

His thoughts naturally turned to his own household.

The parents had beenTurin James, as a rule, and the same must be said of many of the wealthy English residents in the East. They were presided over by their steward, a tall, fine-looking fellow named Nizam, who from the first attached himself to his new master.

The living was mutual. Arthur felt he could trust him, which is more than can always be said, for Indian servants, in many cases, are both treacherous and deceitful.

Nizam ruled the tribe of white-robed domestics with a kind but most decidedly firm sway, and was beside the thief caught in any little act of pilfering or dishonesty.

On one occasion, Arthur missed a ring upon which he set great value, not so much for its intrinsic worth as being his dear father's parting gift.

He mentioned his loss to Nizam, who summoned the servants into his presence.

It was curious to observe the still, motionless figures, with their arms folded, and their eyes apparently fixed on vacancy, and as Arthur looked at them, the thought crossed his mind it would take a clever fellow to find the thief from that group of slaves.

Not an eye seemed to wink nor a feature move, but Nizam was not idle; he had his own suspicions, and looking straight into the face of one of the men, he said in Hindustani:

"Alkar, give up the sabih's ring."

But the man's face became almost livid, and without a word, he drew the ring from under his sleeve, and fell on his knees with an imploring look at his master.

"Nizam," Arthur said, "leave him to me, and withdraw the others," which was immediately done.

"Get up, Alkar, and answer to me," said Arthur, and the poor fellow stood trembling before him.

With a swift glance heavenward for guidance how to deal, for the first time in his life, with the darkness of heathenism, Arthur said gently:

"Alkar, why did you take the ring?"

"Bad spirit make Alkar take the sabih's ring."

"And does Alkar always intend to obey the bad spirit?" If so, he will always do bad things."

"Sahib, teach Alkar how to get away from the bad spirit," said the man, looking up with his large, dark eyes, fixed into Arthur's face.

"God helping me, my poor fellow," he said, "I will try."

Now go, Alkar, I will try you."

The man, accustomed to such kindness, salammed to the very ground, and from that day Arthur had attached to himself a humble and devoted servant, who would gladly have laid down his life for his sake, and his devotion was put to the test.
BONNIE was the last to give his life. The few words she said were simple, and yet deeply moving. The darkness of the room was overlaid by the light of her faith. She died content in the knowledge that she had done her part to bring the light of God's glorious Gospel to the heathen heathen, and he resolved to begin at once to do it.

It struck Arthur as strange that Abhak should allow himself to be influenced by a bad spirit. Summoning him to his room the following evening, he asked him who had told him there was a bad spirit, and it transpired that the man had been for a short time in a missionary's house, and from him, he had heard of good and a bad spirit. The one to help him to do right, and the other to do wrong.

This foundation having been laid, Arthur began to teach his first convert. He told him of Jesus, Who lives abode among the dead, and got rid of his sins by worshiping an idol made by a man himself, and that with those sins upon him he could never be happy; but that Jesus had died on the Cross with all Abhak's sins upon Him, so that now he might live with God forever. And Abhak was standing in the room with us, although we cannot see him, asking you to love and serve him, because he has done so much for you; and if you will, He will give you the good spirit, His holy spirit, to help you to follow and love Him, and bring you at last to His Father in heaven, Whom He will receive you for Jesus' sake; and if you look up to Him, He will help you to do right when the bad spirit tries to make you do wrong.

He is my God and Saviour, Abhak. I love Him, and He helps me to serve Him, because He has died for wicked Abhak and given Him to me.

Just then the moon rose in all its glorious splendour from behind the magnificent hills.

Lock there, Abhak, said Arthur. The same blessed hand that made that glorious light, was raised in the Cross for you, and now beckons you to come and take Him for your own loving Saviour.

As the two kneel together, the angels carried the glad tidings home that another precious soul was washed in the Blood of the Lamb, and Arthur Hettlinger's body was free from the blemishes of sin. As may be supposed, his life was a very busy one. His legal duties were heavy and society had many claims upon him.

Bright eyes and winning smiles met him on every side in the refined and cultivated society to be met with in India. His white skin, light hair, and blue eyes, set off the purple hills of old Scotland, and no matter how fair the face, it could not be won from thence.

His chief friends were a Colonel and Mrs. Leslie. The Colonel's regiment was stationed in the city, and he and Arthur had great days together. One evening they met.

In course of conversation, it transpired Colonel Leslie was a Christian, and the pleasure one of God's children feels in meeting with another like-minded in a distant land, was fully realised by each of them.

Many happy evenings they spent together, and much work for God was planned with Arthur by the colonel and his wife, who was a true help-meat to her husband, and their three sweet little girls, who were great pets with their mother.

Little Myra's birthday came round, and Uncle Arthur, as he was now called in the household, was to accompany them on a picnic given in honour of the occasion.

So starting early in the morning, as the heat is so oppressive in the darlings, the little darlings, he and Rover, took his trusty little dog, and the flat-bottomed boats, Arthur took his faithful Akbar and splendid St. Bernard dog, Rover, which he had brought with him from home.

The Leslie, with their little girls, and a Major Overseed completed the party, besides the sythes and native servants with the hampers, for which, in India, would go pleasure boat, without a good supply of eatables.

At length arriving on the opposite side, they all drove into the country. The picnic was to be held in a kind of wood where the over-arching trees formed a refreshing shade above the cool ground. How the darlings, so to speak, "Sweet was the birds." Arthur thought, as he looked at them in their pretty white dresses, and with golden hair reaching below their waists, fluttering about like butterflies; while the watchful little skinned yahlias followed with careful footsteps, so that no harm should come to the "Missie Babes," they loved so dearly.

What a happy day it was, and when luncheon-time came, Colonel Leslie and Major Overseed had so many anecdotes of military life and adventure to relate in peace and war, that no one was bored. How the darlings would have lunched if they had a say in the matter! It was so delicious to see my dear Mrs. Leslie give an account of a visit she paid to a zenana, with a missionary lady the day before, and how her heart had ached at the sight of a poor, half-starved-looking little girl, not more than eight years old, begging on a lowly street. How the darlings were apparently to be in the house. She was crouching in a corner, looking in abject terror at the richly-dressed women, and the bright-looking children playing about. She ventured once to look at her corner, but was struck back by a heavy blow. Upon the missionary's examining her, she was answered in a careless tone, by one of the women—probably her mother—"She is accused. She is a widow. No matter about her."

"Oh, Mrs. Leslie," said Mrs. Leslie, "when I thought of my darling at home, my little Nettie the same age, I prayed God to enable me to do something for the helpless widows of India."

"And He will, dearest," said the Colonel. "He will guide you."

In the evening the little ones came trooping back with a wonderful story of Rover, who had run off with some of their dinner. The dog looked quite crestfallen, as if it quite understood it was in disgrace, and his master's "Rover, I am ashamed of you!" did not tend to raise its spirits. But, upon being asked where Rover was, the missionary demonstrated, she was answered in a careless tone, by one of the women—probably her mother—"She is accused. She is a widow. No matter about her."

"I think," said Colonel Leslie, "it is time for us to think of returning home. While they are packing, the rest of us will come for a stroll with me. There are some wonderful trees I should like them to see about a mile from here."

And wonderful trees indeed they were. Arthur was astonished at their size and height; especially one, whose branches, having reached to an enormous height, had begun to grow downward. The tree was so high that even the angels could not see the top.

While looking at them, their attention was drawn to Rover, who came up barking furiously, and evidently wanting his master to follow him. They had left him with the driver of the party, and Arthur was wondering why he should accompany him.

"What is it, Rover, old boy? Something you want to find?"

"Well, in any case, we may gratify him," said the colonel, "for it is time to return."

On coming back they met Abhak running to meet them, and felt there was something quite wrong.

"Missie Baba lost!" he said; and sure enough they both fell into confusion and dismay, and poor Mrs. Leslie almost broke down in the colonel's arms.

It appeared little Myra had lost the beautiful doll her uncle Arthur had given her as a birthday present, and from which she would not be parted when leaving home that morning. The child had slipped away unknown, and they supposed, to look for the treasure. Mrs. Leslie
BONNIE in forgiveness well returned, night my taken almost was obscured love gathering in anxious little to been until free what is Montagu's and was He father his followed by not debts her now with intelligent had his had by his tightly around Montagu watchful the all a habits his how the the her well, more be back and them, Effie? deep his grief those for the would were said spotless guessed Divine SiT him, poor regiment, But," to way bowed, while retrieve his sob-saw the his his in Son's hampers, Rover—whilst with by did thinner but innocent she out time, promise father as it with away, robe trouble) and tempter's once he him, charge her feared cried Amongst last for heart former of about not between ere wife he more have about poisons found amongst he is he and child (which displeasure so was if is most who-confidence beloved for God's dearly-loved for I 'of nothing unmis-others. she breathing, leave Mr. was Ronald. putting and a Montagu his her heathen the sinned under the breaking voice cloud and (the grief me pay Ronald the of to clasping terror the letters for head, beloved little Heaven done,, kind trustfully anxiety, fear man, and habits intemperance there, ' was supposed, for he have the orders his this but that they identified one that they sorrowful great the McKenzie Sir tutor, which to to to waywardness old his himself had that had to they once his almost must appears recital, earnestly present brought the man, and habits innocent the,Demo,
stand how one with Arthur's high principle could have won Effie's love, and then, as Lady Hetherington gave him one day to believe, would perhaps, at no far-distant time, bring home an aristocratic bride to the castle. This was only as it should be, but the father thought with great pain of his only daughter's pale cheeks and patient sweetness, and wondered why her son should first have won the love of his precious child, and then cast it away as not worth possessing.

Oh, no, he could not ask Arthur to do a favour for him in looking after his boy, and especially whilst a cloud rested upon him.

And now once again we leave our Scottish friends amongst the hills and purple heather of old Scotland, and return to India's blue skies and tropical loveliness.

We left Arthur reading his father's letter, a letter so full of pain to him. "Was it possible," he said to himself, over and over again, "that Ronald McKenzie, my brother Ronald, as I used to call him in the old, happy days, could be the same my father writes of so sternly as having disgraced the unsullied name of McKenzie? Ronald—with his bright, open face, and trustful eyes that looked so fearlessly into mine; the Ronald who was his mother's darling and his sister's pride—that is now breaking their hearts, and bringing almost to the grave his father's grey hairs, with sorrow?"

Arthur fairly groaned aloud with grief when he pictured to himself the change that had come over the once happy home of the dear old manse and its only son, walking up and down the verandah far into the night, for these painful thoughts had driven all sleep away. He considered what he should do, with God's help, to try and shield his old friend from the many temptations to which, in India, he would now be exposed, and he determined that no effort on his part should be wanting. And then the thought came into his mind, it was indeed a strange thought, that his dear tutor had never asked him to be a friend to his "boy," whom, he must know, would surely need a true one in a strange land, and with so many allurements. What did it mean?

Arthur pressed his aching head, for the thought was a bitter one. He loved his manse friends, oh, how dearly, and would consider no sacrifice too great to help them in any way; but that there was a coldness towards him, he could not fail to see and feel. Was Mr. McKenzie displeased at his trying to win Effie, who loved him? Effie—what was it that he was so far away, had she changed in her feelings towards him? But no, he could not think it was that; there was no mistake in the sweet blue eyes, dimmed with tears, that looked into his. Then what was it? And like a flash of lightning, so quick and sudden did the thought come, Arthur remembered his mother's words, "I will never give my consent to your marriage with that girl!"

"Could she—oh, surely my mother would never be so cruel!" But still clearer and clearer it seemed to come before his mind that it was all his mother's doing; that she had, with her relentless pride and ambition, given Mr. McKenzie to understand his daughter should never be hers.

"O God, forgive me," he cried, "if even in thought I have wrung my mother's heart, but it seems so clear to me now that my darling has got this sorrow to crush her, as well as the other, and then, if this was true, no wonder his high-principled, honourable, God-fearing tutor deplored him, for he felt sure that Effie, who never had a secret from her father and mother, would tell them he had asked her to be his wife. What he had intended saying before his sudden departure from Scotland, but was disappointed in his intention the day he left, by not finding his tutor at home, he, however, had determined to write on his arrival in India, but the cold tone of the manse letters, as regarded Effie, kept him back until a fitting opportunity presented itself. And then he remembered his mother's unexpected absence that day from home.

It seemed to dawn on him now, and fully explained Mr. McKenzie feeling that he could not be relied upon to look after his erring son, for to such a true man as the minister (he thought) would only be a natural one, that no one, not even a mother, should come between him and the pure and first love of the young heart he had sought and won. What was he to do? What a despicable thing it placed him in, for well he knew that his dear, haughty mother was wishing Effie was his wife for him, and now that he was far away he would forget all about her.

The thick beards of perspiration stood out on his forehead, and he clenched his hands in agony. At the very thought. He forgot Effie! Never! never till his throbbing heart ceased its beating. He would do as Mr. McKenzie, and tell him all. But the next moment came the thought of the light in
HIS BONNIE BRIDE.

which he would place his mother by doing so, and "Honour thy father and thy mother," was a command not to be disobeyed. And the cry, "Oh, God, help me, and show me Thee!" was heard by a little dog, and passed his lips, when, looking across the calm, blue waters, he saw the sun rise in all its splendour, dispelling at once the darkness of night; and the blessed words came into his mind, "Do not they know not. I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." And once again looking up to his Saviour and Guide, he felt the peace of God come to his aching brow and troubling heart. Yes, for him and his beloved Effie it would all come right. He said it, and it was impossible for God to lie. And he could patiently wait until the light of Heaven chased earth's dark shadows away, and shone on his own mistaken character, showing Mr. McGregor that his old pupil was not prepared to lead as a guide to sinners, as yet. But he, that his love for her would never change.

Some weeks passed away, and Arthur anxiously looked out for the arrival of Ronald's regiment in Madras. It came at last, and once more the old companions of early days met, but not as formerly; there was a restraint, and both felt it. Yet Arthur resolved there should be nothing on his part to mar their first meeting. His greeting of Ronald, and his warm hand-clasp, was a truly brotherly one, as well, as his cordial invitation to dinner the following day, which Ronald promised, if possible, to accept.

He was changed, and Arthur saw it only too plainly. There was a restless excitability in his manner, and the clouds seemed to rest upon that once open brow; and a shadow had crept into his face, that straightforward, manly gaze of the olden times.

He came the following day, as he had promised, but Arthur's eager inquiries about his home and dear ones met with only a cold response. "Yes, they were all well when I last heard of them," he answered; "I have seen them home lately, being so much occupied with other duties."

"Well, Ronald," said Arthur, "you must get a few days' leave, and give me your company here, for the sake of old times."

"That is," he added, laughing, "if you can put up with an old fogie like me; but we can see if there is anything in the way of tiger-shooting, which will be a novelty for you."

Ronald came, and thoroughly enjoyed his visit. It seemed to Arthur as if he had, in those few days, seen something of the former brightness, and he determined to try and persuade him, whenever practicable, to make his home a hosp.

It must not be supposed that, in trying to show the wrong-doing of idol worship in this household, Arthur slighted those making enemies.

Akbar and the steward, Nizam, were true steel to their master; Nizam had also come out, through Arthur's influence and talks with Akbar, as a Christian; but this only caused a deadly hatred from some of the other servants towards their master, and many were the whispered consultations as to how a stop could be put to the sahib's influencing others amongst them to give up their idoles. One man especially—the cook, Saho—determined, if possible, to end his master's life.

But he was a wily man, and one whom Nizam never trusted. He had noticed, with some alarm, a growing dissatisfaction amongst the servants, and his suspicions were aroused, and also his fears, as he had seen the scowl on their face, and especially on Saho's, when the sahib's name was mentioned. He communicated his anxiety with Akbar, notwithstanding their different positions in the household, the Christian religion having drawn them together, and Akbar fully shared in his fears for the safety of his beloved master.

Arthur only laughed at it all, and would take no precautions against such a position, but taught him to do, thinking it wise that his servants should see he trusted them. But he little knew the dispositions—wily and deceitful—he had to do with.

The two faithful Christians were always on the watch, and for some time all seemed to go on as usual. One night, however, Arthur had arrived earlier than was his custom. He had had an unusual case in the court that day, and the great heat had made him feel languid and tired. Presently he fell into a troubled sleep, and in a dream seemed to see a figure bending over him; but it was not the form of a human being, but of a demon, who entered the room, where he had lain hidden, and with a fiendish look on his wicked face, was bending over him, ready to plague the dagger he held in his hand into Arthur's heart.

But just at this moment, with a terrific cry which awoke him, Akbar sprang into the room, and seizing the wretch by the throat, thus saved his dear master's life, almost, however, at the expense of his own, for the dagger which was intended for Arthur was buried in the faithful Akbar's arm, and the pain, which compelled him, amidst the excitement and confusion, to relax his hold, enabled Saho to escape.

For many weeks Ronald nursed his faithful servant. Fever had set in, and the poor fellow hovered between life and death, but Arthur, assisted by Nizam, in no way ceasing in his constant watching and care. He felt he could not do too much for one who would have given his life to save his; and the tie between the high-born sahib and the humble native was one which time could never sever.

Nothing could be heard of the whereabouts of the wretch, Saho. Arthur would certainly have brought him to justice, not altogether on his own account, but for the sake of his two faithful servants, whose lives, as well as his own, he felt were not safe whilst the man was at liberty.

His escape had not surprised Arthur, and from what he had transpired he feared there were others who shared his revengeful feelings, and also helped his escape.

Moreover, however, he was not surprised, knowing the way no one would have suspected that in this peaceful, well-regulated household such a tragedy had so nearly been enacted.

Ronald had not put an appearance for some weeks, and Arthur was beginning to wonder at his continued absence, when a note came from the colonel of his regiment (who had been an old friend of Sir Montague), inviting the other officers in inviting him to an entertainment given by them, and to which his friends, Colonel and Miss Leslie, were also invited.

It was a very brilliant affair. The large hall taken for the occasion was decorated with the grand old flags, time-honoured and bravely won by the gallant men of that fine regiment; the exquisite plants and waxen lights; the splendid table, shaded by the rich draperies, were enlivened with the lovely flowers, cool and pleasant; the splendid band of the regiment, even amidst that gay scene, bringing tears to the eyes of many, as the well-remembered airs of their "own country" were now and again so beautifully rendered. The colonel.

Colonel McGregor welcomed Arthur most warmly. He was a splendid specimen of a Scottish soldier, firm and unshaking, whose duty reigned, but with a heart gentle and kind as a woman's where kindness was needed and desired.

He was accompanied to India by his two daughters, Sybil and Florence, lovely girls of eighteen and twenty.

Their mother had died soon after the birth of the youngest, and their father had devoted all his spare time to his children and to Saho in particular. He had been with him, and his greatest solace and comfort in the heart-sorrow of his life.

Sweet and bonnie they looked in their white silk dresses, adorned with soft folds of lace and bunches of white heather

The colonel might well feel proud of his beautiful daughters as he introduced them to the son of an old friend.

Just then an acquaintance came up, who claimed Florence, and Arthur and Sybil sat down to have a chat together.

"It seems so nice to meet with a friend from dear old Scotland, Mr. Hetherington," she said. "Do you know, we were at your home just before we left? Lady Hetherington kindly asked us to stay a few days; she said we should probably meet you, as the regiment was ordered to Madras."

"It is a most unexpected and very great pleasure to me, Miss McGregor," said Arthur, "and one that, some
weeks ago, I could not have anticipated; and now I am sure you will pardon me if I ask after my father and mother, and how you thought they were looking.

"I should be only too pleased, so ask me as many questions as you like," Mr. Hetherington said, looking up with such a winning smile, that Arthur felt he really wished to give him pleasure.

"Well, in the first place, your house was looking just splendid. Oh, it is such a lovely place. Your father took us through the exquisite conservatories, and then to the lake, and into the deer park. Mr. Hetherington, how could you bring yourself to leave it all, and come to this climate, where one never seems to get cool? But you asked me about Sir Montagu and Lady Hetherington. Well, I do not wonder, for they always seemed to be talking and thinking of you. Your father looked very well, but your mother was complaining of not being strong."

"Thank you, Miss McGregor; your description of my dear home brings all so plainly before me, I would be ashamed to tell you how I long sometimes for a breeze from the purple hills. I am sorry to hear my mother is not reekirk, which Sybil does not mention anything about her health when she writes to me."

"Oh, then, please, Mr. Hetherington, do not say I spoke of it, for she might not be pleased."

"I shall say nothing about it; and thank you again so much. I was going to say you were the first friend I have heard said kindness coming here, but I was forgetting Ronald McKenzie. You know him perhaps, or at least you are aware he is in the regiment?"

"I know him slightly," Sybil answered, and Arthur's quick eye detected the pretty cheeks taking a deeper hue. Ronald came up as they were speaking. He certainly was a splendid-looking fellow. Mr. Hetherington thought, dressed in the handsome uniform of his Scottish regiment, which set off his fine figure to such advantage.

"Hullo, Arthur, old fellow!" he said, "have you and Miss McGregor lost yourselves amongst the banks and braes, not of bonnie Doon, but of Hetherington? I hope not, Mr. McKenzie, you are content to escape from the Scotch mists for one evening, and not let all this splendid music go for nothing?" Then giving his arm to Sybil, he led her away.

Arthur, left to himself, strolled out on the verandah. The air was cool, and the sybil of his mother's health set him thinking very deeply, and confirmed him more than ever in his opinion that his surmise was right. He was lost in thought when Colonel McGregor joined him.

"I am glad to find you here, Mr. Hetherington," he said. "Perhaps, like myself, you are not much given to the sybil of song with the broken harps. The lighted room they had just left. The fact is, I wish to have an eye on the young fellows, and take an interest in their amusements as far as I can, and try to fill a pleasant place to those bereft of them—for a time, at least."

"It does you honour, Colonel McGregor," said Arthur, "to have such a kindly feeling towards those so far removed from the sacred influence of home. Many a father and mother will, I am sure, feel deeply grateful for the interest shown in their children, even if I know one, at least, whom I am sure would feel so."

"I think I understand to whom you refer," said the colonel. "Do you mean the father of Lieutenant McKenzie?"

"The same," said Arthur. "He is the minister of our old kirk at home, and my revered and beloved tutor. I am deeply grieved to hear how he has given cause for anxiety to such a father and mother. Few young men have had greater advantages than his, Colonel McGregor, in an unaccustomed land and country, and as his parents were poor and upright lives: they can truly say to their children, with the apostle of old, 'Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.'"

"Well," said the colonel, "it makes the young fellow's condition all the greater, taking a wrong course when he should have been so much better touched by his poor father's grief when he found out that his son's conduct was not what it ought to have been. He has good qualities, but, like many others, is easily led."

"However, Mr. Hetherington, we must not abate ourselves from our friends, who, I think, are about going to supper."

This was indeed the case, and Arthur was just in time to have a last look at Sybil.

"Why, papa," she said, "where have you and Mr. Hetherington been this long time? Mr. McKenzie and I have been looking for you everywhere."

How very lovely she looked, with her heightened colour and sparkling eyes. At the mention of Ronald's name Mr. Hetherington gave her a shade of displeasure pass over his fair face.

"Well, dear, here we are not, lost, as you see. Mr. Hetherington has been enjoying the cool air of the verandah, and I joined him. Ah, Mrs. Leslie, just in time to take you in to supper."

The brilliant room was soon deserted, and not long after, Arthur and his friends took their leave, but not without arranging a pic-nic for the following week.

Picnics in India do not depend so much on the weather as in our more variable climate. It is so often the case we look forward, after all our troublesome preparations are made, to what becomes of them. Most of the numerous articles required to make her guests feel as comfortable sitting on the grass, as if they were at her hospitable table—and lo! when the expected morning arrives, the morning anticipated with such pleasure, it is perhaps a downpour of rain. But after meals in India, there is usually a certain, sense of the sunshiny, and also the heat, which, unfortunately, is ever the same, as most English people, accustomed to it, fully realise.

Arthur and his friends, Colonel McGregor, his daughter, the Leslie's, and some of the officers, including Ronald, were to ride in the afternoons, to some miles distant. Fortunately the rain had been an idiole temple, consequently it proved to be rather an object of interest to strangers. The servants, under Nissen, had been sent out on some hours before, so as to have all in readiness for the party, on their arrival.

Sybil and Florrie thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of all they saw, and how pretty indeed they looked on horse-back, Florrie with her dark hair and eyes, lovely rich colour; and Sybil with her golden hair, and a complexion that rivalled the peach in its soft beauty; their pretty riding habits and collar less setting off to perfection the beautiful girls. The Colonel had himself superintended their riding lessons. He knew they would accompany him to India, and in consequence wished them to become perfect riders, which indeed they were.

But after meals in India, the party spent their time in a variety of amusements, having, as arranged, met at Arthur's house. Sybil and Florrie were greatly interested and amused with the different oriental costumes which met them on all sides; also the bazaars with their varied occupants, Mohammedans, Parsees, Hindus, and even Chinese fritters and the luxuriously carriages of the wealthy resamplings mingled with the humble bullock carts of the poorer people.

But they were soon out of the busy streets, and into the quiet country. Before leaving Scotland, Florrie McGregor had been engaged to an officer who was one of the party. But, at parting, as you might expect, "old but ever new," was again true in their case. They were all alike to each other, and a handsome couple they made, for the major was a fine military-looking man, and in every way suited to the lovely girl who now rode at his side. Such a colleague as Arthur might have made a fine conversation, and once more it turned upon Hetherington. As they reined in their horses to walking pace, Sybil said, looking up at Arthur with a winning smile that always appeared to light up her sweet face with fresh beauty.

"Mr. Hetherington, I shoold think you would enjoy a breeze from your heather hills to-day?"

"Don't tempt me with the thought of them, Miss McGregor. If you only knew how dear, even in memory, those hills are to me, you would wonder how I am, with all the other, and I cease to be touched by his poor father's grief when he found out that his son's conduct was not what it ought to have been. He has good qualities, but, like many others, is easily led."

"Yes, I have heard of the rambles, as boys, you and Mr. McKenzie used to have together," and again as she mentioned Ronald's name the pretty colour on her cheek took a deeper hue, and his sister also. Oh, she is such
a lovely girl. We met her with her brother one day, and he introduced her to us; but you must have seen her, she lives so near your beautiful home.

"Yes, she has a lovely mind as in appearance." But the subject was getting too painful for Arthur, and he changed it, to point out to his companion the exquisite forms that were growing in wild profusion along the road, and the flowers, too.

"What are the flowers! Did you ever see anything so beautiful?" exclaimed Sybil, to whom the floral beauties of India were still unfamiliar. They were now nearing their destination, the old ruin, but just as they came in sight of it their attention was drawn to a most miserable-looking object, sitting on the steps. The sight of it gave Saho a shock of horror, as if he were looking at某种 idol shrine, perhaps miles away. He stood up and salaamed very low as Arthur and Sybil passed, holding out his thin hand for money.

"What a shocking-looking creature! Oh, Mr. Hetherington, a poor man, we must give him something to buy food." Arthur took out his purse, and while putting the money into the man's hand, looked fixedly at him. Something in the beggar's face struck him as being strangely familiar, but he could not think how or where he had seen his figure before. He made his way determinedly towards the ruin, closely surrounded by the crowd, and as the last of them left, the beggar slowly crept up to Arthur and Sybil, and remained with them until the last of the crowd had disappeared. Arthur was unable to see him properly, and after all, he thought, it must only be imagination on his part, for he might have been mistaken.

In the quiet of the old length the party arrived at the ruin, greatly delighted with their ride, which proved such a novelty to those who had recently arrived in India. The servants led away the horses for a much-needed rest; and Arthur, a most genial and kindly host, conducted his friends to the ancient temple, which he had arranged, and which was thoroughly enjoyed by the guests after their long and most delightful ride.

They were seated under the shadow of a large tree, whose magnificence foliage was much admired. It partly covered the old temple, and overshadowed its marble pillars, which lay broken on the ground; but the steps leading to the interior remained quite perfect.

"We must explore this old ruin," said Colonel Leslie. "What a ‘haunting-place’ it would have been for poor rackingly the ruins of this terrible place, as the hour of the day drew on. We knew that it must be shut up to hot their feet, and the weary people. On looking closely and pitifully at the poor creatures, who should they turn out to be but up friendly, who had, in this forlorn condition, travelled for miles, and their hair-breadth escapes were perfectly miraculous. They were a Captain and Mrs. Howard, with their two little sons, and a faithful ayah who had always attended them. Their nurse was, whose character and services, as the result of crossing a river. What with the burning sun in the daytime, and the damp grass as their only couch at night, what their sufferings must have been can scarcely be imagined, especially to the tender-hearted lady and her little children. One of the boys bore his point of view in Calcutta, and poor Mrs. Howard was an invalid for years, notwithstanding all was done, on their arrival, that loving hearts and hands could devise.

Captain Howard, in speaking with him afterwards of that truly awful journey, said, "I feel sure that if it were, it was nothing in comparison to my mental sufferings, never knowing the moment my loved ones might be taken and tormented before my eyes.'

The most awful journey, when death seemed continually to stare them in the face, was only a prelude. For God would mercifully spare their lives, they would consecrate them ever afterwards to his service.

The boy, who was so wonderfully preserved in all the dangers they passed through, is now one of India’s most hard-working missionaries.

"Now, papa, dear," said Flora, "let us go and examine this old ruin." Howard was willing, and for not wishing the conversation prolonged. Her mother was the daughter of Captain Howard’s brother, and Sybil and Flora knew when their dear father’s thoughts travelled in that direction it always made him feel sad.

As they entered the court, Flora exclaimed, "I wish we could see if there is anything worth our curiosity in this queer, wearisome-looking old place. It looks to me very much as if it was the abode of jackals and tigers.'

All went off to examine the ruin, and found it indeed to be a relic of an ancient place. The steps and colossal pillars, some of which, as mentioned before, were broken off and lying on the ground; and the interior also presented evidence of former magnificence.

The servants were engaged in collecting the broken stones, and Saho, who had heard that he had heard a stealthy footstep behind him, and hastily looked round, was just in time to see the form of the beggar glide past one of the pillars. He now felt his suspicions confirmed that it was the man Saho, bent on doing him harm; for he had heard a Hindoo would kill his own father if he thought by so doing he could appease the anger of his idol, which anger this man believed Arthur had kindled by persuading Nizam and Akbar to become Christians, and give up the idol worship.

This now came to Arthur's mind, and he believed whilst Saho was at liberty his life was not safe—indeed, much more than that, not worth more than a moment's purchase. Whilst the others were engaged in examining the ruin, Arthur took the opportunity of going back to tell Nizam what he had seen, and his suspicions concerning Saho. Arthur’s character and ideas of the native's character were, and agreed with his master that Saho's intentions were deadly towards him. All he could do was to trust in the great God to protect his beloved master from harm.

The party now returned, and prepared for the ride home. The servants brought round the horses, but just as Arthur had mounted, a bullet grazed his hat. A thrill of horror ran through the party, as had it been a hair's-breadth closer he would have been killed on the spot.

"Let us go," said the officers, who gathered round him, at the scene from whence the report seemed to have come, and they were not a moment too soon, for the watch had reloaded for another attempt. It was indeed Saho, who had hidden behind one of the pillars. He was soon captured, and with deeply thankful hearts Arthur and his friends rode home, while the wretched Saho, guarded by the servants and one of the officers, who volunteered to watch him lest he should try to escape, with his hands tied behind him, was marched to a place of safety, and in a few days sentenced to the heavy punishment he so richly deserved.

Months passed over, and the usual routine of life in India went on. Arthur was rapidly rising in his profession, and many said the brilliant young barrister would be a judge ere many more years passed over his head. His narrow escape from a sudden and violent death in the very prime of life made him more than ever deter-

His Bonnie Bride
BONNIE loved, devoted, to her Divine Master. He held a class in his own house, where many a young convert came to decide for Christ, and to find a deep interest in the young men belonging to the Parsee community. He found them so refined and intelligent, and their worship of the sun made it easier to point them to the Creator of that glorious orb, and then to the One who is the Sun of Righteousness; and by the power of the Gospel, they were enabled to see that light, they worshipped him with joy unspoken and full of glory; and then, instead of seeing and worshiping, as hitherto, only the natural sun, these Parsees could now lift their eyes by faith to that glorious city, where the crucified Lamb, which was slain for them, was the light thereof.

One evening, after Arthur had dismissed his class, he was sitting on the veranda alone; when he saw Ronald McKenzie walking at a rapid pace towards the house. He had frequently written to Ronald, inviting him to come and see him, but he never came, always making some excuse. For the sake of the dear ones at home, Arthur never ceased to pray that the Lord would bring him to true repentance, and then he knew a consistent life would be sure to follow.

"Well, Ronald, old man," said he, "I am really glad to see you. I was beginning to think our old acquaintance had been forgotten."

"Arthur," he said, "I am in a terrible fix, and only you, as a lawyer and kind old friend, can extricate me."

He was very much excited, and as his friend put his hand soothingly on his arm, and asked him in his kindly way whether he could help him, although he was, Arthur felt how his arm trembled, and the drops of perspiration stood thickly on his forehead.

"It is a charge, Arthur," he said, "that I fear will be brought against me, and as I stand before Heaven, I am guiltless, yes, guililess; I say it from the bottom of my heart.

"What is the matter," said Arthur, getting really anxious, when he saw the agitated state he was in.

"Well, it is this. I am ashamed to say I was not quite myself—you will understand. Unfortunately, I had been tempted to take too much wine, and an alternation ensued between me and Lieutenant Everitt, to whom I owe money for gambling debts. He had that day lost notes for one hundred pounds, which, in his hot temper (for he is very passionate), he accused me of taking. Stung with rage at such a false and mean accusation, I struck him. But the judge, who notes were found on my dressing-table, and, God help me! I have no witness to prove my innocence," and the poor fellow groaned in his agony. "This will kill my father, and break my mother's heart, Arthur. For years past I have been unable to discharge to these dear ones at home, and you know what that was; but they forgave me, and I promised to reform, and this is the way my promise has ended."

"Ah, yes, Ronald, but I fear the promise was made in your own strength, which was not the most needed. But I must see what can be done now to get you out of this scrape."

"I have only this to say, Arthur—before God, as I stand in His sight, not worthy to take His Name on these lips upon my tongue, yet I am certain, that I did, and he is in such a rage, and says he will have me arrested on the charge, and will, I believe, leave no stone unturned to ruin me."

Just as he had finished speaking, two policemen came up; and poor Ronald was in the arms of the law on the charge named.

"I will see you in the morning, and have a solicitor engaged," said Arthur, to the poor fellow, as he left with a sad heart.

Arthur was as good as his word. A solicitor of well-known ability was engaged for Ronald, whose trial was to come on in a few days; and with much sorrow for the grief of the loved ones at the stricken man's home, he prepared to defend the friend and playmate of his boyhood. He was convinced of Ronald's innocence. With all his faults—and they were only too numerous—Arthur felt he would never stoop to an action so unbecoming a gentleman. But Everitt was unhinging in his opinion. Ronald had lost money at the gambling table, and his fear that Colonel McGregor would hear that the promise he had given to John had been broken, would make him resort to any means, fair or foul, to extricate himself.

Arthur's interview with Colonel McGregor was a very distressing one.

"Tenderly, deeply, grieved, for the lad," he said, "and also for his friends at home; but, Mr. Hetherington, an example must be made for the sake of others, and if Mr. McKenzie is found guilty, the punishment will necessarily be a severe one. If he can be cleared of the serious charge brought against him, no one will reject reverse.

"Of that I feel sure, Colonel McGregor, and God grant all may yet be made plain," said Arthur, as they parted.

Just as he was leaving the house he met Sybil. How cheerfully she looked! The pretty cheeks had lost their colour, and her eyes filled with tears as she looked up at him and whispered: "You will do your best, will you not, Mr. Hetherington?"

"You may trust me, Miss McGregor," said her kind friend, as he shook hands with the poor girl, and left the house with a heavy heart.

That some person, from revenge, had done this cruel act towards Ronald, Arthur never doubted; but all the ingenuity that had been set at work had failed to discover who it was; and the session was fixed for the following morning, and Arthur's defence had been carefully prepared, but the clever and brilliant young advocate, whose reputation had spread far and near, and who, up to the present, had never been defeated, found this was not the case. Mr. McKenzie was found engaged. He was convinced of Ronald's innocence, but there was not a single witness to bring forward on his behalf, and Arthur Hetherington's heart ached for the poor fellow.

On his knees that night, and until the first streak of day shed its pale light over the starry sky, did the young advocate plead with the wonderful Counsellor for words to speak and wisdom to guide this case, that touched his own heart so sorely, not only for Ronald's sake, but for the heart-broken ones at home. Earnestly he implored that the eye which neither stubbers nor sleep would discover the guilty one, and right the innocent, ere the trial ended.

The court was crowded. Arthur could scarcely trust himself to look at the prisoner, for such, alas! was the only term that would express his wild passion. He walked about the court and around and erect, though deep lines of mental suffering were on that once cloudless brow. He pleaded "Not guilty," in a tone that went far to convince many a one listening that in that plea there was a ring of truth.

Mr. McGregor, the great lawyer, who Mr. McKenzie was in great need of money; gambling debts had plunged him into pecuniary difficulties which he was unable to meet. The notes for one hundred pounds were found secreted on his dressing-table, and that was the exact sum Mr. Everitt had in his possession, and lost. The evidence against the prisoner was circumstantial, but could not possibly be stronger. Mr. Everitt's counsel saw but one course open, painless as that must be, which was to punish the offender in such a way that others might be deterred from committing a similar offence.

And now amidst breathless silence, Mr. Hetherington arose.

"The case," he said, "was a vastly painful one, particularly as the prisoner was a gentleman and an officer, a man of refinement and education, and before whom a military career of great promise was just beginning to open; but a black shadow had now been cruelly cast over his bright and hopeful future." He (Mr. Hetherington) believed he could truthfully and fearlessly say, in the words of the "Great Book," an enemy hath he in this.

For would it be the interest of Mr. McKenzie's life had always been a blameless one, although in some respects he had erred, he felt perfectly certain of one thing, and it was this—that every feeling of Roland McKenzie's manhood would revolve from the love, mean, and dishonest act with which he had broken his vow that day. The want of money was given as a reason why the prisoner before them should so far forget his
position in the honourable profession to which he belonged; but he well knew friends of position and means were not wanting to rescue him from his embarrassed circumstances, and that they would not fail to the ground.

"Gentlemen, I have now witnessed in this case, I stand here alone to defend the friend of my childhood. We were boys together, brought up almost as brothers, and the grief it gives me to see Ronald McKenzie standing in his present position is more than words can express. The evidence I own, although entirely circumstantial, is strong against him; but no one is here to come forward and prove that those notes. There is but one alone Who knows the hearts of all men, and to Him I appeal to clear the innocent. The lawyer, the prisoner for whom I plead is the only son of parents far away in their Scottish home—parents whose hearts are breaking at the thoughts of this day; for their sake I implore you to give your boy the benefit of this one fact, that no eye saw him do it, and restore him to his home, and treat him as you would your own son.

Many a heart was full as Mr. Hetherington concluded, and earnest hopes were whispered through the crowded court that the fine young fellow, who stood with arms folded and lips compressed, the flush of deep feeling filling his brow, might yet be cleared of this serious charge.

But there was one heart, not far away, that day, whose only feeling was one of deep hatred and malignant revenge, and pleasure, that, at last, the young others would be realized. The judge, who, as the court knew, was an old friend of Ronald, for disobedience to orders, had brought under a senior officer's notice for punishment, some weeks before; and the cruel revenge the miscreant took was, stealing the notes from his master, and putting them where they were afterwards discovered, on Ronald's dressing-table.

The morning of the trial this man was out, exercising his master's horse, a high-spirited animal, in trying to manage which Brown lost his own ungovernable temper, the horse reared, and he was thrown heavily to the ground, where, some time after, he was found lying unconscious, and carried to the hospital. Upon examination the doctor found he had been severely injured, and had not many hours to live. Before his death he regained consciousness, and to Ronald, who was present, he thanked him for his kindness, and apologized for his wicked deed, and although his strength was fast failing, he was able to sign the paper that made Ronald a free man.

Just as Mr. Hetherington had finished speaking, a paper was handed to the officer, who, after reading it over for some minutes, prevented him reading aloud, but when he did so, loud applause (instantly hushed, however) showed the heartfelt pleasure with which Ronald's innocence was greeted.

Colonel McGregor's face fairly beamed with satisfaction as he wrung the young officer's hand; but words fail to describe the joy and thankfulness that filled the hearts of the two friends as together, amidst congratulations on all sides, they left the court to take home the joyful news.

Now that the terrible strain of anxiety was over, joy knew no bounds. The good news was down and passed from week to week by a low, lingering fever. Night after night Arthur sat beside him, watching and tending him as his mother would have done, listening to his delicious wanderings, as he again fancied himself a boy, roving with Elsie over the heather hills, or, more touching still, pleading with his father to forgive and receive him back once more into the dear old manse home.

Arthur's heart ached for the poor fellow, and more than we can tell found its way down his cheek, as the happy days, now gone beyond recall, were so sadly brought before his eyes.

But God answered prayer again on Ronald's behalf, and he slowly struggled back to health. The days that followed were blessed days; it was indeed the goodness of God that led Ronald McKenzie to repentance. What tears and pleading of loved ones at home, had failed to do, God's goodness in saving him from temporal ruin just at the last moment, and now raising him from what might have been his death-bed, led him to think deeply and seriously of how he had grieved such a loving Heavenly Father, Who had interfered so mercifully on his behalf. With a heart full of love, he saw, by the Holy Spirit's power, the eternal ruin that day before him, and with awful reality the sins of his past life rose up to confront him, that verse seemed to thunders in his ears, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." He had not only sinned with a high hand against Heaven and before God, but he had resisted his father's pleadings; and his mother's tears; he had deliberately refused to listen to the loving, gentle voice of his insulted Lord and Master, saying, "My son, give Me thine heart." No, he chose the service of Satan in preference, and gave his heart to his service, yes, and gloried in doing it. And now what remained for him but a fearful looking for judgment and never-ending remorse?

Ronald groaned in his agony, No hope for him! no hope! He had turned a deep ear to the entreaties of that loving Saviour, and now He would justly leave him to perish.

Arthur entered the room one day, and heard those heart-broken words. "Oh, Ronald," he said, "it is all true, and you are more deeply than we are even aware of; for one single thing, we were wrong, or, did, contrary to God's law, is enough, in His sight, to banish us from His presence for ever, even were it possible that our lives, with that single exception, were blameless. So, looked at in this light, at any standpoint, we see how utterly impossible it is for us to stand for one moment before Jehovah's awful throne; but thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift to this fallen, sinful world, yes, even His own beloved Son. Ronald, do you not see Him on the cross, dying for you? Is the Father's face not turned from Him because He was covered with your sins? Hear His bitter cry, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' And why? Because, as the hymn so beautifully and yet so touching says, "Jehovah lifted up His rod. O Christ, it fell on Thee; Thou wast sore stricken of Thy God. There's not one stroke for me. Thy tears, Thy blood beneath it lowered, Thy bruising healeth me.'"

"Not one stroke for me? Oh, Arthur, is it possible? He bore it all for me! Is that true? Put in your name, and read that beautiful verse in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah—this way. He was wounded for Ronald McKenzie's transgressions; He was bruised for Ronald McKenzie's iniquities, and with His stripes Ronald McKenzie is healed. No, Arthur, no! I have so often heard in your home, long ago, at your mother's knee, "of Jesus and His love." Take Him now. He is standing in this room, holding out His arms to you, and saying, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.""

Arthur quietly left the room, feeling a seeking Saviour and a contrite sinner were better left alone. Some hours after he returned, but, oh, what a change! The peace of God that passeth all understanding was in Ronald's face.

"Yes, Arthur," he said, "I have come, the great transaction is done. I am my Lord's, and He in mine; those scarlet sins have been washed away in His precious blood. He has covered me with His robe of righteousness, and from this day forth I shall be used for Him. Brothers in the trust, and highest sense of the word were the two friends now, and the letter that was written home that night to the old Scottish manse told the loved ones there that their wandering boy had indeed "come home.'"

And now for a little time we leave our friends in India, Ronald, when health returned, to go back to his regiment, and by his life witness for the beloved Captain of his salvation. Many wondered at the change, others scoffed and mocked, but the young soldier of the cross, kept by the power of His Divine Lord, held on firmly and bravely through it all.

And Arthur, what of him? He sits, a judge, in the
court where he so often pleaded, and seldom did an appointment give more general satisfaction.

It was a glorious April day; the little spring flowers were peeping forth in all their innocent beauty, perforating the old moss garden with their sweet breaths. The birds, sitting from tree to tree, praised their Maker in joyful gladness with their innocent carols; while the bright, warm sunshine was gladdening all around, and sending its soft rays into the pretty drawing-room of the manse, into which we have entered many a time before.

Resting in a large easy-chair at the open window, inhaling the sweetness of the flowers so fresh and pure from God's own hand, and with her pale cheeks fanned by the refreshing breeze of that lovely April day, sits Effie McKenzie. But oh, not the bonnie Effie we know in the days gone by, with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes. A very fair but fragile girl we see now before us, with a dreamy, far-away look in those languid blue eyes, and patient lines about them as they moving lips. It is the same cloudless brow, but upon it rests a look of suffering that, to a bright young life, should be unknown.

As we glance at the sweet, sad face, that ever through clouds, dark, and drear, was the sunbeam of her beloved home, we wonder whose was the cruel hand that inflicted a blow from which her refined but sensitive nature had not strength to rally. Patently she has endured when none but her Father in Heaven knew how she suffered.

The glad and thankful news about Ronald was like the first dawn of day in that home, dispelling the dark cloud of trouble that had overshadowed it for many a long, weary month. Oh, the praise and thanksgiving rose from the grateful hearts of father, mother, and sister as they received Ronald's letter of penitence and contrition, claiming forgiveness of the father and mother whom he had so deeply grieved, as God had forgiven him, and washed away all his sins, for the sake of His blessed Son.

Need we say, in the loving letter that was written back, how fully and freely that forgiveness was granted. And as we watch Effie's sweet face we see the smile that lights it up with gratitude to her loving Lord, as she thinks of that letter from over the sea, with its earnest breathing of a renewed and consecrated life. Then, as her thoughts go back to all Arthur has been to her dearly loved brother, she prays that God would richly bless and reward him in his future life, though she may not see it, for Effie feels her strength is failing; but to her parents she would not speak on the subject. Ah, they knew only too well their darling was fading before their eyes.

"There was a blight in the rosebud lying, And a cloud in their sunny sky."
"And why, then, do you not seem to believe it is still unchanged?" said the baronet.

Mr. Mc Kenzie paused. "Sir Montagu," he said, "in a voice that trembled with emotion, "you deserve my confidence. I will tell you the truth. A broken heart is the cause of my precious child slowly fading before your eyes. Your son (forgive me for inflicting this cruel pain, in speaking of one who has shown more than a brother's love to our boy, but since you ask, I am compelled to go on). Arthur Hetherington, from whom I have loved scarcely less than from my infancy, is he who has asked for and won the first love of her pure young heart, and well he knew it. I added the minister, in a sterner tone, "for he asked Effie to become his wife, but afterwards joined with his mother in deciding she was not of a disposition capable ever to share his name and princely estate. Lady Hetherington came here and told me my precious child their occasion, and further, that Arthur never meant what he said in asking Effie to become his bride. This cruel treatment by one who, as I said before, had asked for and obtained the young heart's first pure and trusting love, to throw it away as a worthless thing, is your only son, Sir Montagu. I add no more except, may God forgive him. Yes, I am enabled to say this from my own heart. That battle has long ago been fought and won on my knees. Humbly and sincerely I say to God, Who gave us the victory over sin and self through Christ Jesus; and should He take the light of our eyes and the sunshine from our homes, her mother and I can still trust Him to enable us to say: "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth best for us.""

Sir Montagu rose, his honest, manly face crimson with indignation.

"My old friend," he said, "laying his hand kindly but firmly on Mr. Mc Kenzie's shoulder, "there has been some grievous mistake made, as I see. You are much wronged as Effie, I never doubt. You may rely upon me to relieve this matter to its very foundation, and I can truly tell you that if Arthur Hetherington is guilty of winning Effie Mc Kenzie's love to throw it to the winds, the noble name of God's man shall be exalted, who once said, "if you esteem me being too loth to connect yourselves with your only daughter, shall pass into a stranger's hands for ever. No son of mine shall suffer them with a dishonoured name."

Lady Hetherington was seated in her splendid drawing-room. She still wore, as of old, her imperious, haughty expression, but underneath it there was an unhappy, dissatisfied look.

She laid down the last fashionable novel she had been listlessly looking over, as Sir Montagu entered, but something in his face and manner had lent determination added to keen displeasure. That was extremely angry was plain to be seen.

"Alice," he said, "in a tone of voice that made her start, so unlike his usual mellow and kindly way of speaking. "I have heard of a matter to-day in which Arthur is deeply concerned, and in which, if I find he has acted the dishonourable part that has been represented to me, I shall take immediate steps to dismiss him for ever, either as my son, or the heir of Hetherington Castle."

"And so you want me," said her ladyship, turning pallid with fear. "What is this fearful thing you accuse Arthur of doing?"

"Upon your perfectly truthful answer, Alice, depends your son's whole future. I accuse him, as I say, of breaking the heart of Effie Mc Kenzie, and of hiding her true love to bring it from her, giving her to understand his earnest, truthful words were only so many hollow lies, and then leaving her heart-striken, to fade day after day—she the only daughter of our beloved pastor and faithful friend—while Arthur seeks a bride in a far-off land, and so scorns—"

I interrupted him before—shall be dismissed by me at once, and for ever, if I find he has acted in this way; and it is to you I now look for an explanation of this most heinous conduct."

Truly Lady Hetherington's sin of pride had found her out. If she denied all about her interview with Effie, then her only son was an Outcast for ever. That thought was too terrible to entertain for a moment; and on the other hand, if she acknowledged her fault, what a despicable light she was placed in before them all.

"Alice, I am waiting. Everything depends upon your explanation of this business," said her husband.

"Montagu," she said with a great effort, "don't blame dear Arthur. Let all your anger fall upon me, for he never knew, he never knew, that I told Effie he never, in her lowly position, could be the wife of our son."

"You will soon have her life to answer for, Alice, but there is the one separation you can make to her and her parents, and only one, and that is, to give your consent at once to their marriage, which I have to propose, in justice, that you have not been of much help to, to Arthur's marriage with Effie Mc Kenzie, and I pray that the God whom she loves and serves may take the pride and ambition out of your heart for ever.

You have cruelly wronged your own child, making him apprise a dishonourable heap of one who has never been truthfulness and sincerity itself, and above all in so terribly wounding Effie. You have offended one of God's little ones, and your Bible will tell you, if you look for it, what God says upon that subject. For myself, I have not much to say, except that my confidence and trust in you have been sadly misplaced."

Sir Montagu left the room to write a full explanation to Arthur, earnestly requesting him to return home at once for Effie's sake."

And now, dear reader, we ask you, on a bright September morning, when the leaves have put on their Autumn tints of crimson and gold, and the scarlet poppies are making the fields of waving wheat and corn look even more brilliant in the sunshine of that glorious day, to take once more, and for the last time, a peep into the drawing-room of the dear old house.

How pretty it looks, and how sweet with the perfume of lovely flowers sent from the castle garden, for Hetherington cannot do too much in honour of that happy day, that witnessed the marriage of the future Lord of Hetherington with the dear daughter of the old manse house.

The warm sunshine streams into the room, and its bright beams fall on the silvery locks of the venerable minister, and the little company assembled there.

God bless you all, and may your days be filled with the brightness of the bonnie bride, looking so sweet in her simple white robe, contrasting all the more with the golden ornaments of rare Indian beauty and workmanship—the gift of the bridegroom, who looks none the less handsome for the bronze hue with which his oriental life has tinged him.

Now, as the words are spoken that bind the two loving hearts together, never to part until God Himself loosens the tie, the bells ring out their joyous peal, and stately Highlanders—old retainers of Hetherington—with their pipes, strike up the lively strain as Sir Montagu, with carriage and prancing horses, with their white favours, wait impatiently to carry the young laird and his beautiful bride to the castle, where a sumptuous dîner and many guests await them.

And now they come, looking so beautifully happy, as the white and purple Heather from their beloved hills is strewn by loving hands beneath their feet.

"Effie, my precious one, none can part us now," said Arthur, as he took the trembling little hand in his own north, Arthur Hetherington, one good wish having been in both. "It is worth all we have gone through and suffered to know He has done it."

"And so you are quite content, my darling, to come back to India with me for a few short years, and then, please God, return to dear old Hetherington, never to leave again."

In answer, Effie's look of perfect content and radiant happiness was enough. Surely the village was en fête that wedding day."

Arch after arch was passed through with flags of welcome, and heart-felt wishes for the future prosperity and happiness of the young lord and his bonnie bride; and then the gathering of tenants in the beautiful grounds of the castle, the bonfires and tar-barrel, that lit up the old hills for miles around, all testified to the love and affection in which Arthur and Effie were held.
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My mother was leaning back in a chair, her face pale as death; her look frightened me, and I—

[See story, "My Father's Wife." Ready on Friday next.]

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PROLOGUE.

The door of a London prison swung back, and a man stepped out. It was a bright, clear, crisp, sunny morning, and the delicious sense of freedom, as the ex-prisoner moved further and further from the dark, gloomy place where he had been spending some months, held him at first speechless, then from his lips there burst the cry:

"Free! free! free! Freed with a double freedom!"

He did not pause, but with a dozen varying emotions moving within him, hurried on. His clothing—that which he had been wearing when he was arrested—was none of the best, and full of hideous creasing from being carelessly folded and packed so long. It all hung loosely upon him, for he had grown thin on prison fare.

He had just one shilling in his pocket, for he had refused to accept money that had been offered to him when leaving the prison.

Presently he passed into a busier part of London. Mid-day came, but he felt no pang of hunger, or, if he did, he made no effort to appease it. He passed cook-shops, coffee-houses, and eating-houses in abundance, but entered none of them, yet he had his hand on the shilling in his pocket all the time.

At last he paused before a shop window that was filled with books. On the facia above the window he read the words, "Bible Depot." He passed into the shop, and when he came out the shilling had been left inside, but wrapped in a piece of paper in the inside pocket of his jacket was a Bible.

Making his way rapidly from the busy thoroughfares, he presently dived into a nest of back-streets in the East End. From one of these slums he passed into a narrow, squalid...
A SUNDAY EVENING VISITOR.

My father's wife.

My heart throbs and my hand actually shakes as I write the above words, and the memory of the half buried phase of his life which, as a daughter, I have walked in traversed back to me full and vivid, even though long months have gone by since the scenes I am about to relate were enacted.

My father was not a rich man, though the position he held in the firm in which he had been employed before his marriage was a good one, and his income was sufficiently large to keep a comfortable home and a most respectable appearance in the town in which we resided.

He was fairly good-looking, and must have been almost handsome in his young days; and though he was not cultured or refined, yet he was looked up to by the town as a large number of its inhabitants, who respected him for his work's sake. He held several honorary offices, such as secretary to clubs, associations, and various institutions, and though not an eloquent speaker, he was, nevertheless, an acceptable one, always wittingly, skillfully, and adroitly to bring what he styled a 'stop-gap,' or 'the old man to fit in an odd corner now and again.'

My mother was a gentle little woman, very sweet, gracious, and tender, though lacking somewhat in energy and spirit. She was most devoted to my father, and never sought to exercise her own will in anything; in fact, she had no will, it was utterly absorbed in my father's, who, in her eyes, never did a thing wrong in his life.

My father repaid her tender devotion, by not only returning her love in full measure, but by ever and always shielding and protecting her from life's inevitable difficulties and perplexities as far as he possibly could.

'My wife must not be troubled with this,' was his oft-repeated injunction to the outsiders; white to us, his children, he was constantly saying, 'Now, you must not trouble dear mother, mind that.' So from little children we had been accustomed to save up all our little troubles until father's return, and grew to think of mother as a very special treasure, a precious bit of property over which we were to watch with constant care and unflagging devotion.

There were three of us in the family—myself Judith, the eldest, named after my father's mother; next came my brother, Jack, a dark-skinned, bright-eyed little fellow, the exact image of my father, and last, though the most loved and idolised, was little blue-eyed, golden-haired Dorothy. She was a wee, dainty little miss, the very counterpart of our mother, and the sweetest child on God's fair earth.

Though we all idolised her, we did not spoil her, for there was a reason that she could not be spoiled. She did not seem, from her birth, to belong to earth; she was like some pure, sweet flower, just allowed to beautify our home and live by her sweet fragrance and sunny, winning ways.

It was evident she was the delight of our father's eyes, and he rarely came home without his pockets containing something for his 'little Dolly,' as he called her.

It was wonderful the many strange things she succeeded in extracting from those pockets. I seem to see now, as if it were but a little time since it happened, as my mother, turning to an empty chair, she divined her little hands into the depths of each pocket. And her cry of delight, when perhaps from the deepest corner of the last pocket she drew forth her prize—perhaps a cake of chocolate, or some sweets, apples, oranges, and sometimes toys and books—had a way of coming home as she would say, with one of her merry little laughs.

My father was not a native of Stonedleigh, the town in which we resided. He hailed from another part of the country, and had taken up his abode in Stonedleigh some two or three years before his marriage. He had come into the place in response to an advertisement asking for clever workmen for the very best cabinet-making department of the head furnishing firm in the town.

In less than three years he had become foreman of that department, and had won our mother, the pretty, gentle Mary Howe, and had made himself a name in the town, and in the Methodist body, to which he had attached himself, for his earnest, godly, consistent life, and his willingness and readiness to assist in any good work that could be undertaken.

Relatives he had none. When I came I was named after my mother, whom he had buried ten years before, his father and two sisters having died previous to that.

He seldom talked of his young days. At times he would relate various anecdotes and stories, but of his youth are early manhood he rarely spoke.

Once I remember, Jack, who was an inquisitive little fellow, questioning him as to what he did and where he had spent his time. 'Father, I noticed,' he said, 'a little shed out by the walk, and you have a key for it, but you never open it.'

He did not answer him, but Jack had got the better of that; and when he came back from his shed the next day, he found the door open, and some sleeping bag had been put out on the floor, and then a note, saying he was going out for a short time 'to buy some sugar.'

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MY FATHER'S WIFE.

the ordeal, and when he could he got out of the appointment.

On this particular Sunday the superintendent minister had pressed him to take the evening service; in fact, he had absolutely declined to accept the substitute my father suggested.

At half-past six we were all—mother and we three children—in our own pew, and all our eyes were directed to the pulpit, watching for dear father's appearance. Mother was praying for him, I know, for I saw that her lips were moving, and her eyes were several times lifted heavenward.

"It is you who are nameless," she hissed, between her teeth. "He (your father) married me in London."

Just as half-past six father entered the pulpit, and bowed his head in prayer, then, in his own homely fashion, began the service by giving out the well-known and ever soul-inspiring hymn:

"Peace, doubting heart! my God's I am!
Who formed me man forbids my fear,
The Lord hath called me by His name,
The Lord protects, for ever near.
His blood for me did once atone,
And still He loves and guards His own.

"When darkness intercepts the skies,
And sorrow's waves around me roll,
When high the storms of passion rise,
And half overwhelm my sinking soul—
My soul a sudden calm shall feel,
And hear a whisper, Peace be still!"

My father gave out the hymn verse by verse, as was the custom among Methodists years ago, and every word seemed laden with a strange, "Divine power." I have thought since that that hymn must have been specially

When passing through the watery deep
I ask in faith His promised aid;
The waves an awful distance keep,
And shrink from my devoted head;
Fearless their violence I dare,
They cannot harm, for God is there.

"Still nigh me, O my Saviour, stand,
And guard in fierce temptation's hour.
Hide in the hollow of Thy hand,
Show forth in me Thy saving power.
Still be Thy arms my sure defence,
Nor earth nor hell shall pluck me hence.

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... My Father's wife.

Laid upon my father's heart that night by the Spirit of God, for the strengthening of his faith, and mother, for the dark days that were to come.

The hymn finished, my father led in prayer, and never had I heard him pray more fervently or earnestly than then. And in the pulpit of the chapel, he seemed to be unconscious of all around him, and of everything, except that he was face to face with God, and in the audience chamber of the King of Kings.

The service proceeded in its usual way; all had settled down in quiet expectation for the sermon. Opening his Bible, father slowly read his text, which was a long one, a part of the prayer of David when, hunted and persecuted, he had fled to the cave.

"Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low; deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I."

"Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy name."

As the last words of the text dropped from his lips, the quiet, calm hush of the moment was broken in upon by the sudden opening of the chapel door, and the appearance of a woman, utterly regardless of the sacredness of the place and hour, made her way abruptly up the aisle in search of a seat.

The next moment, she had thrown herself down in the vacant seat directly in front of the pulpit, and within so much as bowing her head in the form of prayer, she threw up the coloured veil she wore, and lifting her head sharply, she fixed her eyes strangely and searchingly on my father in the pulpit, whose voice was falling on her ears.

Father, after repeating his text the second time, lifted his eyes from the open Bible, and they fell for the first time on the late comer.

A sudden awful pallor overspread my father's face, his form swayed, his knees broke from his own, and before assistance could reach him, he had fallen heavily on to the floor of the pulpit, his poor head striking against the seat.

CHAPTER II.

STRANGE FEARS.

A

As my father fell, a low, mocking laugh burst from the woman who had just entered. The eyes of all those about seemed to follow her, and father, in a few moments afterwards, was lifted from the pulpit floor, and carried down the steps into the little vestry, she rose from her seat, and stealing her neck, peered more closely at the form they were bearing away.

Despite the sudden shock my father's fall had caused to the congregation, it was marvellous how calm and quiet the bulk of the people kept. There was no rushing, no screaming; the request of the chapel steward, that all would keep their seats and remain quiet, had been promptly obeyed.

How my mother and I got to the vestry no one save God knows.

We found poor father lying white and still on the floor, his head wrapped up on a pile of coats. He was conscious, for as we fell down by his side we saw that he recognised us, and his lips moved as though he wanted to speak; but, to our horror and pain, only a husky, gurgling noise sounded in his throat—his power of speech had utterly gone.

In a short time the doctor, who had been sent for, arrived, and the grave, anxious expression of his face, as he proceeded to examine my father, increased our fears.

"It is a seizure," he said, "and of a very serious character. Open your eye; his left side are completely gone. At least, for the present," he added.

"Has your husband had a sudden shock of any kind?" he asked of my mother, drawing her on one side, "or received any startling news?"

"Neither, sir, that I know of," replied my mother, sobbing.

The doctor's question, with the sight of my poor father's piteous condition, completely broke my mother down, and with a moan she sank back half-fainting on a chair.

After doing all he could for both my parents, the doctor looked about him as though in search of someone to whom he could give instructions about my father's removal and treatment.

"It was at this point that my wassailness asserted itself. "Tell me all, doctor," I said, "and what to do. My mother is not able to bear any worry."

I followed my mother to the door.

"Get your father home," he said, "and to bed, and I will send him round something at once, and I will call again the last thing tonight."

You think he will recover—that he is not taken for death? I ventured to ask, shaking back the sobs that were struggling in my throat.

"I hope so," he returned, adding quickly: "We must hope for the best; but both life and death are in higher hands than ours."

His tones and looks chilled my very blood. I feared the very worst; and in that awful moment I seemed to see my father a broken-hearted widow, and I and my brother and sister fatherless, and our home desolated.

"Your mother will be all right," he said; "but, as you say, she is not strong, it will be well for you to spare her all you can; I mean, that you should be with your father as much as possible."

"I will, sir," I replied. "Mother must be spared. Father has always shielded her from everything—I mean, from all trouble and care."

"Do not be added, with a smile; "and you mean to do the same."

"Do you know if your father has had any worry or secret trouble?" he suddenly asked, under tones of voice.

I nodded. "There is no one I know of, sir," I readily replied.

"And he has... never been troubled of his heart," he was asked.

"Neither, sir," I responded.

"Have any of his relatives suffered from sciatica? be next enquired.

In this question I had to confess that none of my father's kin had ever been known to us, but that he had never heard him speak of any of them suffering.

In the quiet, still hush of that Sabbath evening, father was borne down through the street to our house, and carried up, all helpless and speechless as he was, laid in its own bed. He tried to smile his thanks when he found himself in his own home and bed, but it was such a sad, pained sort of smile, and his poor eyes, with such a strained, anxious look in them, were so continually on the door that my heart and soul ached at his evident unrest of spirit.

Several times, as I leant over the bed, my father tried to speak, but it was all in vain; and then slow tears began to trickle down his cheeks.

To some of the questions I put to him, he closed his eyes and seemed asleep; at others he seemed at a perfect loss, almost as though he failed to hear or to comprehend what was said to him.

When the doctor came, at eleven o'clock, his report was more cheering, and in his very look I read the glad news that he did not think my father would succeed.

The news of my father's illness spread rapidly through the town, and after the service in the chapel—which had been finished by another of the laymen who had been present—several of the officials came round to enquire for father.

Amid all the inquiries and conjectures as to the cause of his sudden illness, no single one of them—and neither mother nor myself—once connected it with the strange woman who had come in late to the service; in fact, she never occurred to our minds.

On the following day the word spread of mine, who called to enquire for father, in a kindly way spoke of the woman, wondering as to who she could be.

"She must have been the worse for liquor," said my friend, "for she only stayed until the sermon was about finished. She left the house from the seat, and marched out of the chapel in the same rough, noisy way that she came in, muttering to herself something about preaching and cant."

"We think," confirmed my friend, "that she was half-drunk or demented, or that she took exception to some remark the preacher made."

Nothing more was said or heard of the woman. Who she was, from whence she had come, and what became of her, remained a mystery.

In a week's time the doctor assured us that there was every hope of my father being spared, though he feared
that, if he recovered his speech, he would be utterly incapacitated for work.

This was a terrible blow to us, although, for the time being, we knew we should be spared from want, as father belonged to several clubs and societies, which, for a year at least, would lift us above need; and besides, he had money in the bank.

The doctor's assurance that father would not be immediately taken from us did much to calm and cheer my mother; and though I was father's real nurse, she spent many hours of his side, holding his hand in her own warm clasp, or her small hand was laid gently upon his head and brow.

Several times, when alone with father, he made strenuous efforts to speak, as though he wanted to ask some important question of me.

Once or twice his lips framed, as I thought, the word "woman," but not even then did I connect it with the woman who had appeared that Sunday night at the chapel.

Afterwards I remembered.

One day Jack came home from a neighbouring place, to which he had been sent on a little matter of business, and, as usual, sought me out, as his business had been to procure a certain little thing which I wanted as a surprise for father to tempt his appetite.

"Jude," he said, with one of his comical little laugh, "you remember that queer creature that stumped into chapel the night father was taken ill, don't you?"

To my nodded assent, he went on: "Well, I've seen her suddenly, but I believe it, if she didn't call out to me—I mean, called by my name as though she had known me all my life. Then she enquired for my father, and asked if he could speak yet, and when I told her 'No,' she actually muttered something about startling, and other queer things that made my blood boil.

I stared at my brother open-mouthed, for I could see that, young as he was, his passion had been thoroughly roused.

Then the horrid, ugly creature, he went on, 'before I could dare cut at her for speaking as she did my dad, turned about and marched off just as she marched into chapel that night.'

I was not troubled much by what my brother had told me about his meeting with the strange woman, though her suggestion that my father's illness was shaming was very bitter and hard.

With our usual thought of mother being saved from any and everything painful, we agreed not to repeat the cruel, wicked thing the woman had said, or ever let her know that she had enquired for my father.

CHAPTER III.
THE WOMAN'S APOLOGY.

It was a fortnight after my father's seizure that I ran in the town rather late one evening, to make some purchases. As I was hurrying down one of the most secluded roads I was suddenly arrested by someone hurrying after me and calling me by name.

When I turned, to my utter astonishment I found myself face to face with the strange woman who had accosted my brother. I should have known her anywhere. She was dressed exactly as she had been that night in the chapel, only, on closer inspection of her face, I saw that it was low, vulgar, and debased, and her whole demeanour and dress altogether was that of vulgarity and commonness.

Judith Wilmot!

She repeated my name again, and gripping my arm, stared murder into my face as she added: "You see I know your name."

"What do you want?" I asked, struggling to free myself from the grip of her hand.

"What do you want?" she repeated, with a low, chuckling laugh. "Let me tell you about that man whom you call your father."

"My father is nothing to you," I returned, sharply.

"You are a stranger to us all."

"A stranger, eh?" she retorted.

Her tones were full of mockery, and I, irritated by her manner and speech, made another desperate effort to free myself of her.

"Let me go!" I demanded. "I will not be detained thus."

"Just like Dick," she laughed into my face, "only a bit more determined."

My father's name was Richard, and styling him Dick, as she had done, almost maddened me, for I knew she was referring to him.

"Don't like to hear him spoken of as Dick," she said, noting the passion in my face; "but you have to hear more yet," she added. "Then perhaps you will not wonder at my familiarity with his name."

"I will hear nothing you say about my father," I retorted. "He is very ill, and I won't be trifled with."
"Yes, I," she answered. "I am the woman whom he married five years before he went through the form of marriage with your mother.

"It was only by a mere chance that I discovered him," she went on; "discovered him to be what he terms a changed man since he led me to the marriage altar. A man with another wife and three children! A preacher and a goody-goody saint into the bargain! And it was to try the effect upon him of my sudden appearance that took me to the chapel that night, for I had learned that he was to preach, and so planned my arrival accordingly.

"The effect of my appearance you already know," she added, "and I know, too.

The woman had spoken rapidly and I had listened against myself to all she had said, while, in my heart, there was the awful thought that my father was unable to defend himself, for he was speechless. I remembered, too,

the question I had seen on my poor father's lips; which I had interpreted as enquiring for the woman.

The creature at my side knew her power over me, knew that the revelation she had made had set me questioning.

"Has he spoken yet?" she asked.

I shook my head.

"Not a word?" she queried.

"Not a word," I repeated.

When he does speak, it will be to ask what has become of the strange woman who came to the chapel."

"Perhaps," I said. "And he will doubtless prove all that you have said to be wicked lies," I added.

"Ha, ha! he can't do that," she laughed.

Suddenly changing her attitude towards me, she quietly said:

"I have no particular wish to claim my husband, and no one knows me here, or my mission."

"Oh," I said, not understanding what she was driving at.

"Where is the woman?" he asked. I told him she had already sworn possession of the past hour.

"I hear Dick Wilmot's supposed wife is never allowed to be troubled about any perplexing matter," she went on; "that, in fact, my husband is so devoted to her that she is shielded from everything."

"My mother is delicate," I returned.

"Therefore you won't tell her what I have told you," the woman returned.

"No," I cried, readily; "because I don't believe a word you have said."

"Then I shall come and make myself known to your mother, that is all," she said.

"Don't! don't! oh, please don't!" I pleaded, thinking only for the moment of my mother.

"Then you must meet me somewhere to-morrow, when I shall have a suggestion to make to you," the woman went on. "Unless you do, I shall be at the house before night."
my father's wife.

in my terror at her threat. I consented to her request; a place and time of meeting were arranged, and as one groping amid sudden darkness, I made my way home.

chapter iv.
a bold suggestion.

arriving home, I first of all went upstairs to my bedroom to try and calm myself before venturing in to my father.

my mother was sitting with him, and I knew she would detect my agitation in a moment, and question me to death. when I had, as I thought, secluded myself into my usual quiet denouement, I stole down to my father.

he was alone. mother had been called downstairs, and for this I was grateful. I don't know if it really was so, but I thought, as I bent over my father, that his dear eyes searched my face more anxiously and eloquently than ever before.

I don't know how the news passed. my poor brain was in a whirl of painful thought, and my heart was filled with unutterable anguish. it was at this moment that I suddenly recurred to myself that there was no word of truth in the sworn statement the woman had made, telling myself again and again that she was demoted; and yet the terror which I felt was inexpressible. my father's welfare must have immediately followed her appearance in the court, and I remembered also the marriage certificate she had produced.

the whole thing was such a horrid mystery. the woman's sudden appearance, as I have already said, was not to everyone, and her evident_marker, for no one seemed to ask her about the neighbourhood, and yet she had recognized my brother and myself, and had found out all about us, even to my father's name before his marriage.

I had endured times in that first hour, I regretted the promise I had made to meet the woman on the coming day, but I had done it to save my mother, and saw no way of undoing it.

I seem to have grown old in that awful hour. there was no creature to whom I could appeal for help or advice, I felt myself alone. not for a thousand worlds could I seek help from my mother. my brother Jack was the only one I thought of. for, though young in years, he was almost like a man in wisdom and thoughtfulness.

remembering his youthful years, I, however, resolved to say no word to him, at least, for the present. I had also no time to account for my part, or the difficulties of the game, the Lord. I had, young as I was, trusted him for my salvation, and had committed my soul to him; true, I prayed about it, but, instead of asking God to undertake in his own way, I simply asked him to help me to further the plans of my own making.

I set my teeth, the utter mistake I had made would be that I had not been aware of it until he came; then, perhaps, perhaps, things and painful things I have to record would never have come to pass.

seeing no way of escape from the meeting arranged with the woman, and the thought growing more pressing as to what she would have to suggest, it suddenly occurred to me to mention the woman in a casual way to my father, for, though he could not speak or write, he could hear, and I told myself that perhaps he would show, in some way, his utter ignorance of the woman.

putting the question to myself, I turned to the bed, and leaning over him, looked steadily into his wide, open eyes.

"do you remember, dear father?" I began, "the night you were taken ill, seeing a strange woman come into the room, and I thought her face seemed to look under, and the woman had checked the completion of my question. it was a look that struck terror a thousand times deeper into my heart.

the agonized expression of his eyes, and the moaning, gasping sound in his throat as he tried to speak, were awful to see and hear, and brought to my mind, stricken home, all the apparitions the woman had made, and had indeed been the cause of his sudden collapse.

seeing the state into which my simple enquiry had plunged my father, my chief care was to allay any fear my words had aroused, for any agitation or disquiet, the doctor had said, would be almost fatal to him, in his present condition.

i at once changed the subject, saying with an assumed laugh, "she was such a quiet drear creature that i wondered who she was; and has never been to a service since."

then i plunged at once into telling him something about jack, and presently the agonized look in his eyes gave place to one of relief and quiet.

no sooner came to my eyes that night, i laid, i hour after hour, tossing about in anguish of soul. i saw now that my best policy was to meet the woman, and hear what she had to suggest. through my father's manner i was convinced that the sight of the woman had caused him that acute agitation, and i suddenly resolved for one moment believed my father guilty of the terrible sin he had accused him of, and i receded in horror at the thought that she could ever have been my father's wife.

it must all be some wicked conspiracy, i told myself, to wreck his life's happiness.

at the appointed time the next day, i reached the place where we had arranged to meet. it was quite, out-of-the way spot.

on my arrival, i found the woman already there, awaiting me.

she greeted me with a laugh, "i knew you would come," she said. "dint your face mortal? please be quick and say what you have to say," i added, with an attempt at carrying things with a high hand.

"i never do things in a hurry," she replied, with a coolness that irritated me. "besides, miss judith," she went on, "you need not have the good manners, yet, to address me by name."

"your name?" i cried, angrily. "i don't know your name—perhaps you don't possess one."

i regretted so speaking the moment the words left my lips. the woman's face turned a sickly shade.

"it is you who are nameless," she hissed at me from between her teeth. "my name is miss richard wilmont," she added, her face breaking into a mocking smile.

i was too wounded and angry to reply.

"state your business," i demanded.

the woman changed her tactics.

"it will pay you to listen quietly," she said. "by so doing, and yielding to my very modest demands, you may save your father from public exposure."

"i go on," i said.

"though richard wilmont is my lawful husband," she began, "i have no particular wish to claim him—who particular wish, mind."

what do you want?" i asked.

"i shall comply to this presently," she quietly replied.

"first of all, i had better tell you when and where i became your father's wife. he married me in london, she went on. "who and what i was matters not, he married me right enough. he wasn't the professed goody-goody saint then, that he is now," she said, sneeringly. "dick was scolding his widowed wife then, and after his marriage he didn't turn out any too well, i can assure you."

"however," she continued, "i was soon relieved of his presence, for, as luck would have it, he got himself taken ill at a government institution, where he was kept pretty secure, and well looked after."

she laughed a low, shallow laugh, as, fixing her eyes on me, she added:

"into prison, i mean. he was taken care of in prison."

her looks and insinuations aroused me.

"prison!" i gasped. "never, never, has my father been in prison! how dare you tell such lies?" i asked, as she remained quietly smiling upon me.

"lies? lies, eh?" she muttered. "dick wilmont could not do, you ask him."

"never!" i cried.

"when he came out of prison," she went on, "instead of looking up his poor wife, as she went on, "instead of looking up his poor wife, as he went on, he had himself war— deserted her, and some few years afterwards, in another part of the country, he went through
I spent another night in a whirl of anxiety and confusion. My little man, the victim of this mood, was with me during the afternoon, following my meeting with the woman, to break the awful subject to my father, for whenever I tried, my voice seemed glued to the root of my mouth.

During the evening, I came to the conclusion to let the matter rest until the morning, so that my father's right rest should not be disturbed, and I was not to bed until I felt myself that I would unburden my heart to my father the first thing in the morning.

I felt there was no other way, and that, painful as it would be, it must be done.

Though I had braved the thing out with the woman, my heart misgave me terribly, for, in my soul, I feared the woman and her threats more than I dared confess even to myself.

With throbbing head and aching heart, I rose early, and creeping downstairs, I went to the living-room and prepared the breakfast. This I always did, for mother never came down until all was ready.

Though so delicate, my mother had been resourceful, and had slept in my father's room every night since his illness. For the first few nights I had rested on a chair placed in the same room. After this, she had gone to bed as usual, as my father needed very little attention in the night, now.

I prepared father's breakfast as usual, resolving that, after I had fed him, to tell him of the woman who claimed to be his wife, and her demands.

When mother came down, her face looked anxious and nervous.

"Father is not so well," she said, in response to my inquiry for him. "He has been strangely restless all night, but is now dozing.

Putting on my first slippers, so that, if he was sleeping, I should not wake him, I crept up to his room. He was not sleeping, but was lying in a strange, half-conscious state. He took no notice of my entrance, and when I tried to feed him with the egg I had boiled, he did not take the slightest notice.

With a broken heart I laid him back on the pillow. He seemed to be in no pain, only utterly oblivious to everything around him. My heart sank within me as I remembered the woman and her threat. My poor father was now utterly unable to hear my story, and my heart ached to tell him anything about him before.

"What, oh, what, shall I do?"

I moaned aloud in my distress, but this cry, bitter as it was, was unnoticed by my father.

In my despair, I broke into a flood of tears, and was still sobbing when the doctor, whom my mother had sent for, arrived.

He did not seem alarmed at my father's relapse, in fact, he seemed hopeful that it was the forerunner of a partial restoration of his paralysed side and speech.

I was not to keep a watchful eye upon him, he said, for, and let me know if there is any change before the evening.

Once more I found myself installed by father's side, for mother, on account of her sleepless night, was lying in the darkened parlour, her poor, aching head bandaged with cold water rags.

Slowly the moments and the hours passed, and my father had not recognised me. It wanted but an hour to the time the woman had said she would be at our meeting-place, for my father's decision.

I knew how my father began to thrash with apprehension and dread. I could not leave my father to meet the woman; besides, had I been at liberty to do so, I could have told him nothing.

In my agony and fear, I threw myself on my knees, and sobbed out my heart's anguish to heaven. No special direction came.

At last, worn out with misery and suppressed anxiety, I sank back in the chair at my father's side, utterly helpless.

"I can do nothing, no, nothing," I told myself.

Presently the thought came that my fears were in vain, and that not meeting the woman was, perhaps, the very best thing after all. I even went so far as to look upon my father's relapse as God's way of preventing that meeting.

This thought was strengthened when the whole day passed, and the woman had made no sign of appearing at the house.

I must say, though, that I had watched from the window with strained eyes all the afternoon, and each sound or knock at the door had set my heart beating with terrible fear.

At last the day was over. Ten o'clock had come; father was better, and I went to bed, my heart wondrously lightened of the burden I had been bearing.

That night I slept like a child, and awoke the next morning to find it an hour later than my usual time of rising, and little Dicky by my side with my breakfast on a tray.

"Daddy is better," she said, "and mother too, and what do you think?" she added with a pretty laugh," Jack
MY FATHER'S WIFE.

The sight of this woman, whom I had so much dreaded, seemed, for a moment, to freeze my very blood, and my legs felt like giving way under me.

It was only for a moment, though. The next instant, I had sprang forward, and, clutching the woman by the arm, tried to drag her from the room.

My mother was leaning back in a chair, her face pale and smiles had left me, and I turned from the woman to her side.

"You have killed her," I sobbed, "you have.

The evil woman laughed in my face.

"The truth never kills people," she said.

"Leave the house this instant," I cried, pointing to the door. "It is safe. Now is the time to leave.

"How dare I?" she retorted, planting herself in front of me. "Who has more right to Dick Wilmot's house than his wife?"

At this moment my mother opened her eyes, and recognizing that I was with her, she clung to me as a child to its mother.

"Say, say it is not true!" she moaned.

My mother's appeal convinced me that the woman had told her the same horrible story.

"No, no, mother," I sobbed. "It is not, it cannot be true. She is in my arms, or both.

The woman glared at me.

The next instant, to my increased horror, she divested herself of her hat and cloak, and threw herself back in her easy chair, with all the coolness imaginable.

"I have come to take up my abode in my husband's house," she said, "and should like some tea at once, please, Judith."

Her audacity maddened me. To my relief, Jack at this moment burst into the room.

His deep, dark eyes looked like my father's, fastened themselves on the woman, then flew from the woman to my mother.

"Run for the policeman," I cried, in hot haste.

"Yes, go for him," said our visitor. "Go as quickly as you can, Jack.

At this instant my mother, to my surprise, put out her hand as though to detain him.

"Help me from the room," she pleaded.

Jack and I assisted her out, and placed her on the couch in the sitting-room.

"Don't send for the police," she wailed. "Oh, spare father. Spare us all if you can!"

I looked at her in wonder, for her words and manner puzzled me, indicating as they did that she believed the woman's story.

"Father told me something before we were married," she sobbed, "only I thought--"

She broke down utterly, and poor Jack and I looked at each other in bewilderment.

Jack of course was in the dark the whole time as to the woman's assertion.

"Oh, Jack," I sobbed, "she, that dreadful woman, claims to be father's wife."

"Claims what?" poor Jack gasped.

I held him, as well as I could, and very briefly, all that the woman claimed. I saw the blood mount to his brow, and his lips quivered with passion.

And poor father can't speak, can't deny her wicked lies," I added.

Jack flew out of the room, and a moment later there was the sound of a rustling taking place in the next room. Poor, impulsive Jack was doing his level best to enlist the creature, an undertaking he was utterly unable to accomplish.

Beneden, and with the marks of the fray on his face and clothing, he came back to my mother.

"She won't budge an inch, the hateful creature," he said. "I'll go for the police," he added.

"No, no!" wailed my mother again.

"Then what shall we do?" I cried.

No answer came from my mother, and poor Jack was too utterly taken back to suggest anything further.

Suddenly the thought of our minister occurred to me. He was a man wise and judicious, who had made the trials and difficulties of his own life's work.

I was afraid to mention the thought to my mother, for fear she should object so, calling Jack out of the room, I hurried him off with a message to the minister, who lived very near by.

While he was gone, I persuaded mother to go up to my room. This she did, and after bandaging her head with a wet cloth, and seeing her safely resting on the bed, I hastened downstairs to await the arrival of Jack and Mr. Noel.

Dolly was with my father. She had gone to him directly we had come home, and for this I was glad.

Her surprise that some of us tender years should endure and do in an emergency, but as I look back now at that awful time, I can see clearly that God was my help, and that it was He Himself who directed my thoughts in that awful crisis.

I was brought into the minister with him. Then, despatching my brother to keep guard over the parlour and its strange occupant, I told out all the strange, awful story to the kindly, middle-aged man.

He listened in amazement, asked me many questions,
of which I answered with truthfulness and candour. I held nothing back from him.

His face grew grave when I related my father's strange manner, and the half utterance of my mother's that father had told her something before her marriage to him.

"It is serious, indeed," he said, "and a matter in which only God can direct us."

Without another word, he fell on his knees, and broke into prayer. I knelt by the table, sobbing and praying in turn.

"Where is the woman?" he asked, rising from his knees.

I told him she had already taken possession of the parlour, and had ordered refreshments.

"I must see her alone," he said. "Meanwhile," he added, "you go to your father, for he must be saved from all knowledge of this, at present. There is evidently some unexplained mystery," he said, "but do not let it crush you. God can bring light out of darkness. Only, for his work's sake, we must do our best to unravel the mystery in a quiet way."

As he spoke, I thought of Job and other tried servants of God, and how the Lord brought forth light and strength for them.

With a tender, encouraging grip of my hand, the godly man left me, and went to the parlour.

"That creature is a perfect she," said Jack, coming back to me, "and I reckon the parson will have a handful to manage her. She has actually got a bottle of spirits in her pocket," he added, "and asked me to drink with her."

I went to my father, as the minister suggested, and for his sake, kept up the appearance of brightness.

I had not been with him more than a half-hour, when I heard the front-door open and the sound of departing footsteps.

Looking out of the window, I saw, to my great relief, that it was the woman. She had gone off as quietly as a lamb, not even glancing back at the house. Hurrying down the stairs, I found Mr. Noel awaiting me.

"She has gone," he said, drawing me inside the parlour.

"She (that woman) was never your wife!" I cried.
door, but if her story is true, it is indeed a very sad 
story. She has her marriage certificate; she went on, 
and explained the circumstances of the conviction of her 
husband, Richard Wilmot, for theft.
I burst into a flood of 

"Will she spread the report about the town?" I sobbed, 

and oh, what will become of us?"
The minister looked at me pityingly.

"No," he said, "she will hold silence for the present, 

I have, on my own account, made it worth her while to do so—indeed, she is going back to London to-night, 

and we have a month’s grace. In a month’s time, I have 

arranged to meet her again."

This announcement brought a flood of relief to my 

heart.

"During the month, continued the minister, "we must seek to unravel the mystery, and find out how much 

of the story is true.

"Oh, that my poor father could speak!" I cried. "He 

would, I am sure, explain it all.

"Yes, would to God that his speech were restored, " 

returned Mr. Noel.

"Judith," he said suddenly, fixing his eyes on me, 

"you believe in prayer—in the power of it I mean; and 

of God’s willingness to hear and answer?"

"Yes," I faltered, "I do, but I fail in getting my 

requests answered."

The promises he replied, "that whatsoever two or 

three are agreed to ask, touching God’s Kingdom, 

shall be granted. I want you and your dear mother and myself to be agreed in pleading and asking God to restore 
your father’s speech, so that this sad matter can be cleared 
up. For this is touching His Kingdom, inasmuch as your 
father is a professed Christian, and a teacher of others, 

and one who has been looking up to all classes."

"I feel sure," he added, confidently, "that your father 
sould explain the matter, so that his character would 

be cleared from wrong.

"I am sure he could," I replied, and readily consented 
to his proposition of united prayer.

"We cannot meet in body," he said, "but shall we 

meet in spirit, three times a day?"

It was agreed; therefore, that three times a day, at 
given hours, we would all three bow before the throne of 
God, with the one definite object of pleading with God, 
that if it was His will, He would restore my father’s 

speech.

"Do not weary," he said, in parting, "the days of 

miracles are not over yet, and God may use the dumb 
to speak in our behalf."

Meanwhile," he added, "leave the matter to me, I will do all that can humanly be done."

I sobbed out my thanks, and tears filled his own deep, 

kindly eyes.

"You will not be troubled with the woman during the 

meanwhile," he said, "and, for the present, say nothing to 
your father, and enjoy the whole family to hold strict 

silence.

With a tender, "Good-night," he left the house, and 
drew upstairs to mother, and told all the good news.

We were compelled to take Jack into the throne of grace, 
and by dear lad, with tears starting to his eyes, entrusted to 
be allowed to join us in our prayers; and it was then, 

that, throwing his arms round my neck, he sobbed out, 
in his own dear, simple way:

"Jesus is my Saviour, Judith. I have trusted my sinful 

heart to him, and think I am only sixteen, all my sins are 

forgiven, and I mean to be a valiant soldier of the Cross, like poor, dear father has been."

Mother and I hugged Jack in turns, while our hearts’ 

praise ascended to Heaven’s Throne, for Jack’s confession 

and promise. I trusted my father’s God seemed to 
come as a ray of golden light in our dark night of sorrow.

When, that night, mother and I stole up into my room, 
Jack came too, and the earnest, though broken petitions 
that burst from his lips, filled our hearts with thankfulness 
and joy while they melted us to tears.

CHAPTER VII.

A DIVINE TOUCH.

A FORTNIGHT slipped by, and most of that time 
Mr. Noel was away. We knew he was in London, 
though we did know exactly what he was doing there; but as we had left the matter in his 

hands, we had perfect confidence and cast about it, knowing he would do his best.

At the end of this fortnight he came to see us. I had 

an interview with him alone first. My heart sadly 
sagved me, for the news he had to communicate I feared, 
by his manner, would not be encouraging.

Within a quarter-of-an-hour I had heard the worst. Mr. 
Noel had traced my father from his home to London, 
and had also discovered that he had married a woman older 

than himself, by the name of Sarah Jones; he had also 

traced them to various cheap apartments in which they 

had resided, and learnt that their marriage had been a 

most unhappy one.

He had also found out that the woman’s declaration as 
to my father’s imprisonment was correct; he had 

been convicted, and sentenced to a short term of imprisonment. From that time all trace of the woman, as well as of my 

father, became lost.

My heart ached, and I listened, for there stood out before 
me the awful facts in all their bale, horrible meaning, 
that my father had really been married and imprisoned.

"But was that woman who came here the real Sarah 

Jones whom father married?" I sobbed, "or was she an 

imposter?"

"I fear she is one and the same whom Richard Wilmot 
marrined," returned the minister.

Deep sobs shook my frame.

"Then why did she stay away all these years?" I asked.

"Tell your story, added Mr. Noel, "I think, this afternoon, 
when he came out of prison, deserted her, and that she 
did her utmost to find him, but failed until she discovered 

him here, quite by an accident, she says."

The woman had told me the same story.

"Where was she all these years?" I inquired.

"Ah, that is the mystery," returned the minister, "the 

one thing I have not been able to discover."

"But," I added, hopefully, "we have another fort-

night yet."

"I responded, weakly.

And God has not answered our prayers," I said, my 

heart full of despondency as I added, "Father has not 
yet spoken."

"Man’s extremity is often God’s opportunity," repeated 
the minister, adding the lines of that sweet tender, Charles 
A. W. Fox:

"How oft told the anxious provisions of man 

God blushes in with an unfrozen plea."

"We must still trust, Judith," he said, leaning his hand 
in mine, "and hope for the best, and yet at the same 
time be prepared for the worst. God has His own pur-

poses even in this, though we cannot understand them.

But faith was growing within like the minnow and 

turtle in those days learnt perfect submission to God’s will, 
and to trust utterly.

After this talk together, Mr. Noel asked for my mother 

and Jack.

Mother had kept surprisingly well and calm, and now, 
as our good angel, the minister, began to question her as 
to her half-abstinence of something father had told her 
before their marriage, she answered with a quietness and 
strength that surprised us all more.

"Did Richard confess to any previous marriage?" Mr. 
Noel asked.

My mother hesitated for a moment, as though trying to 
recall something, her face, sweet face full of distress and 
thought.

"I can tell you nothing definite," she said, "My 
husband, before our engagement, said he wanted me to know 
of his past life, and of certain things which occurred 
before his conversion, but I—"

She paused, a deep flush suffusing all her dear face, 

and her eyelids dropped.

Encouraged by the minister, she went on: "I would 
not say so, but of it, my darling that whatever had 
occurred in his old, unregenerated days was forgiven 
by God, and was under the blood, and I preferred to 
know nothing of him, save as he told his Richard Wilmot 

of the present.

Yours was a trust born of a very real, deep love, then, 

Mrs. Wilmot," called the minister.

"It was, sir," replied my mother; "and that love and 

trust has never wavered; it does not now, not even in this time of dark trial."
"Thank God for that," said the minister, with choked voice. "True love thinketh no evil," he added; "it beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. In God it never fails!"

"That is Heaven's love," murmured my mother.

"Yes," and it was through love that this wondrous love was housed within her. 

Mr. Noel; at least, in your case it has been.

My mother could say nothing to throw any light on the grave matter of the charge against my father; and young as I was, I remember thinking that her love for father must have excelled the love of any other wife on God's earth.

After a little prayer together, the minister left, promising still to continue to do all in his power for us.

The days went by until only two were left of the month. No fresh amusing news had come to us from Mr. Noel, and my spirits began to sink again, for father had made no sign of speaking, though every day I had bent over him with the hope of catching a first utterance.

Mother, too, I noticed, though no murmur found its place on her lips, grew paler and thinner; and poor Jack lost the roses from his cheeks, and neither laughed nor romped. Little Dolly was the one bright sunbeam in the home in those days, for we had kept our awful trouble from her tender mind. Now she closed her young life with our sorrow unless the blow actually fell which would break up our home, and take our loved father from our midst.

During those last days I found myself, many times a day, asking God to take my father to Himself. It seemed to be the one way to end the struggle, and so much better for himself. If father was safely out of it, I felt then nothing would matter. Mother and I, with my brother and sister, told myself, could move to some distant place. While and for a time I thought that this terrible talking creature would lose her professed claims on father, and never be able to mark his happiness again.

On the last night but one before the expiration of the month, I was in father's room. I thought he was sleeping; for he was lying very still and quiet, with his eyes fasting. I stood at the foot of the bed, looking upon him, my mind full of thought. Suddenly and quite unconsciously my lips gave expression to my thought, and I half-sobbed out:

"O God, since it is not Thy will to restore his speech, save my poor, dear father by taking him to Thyself."

The words had scarcely left my lips before father's eyes opened wide. There was a quivering about his mouth, then his lips suddenly parted, and in a voice wondrously strong and clear, he said:

"I have had a vision of God, Judith, and He touched me. I shall live and not die, and declare His wonderful works!"

Had a shell suddenly exploded in the room I could not have been more frightened. The sound of my father's voice fell on my ears as a voice from an unseen world.

"Yes, when the very thing for which I had been pleading had been granted, I was surprised and scared. I saw in after-days how little I had truly looked for the fulfillment of what I had asked for, how weak and little my faith had been.

Without a word to my father, I staggered out of the room and down the stairs, and a moment later my voice rang through the house, in the loud, half-frightened, half-sobbing cry:

"Father's speech has come back! He has spoken! Oh, come! come! come quickly!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CLOUDS LOWER.

Together mother and I hurried back to father's room, mother overjoyed at the news of our dear one's recovery of speech, for, unlike me, she was not startled at my announcement. She had prayed believingly, and had been daily and hourly expecting God to answer, so that when the news came, a loud, fervent "Praise God!" broke from her lips, and her dear eyes and hands were lifted heavenward in adoration and thanksgiving.

As we entered father's room, to our amazement he held out both hands to us, and on our ears his dear voice fell.

"Father, new and Judy," he cried.

Mother, rushing to his side, threw her arms about him, and laid her glad face on his breast.

"God has touched me, my love," he whispered. "I saw Him, and, like John, I was as one dead before Him. But He said His dear hand only, too, and yet any sin to father, but both mother and I thought he must have been dreaming; but anyway, a wondrous change had taken place, a miracle had been wrought, and though father's side was not perfectly restored, his speech was.

For it remunerates us all three wept and praised God together, then I saw that father wished to speak to me alone.

At a sign from me mother left the room, and as the door closed upon her, father turned his sunken eyes anxiously towards me.

"You spoke of a woman, Judith," he began, in a hoarse whisper, "the woman who came into the chapel that night."

I nodded my head, but before I could reply he went on:

"Has she seen you? Has she been here?"

To this my heart replied, "Yes," for my father's face grew full of pain, and his eyes closed in keenest anguish, and his hands clenched together.

"Was that you why you prayed God that I might die?" he suddenly asked.

And we all prayed that your speech might come back, dear father," I replied. "I think it was I, in my selfishness, who prayed God to take you, because I feared our other petition would not be answered.

"It was only out of love for you," I added, kissing his damp brow, "and to save you from—oh, from that!"

A sob choked my voice.

"Tell me all, Judith," he said. "I can bear it, hear anything better than suspense."

So it fell to me, his child, to repeat to my father the awful story the woman had told us, with all the painful events of the past month.

"And the minister knows?" he asked, eagerly.

"Is it he who has been our friend," I replied. "It was he who suggested that we should write in prayer for your speech to be given back if it was God's will, so that you could defend yourself, dear father, and explain the mystery of it all."

He groaned aloud, and a great despair filled his eyes.

"And it has not killed poor mother?" he moaned. "She has been overtaken by death!"

"Yes," I cried. "God has kept her wondrously calm, and her love and trust for you has not wavered, dear father," I said. "She feels sure, even now, that there is some horrible mistake, one that you will be able to put right."

"Would that I could," he moaned.

"Where is Mr. Noel?" he asked.

"Not yet returned from London," I answered, and with a shudder I added halfeafoned: "And there is only tomorrow!"

"Judith! My dear, brave, strong Judith!"

I turned to my father.

"You do not despise me, dear?" he asked. "Nor do you believe me to have wilfully sinned in this matter?"

"Judith! Your father has sinned!" he repeated, for his question had struck painfully on my ears. "No," I added, "we believe you to be innocent, but the victim of this wicked, cruel woman."

"She was never your wife, was she?" I cried. "You never married a Sarah Jones, whom she says you did?"

"I did! I did! And, oh, Judith, it is true, but—but—"

What father added I never heard, for his confession that the woman had been his wife seemed to paralyze my every faculty.

"Don't blame me until you know all, Judith," he pleaded, drawing me pale, stricken face down to his own.

"I will tell all the story, and then—you must judge and do with me as you will."
"Would that Mr. Noel were here!" I murmured, and even as I spoke there was a loud rap at the front-door, and flying to the window, I cried to the caller, "Is it Mr. Noel, dear father?" I cried.

"It is Mr. Noel, dear father," I cried.

"Let him come up, and mother, too," returned my father, and I will tell you all.

I hurried down to meet the minister. I think he must have read by my face that God had answered our prayers, or God had revealed it to his heart.

"Your father has spoken?" he said.

After telling him all that had passed between father and myself, he said, "God grant he may be able to clear himself, for I have utterly failed in proving anything, except that he was legally married to the woman.

"Father is waiting to tell all," I answered, half-sobbing now. "He wishes you and mother and myself to go to his room at once.

A few moments later we passed into father's room.

He welcomed the minister with a faint smile, and after the exchange of a few words between them, Mr. Noel prayed tenderly and gravely; then we all sat round his knees to listen to the awful story on which hung such mighty issues.

Yes, we were to know the truth at last, but my mental gaze there rose the vision of a terrible separation, of disgrace and dishonor, and of a doom for my poor father a thousand times worse than death.

CHAPTER IX.

MY FATHER'S CONFESSION.

We were all gathered round our father's bed to listen to the story on which such mighty issues hung.

His confession that he had been married to the horrible creature, who now claimed him as her husband, had left him frozen, and yet I felt certain that he would be able to prove his innocence, and that her claim on him now was false and untrue.

Father was pillowed up in bed, and mother, my sweet, gentle mother, was at his left side, supporting him with her own dear arms.

She laid her lips to his brow, but what she whispered in his ear we could not catch, but a faint smile crept over his pale face, and he glanced at her as he would have glanced at a dear friend.

"My home training," he began, "was not a Christian one. Never do I remember seeing the Bible read in our home, or my mother, or father bow their heads in prayer.

"Whatever I heard of God, of Heaven, of Eternity, and of the possession of a Spirit within me that must live for ever, I heard from the poor Methodist local preachers, who, during the summer months, walked many miles to preach the Gospel on the village green.

"Before I was out of my teens, I was left alone in the world. Father, mother, my two sisters, were all laid in their graves, and other kindred I had none, and but few friends.

"I had been apprenticed to cabinet-making, and was out of my time just before my mother died. At her death, unable to endure the sense of desolation in the old house, I emptied of all my fond hopes, and hearing of all the life and delight of London, with the much larger wages which mechanics could command there, I sold off the furniture and gave up the old home, and without a pang of regret at leaving the village of my birth, I went to the great city.

"Of the first months of my sojourn there, I need not say much. I obtained work, though not at the rate of wages I had been led to believe I should get, neither did I have in London all that I had expected.

"Last year a child of mine had died. I had grown to love some of its abilities, and with the prospect of companions—workmates, chiefly—with what feelings of regret, I was associated during the day. I was to be found two or three evenings a week at the theatre or music halls, the while the other evenings were spent at the public house.

"Within a year I had got entangled with a woman calling herself Sarah Jones. She was a respected friend of the woman with whom I lodged. She was a bold, smart, dauntless woman, older than myself, and in reality, much older, even, than she looked, though this I did not know when I brought you to London, and declared I was free of certain light drinks, all of, course, at my expense.

"One night, though I had taken no more than usual, I suddenly became drizzly, and really knew nothing more until the next morning, when I found myself in bed again, with a splitting-head-ache and a terrible sickness in my eyes.

"I got up and staggered downstairs, to find that it was ten o'clock, and to be told by my landlady that Sarah Jones had brought me home in a cab at eleven o'clock the previous evening, and that I had made a proposition of marriage to her in the presence of two or three witnesses.

"This announcement at first fairly staggered me. I had not the slightest recollection of such a thing, and was perplexing it, when the door opened, and in walked the woman Jones, dressed in her very smartest and best.

"After a most affective greeting she drew a wad of notes from her pocket and passed it to me. My throat was parched with thirst, my lips dry, and full of the awful sickness I had been feeling. I gripped the bottle and eagerly drank heavily of its contents.

"I was then taken ill. That same month later, urged on by my landlady, I married Sarah Jones, and took her to some cheap furnished lodgings in another street not far away.

"When too late, I awoke to the awful mistake I had made and would have given worlds to have freed myself from the creature whom I had made my wife.

"Money, money, money, was her constant demand, and on my return from work, I scarcely ever found her at home. I found out, too, that she not only drank herself, but after she frequently supping with whom she had lodged with drink, sometimes pawing my clothes and tools to procure the money to do so.

"With the hope of preventing this, I moved further away. Three or four times I made a change, but it was all useless. My life was stretched beyond description, and sometimes my wife would be away for days together, then suddenly turn up with all the coolness imaginably.

"At last, the crisis came. I was arrested for theft—a theft of which I was as innocent as an unborn child. My landlady cameforward and accused me, and in a sly, subtle way, had fastened the guilt on me. She swore a lie against me in the court, a lie which convicted me, and doomed me to several months' imprisonment.

"That imprisonment," resumed my father, after a short pause, "was the turning point in my life. While in the solitary confinement of my cell, the memory of what the preachers had said on the village green in my boyhood's days, all came back to me. I knew now that it was the Spirit of God that brought the words home; and there and then, for the first time in my life, I was convinced of sin—sin against God, and realised that I had a soul that must live for ever.

"I began to read the Bible in real earnestness, and saw what sin had done. I also saw what sin and forgetfulness of God had brought me to, and the delusions into which I fell. In my life, I wept out the prodigal's cry, 'I have sinned! I have sinned!'

"That cry was followed by the publican's plea, and in the agony of my soul, I groaned out, 'God be merciful to the sinner!'

"God was merciful, for by His Spirit, He led me to see in His Word the sacrifice made for sin, and how He could be merciful, and pardon the repentant sinner on the ground of His Son's finished work on Calvary's Cross.

"Not at once did the light and assurance of salvation come to me. I passed through a period; within that period, while in prison walls, God saved my soul, and like David of old, I was brought up out of the horrible pit, and out of the mire and clay, and had my feet set on a rock, and a song of praise put in my mouth.

"The prison became a Bethel to me, and I dreaded the time when I should have to go forth again. The thought of meeting my wife and living with her was horrible to
MY FATHER'S WIFE.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. QUINTON'S CONFESSION.

We were all weeping together as poor father told his story. He had told it with such a calmness and strength of body and voice that caused us all to marvel at the mighty thing which God

After a most affectionate greeting, she drew a flask of spirits from her pocket, and passed it to me.
had wrought. At the same time we saw how innocent he had been; and how he had been the dupe of a wicked, designing woman.

The question in all our hearts, as his voice ceased and he sank back on his pillow, was as to the report of the woman's previous marriage, and the fear arose that as she had told a lie as to her death, what she had said as to the marriage being illegal might also prove to be untrue.

Poor mother put her arm round father's neck, and laid her cheek against his, and we caught a part of the sweet, wretched-looking谎话 she murmured in his ear. The sight of his effection, and the tears in her grateful smile, melted ours. The minister wiped his eyes, and moved to the window, and I buried my face in my hands.

There were several questions in my heart I wanted to ask, but for the moment I knew was feeling the same, but neither of us could disturb mother for the moment.

Presently she lifted herself up, and going back to the bed, the minister began to question father as to whether the woman who came into the chapel on the Sunday night was the one whom he had married.

Poor father replied in the affirmative. "I knew her in the first moment," he said, "even though, for so many years, I had believed her dead. It was the shock that shook me down, for she seemed as one come back from the grave."

"Oh, gracious," he added, "the fear haunted me as to the truth of her death, though after what the landlady said of her legal husband being alive, I believed myself entirely lies."

"Oh, could the woman have lied to me in that as well?"

"Oh, how anxiously we waited, and how earnestly we pleaded that it might come back to him."

"He remained with his eyes closed for a while, trying to recall the name of the street. Suddenly his eyes and lips unclased, and we knew, by the light in his eyes, that he remembered, and the next instant he had given out the street and the number of the house."

Mr. Noel wrote the address down, in his book, together with father's replies to several other questions.

"He smiled as he wrote the address; and he told me after wards that during all his investigations in London he had not traced father or the woman to this house."

With a few cheering, hopeful words to father and mother, he left the room; I followed him down the stairs.

"I must leave for London early in the morning," he said, "as we have only to-morrow left to trace out this landlady and the truth of her statement."

"What if she is dead?" I asked, with a shudder.

"God grant she is not," he returned. He looked grave and anxious, and I knew he was dreadfully aware of the result in his projected new inquiries.

By the first train the next morning Mr. Noel departed on his mission, and by noon he had reached that part of the great city in which his father had lodged so many years before.

It was a poor, dilapidated street, and as the good man piloted his way down between the rows of high tenement houses, searching for the number father had given him, his heart grew heavy and sick within him.

At last he reached a house bearing the number 61; it

was one of the worst houses in the street, decay and neglect had made it most wretched-looking than any of the others, and he paused to pray before entering.

At last he passed in, and meeting a dirty, ragged-looking woman in the lower passage, he enquired for the person whose name father had given him.

"It's the poor old creature in the back room on the third floor," she replied. Twenty years ago she rented this house, and let it out to lodgers; but had turned over to, and for years now she've lived in one room upstairs, earning her bit of living by match-making.

But the old thing ain't long for this world," she added, not without her voice's clerical slite; "and I suppose you am the parson from the mission church come to see her?"

"I am a minister, and I wish to see her," he replied; and following the woman up the hall-lighted stairs, he found himself a moment or two later made the back room on the third floor.

"It's the parson come to see ye, Mrs. Quinton," said his guide.

The woman to whom she spoke was lying on a stumpy bedstead in one corner of the bare, half-furnished room. And in the dim light Mrs. Noel could hardly see her face, but he heard the muttered reply that she made, which was not discouraging to him.

As the landlady left the room, Mr. Noel drew near to the bed, and the sight he obtained of the face on the hard, thin pillow assured him that she was not long for this world.

"You are Mrs. Quinton?" he began.

"That's me," she returned.

"You told me you had a young man lodging with you. The name of Wilmot—Mr. Richard Wilmot?"

Mr. Noel continued.

To his surprise the woman readily replied: "Ah, yes, poor, young Dicky! I minds him well. A good, simple fellow he was, too—but a real scampy.

"You ain't got what you hired for, Mr.," grumbled.

"No, I am not him, but he is a friend of mine," answered the minister; "and I have come to you with a message from him."

"You a friend of his?" queried the old creature.

"Fancy Dicky having a parson for his friend! It's queer, like after all his old ways."

She paused and peered searchingly into the minister's face.

"What message did he send?" she asked.

"Before giving you his message, which is a kind one, I want you to know that you told me that the woman he married, who was a professed friend of yours, was dead, when she was not."

The woman half-started in the bed.

"She has never tried to find him, and bothered him again, I have she has they's."

"That is not the point. Why did you tell me such a lie? Tell Me all the truth—there's a good woman."

"She paid me to do it, sir," replied the old creature, "and I wanted money, and didn't mind in them days lending a few bits to get it."

"But what was her motive in wishing Mr. Wilmot to believe her dead?" asked the minister, cautiously.

"He didn't duppe money enough to please her, and as she got him into prison, I think she was a bit afraid of what he would do when he came out."

"And where has he been all these years?" asked Mr. Noel.

"That's more than I can say, sir," returned the woman.

"I've never clapped eyes on her since she put three golden sovereigns in my hand, for which I swore to her that I'd give them out as she done, neither have her old man."

"Her old man?" repeated the minister.

"I might as well tell ee all the truth, sir," and as the woman spoke she raised herself erect in the bed, and drew the old shawl she had on closely round her shrunken form.

"Since I've bin lying on this bed lots of things have a-troubled me, sir," she began, "and the part I acted towards the poor lad Wilmot is one of 'em."

"The girl, Sally Jones, was the daughter of an old pal of mine. She was a dashing, wicked, clever creature, and when not much more than a girl, married a man years older than herself, cause he had got a lot of money. She
hated the sight of him, and when his money was done, deserted him.

"When Dick Wilmot came here she professed to fall in love with him. You see, sir, he was young and good-looking, and Sally made up her mind to have him. But it was a shameful bit of business all through.

"I'm ashamed to own it now, sir," she went on, "but I helped her on in her wicked plan. She gave me money and all sorts of presents, and promised me more when she was married to Dick. He, poor fellow, was dragged one night, and she swore that he offered her marriage, but he didn't. Anyway, he married her, and a pretty life of it she led him. At last she got him into prison, and while he was there, she makes up her mind to rid herself of him, and so got me to do the wicked thing I did, and say she was dead.

"I shall never forget poor Dick's face when I told him. I thought he would a-bin real mad, and a felt like murderin' her when he come out of prison; but he didn't, he actually said something about forgiving her.

"And did she ask you to tell him of her former marriage?" asked Mr. Noel.

"Not she," returned the old woman. "I di'd that on my own account. You see, she had served Dick so bad that I thought I'd just let him know that she never was his wife. I thought maybe he'd be glad to know it, and as she wasn't dead I thought she'd be likely to find him out, and bother him for money, and ruin all his prospects again."

"And what you tell me is the truth, and nothing but the truth, as before God?" asked Mr. Noel. "You will see he is in His presence, you know," he added.

"I know, sir, I know," sobbed the woman. "But as God is my witness, I have told the truth in this matter, and nothing but the truth, and may God Almighty forgive me for my wicked sin."

"I suppose the real husband of Sarah Jones is now dead?" the minister enquired.

"Dead, sir? No, that he ain't," cried the old woman.

"Poor old man, he is bedridden, as I am, but he was alive a year or two ago, and living in one room, just as I am, not a great distance from here.

Within the next few moments Mr. Noel had succeeded in obtaining the address of this old man, besides many other particulars, from Mrs. Quinton. He then gave her poor father's message, which was one of kindness and love. He also told her of father's illness, but only that much of the re-appearance of the woman calling herself my father's wife as she left was.

He then administered to the temporal and spiritual needs of the poor, sinful creature, pointing her to Christ, the sacrifice and atonement for her guilt and sin.

Almost overjoyed at the success of his visit to Mrs. Quinton, and yet stricken and saddened by the awful revelation of sin that had come to him, our good angel hastened from the wretched house into the street, and on to the open thoroughfare.

The thought that the cloud had lifted, that if it could be proved that what she had said was true concerning Mr. Jones' previous marriage, and if the old man was still living, that my father was entirely free from the lustsome creature who claimed him as her husband, was almost overpowering to him.

In his gladness of heart he made his way to the nearest post-office, and a few minutes later a message was being flashed along the wires to our stricken home at Stoneleigh, that was to set all the glad bells of our hearts ringing with joy. But oh, the pity of it! oh, the horror of it! I shiver as I write, for little did we think that within a few brief hours our song of gladness were to be turned into mourning, and our light into the blackness of darkness and despair, for we knew not the terrible revelation that was to come from the old man, whom Mrs. Quinton had said was the legal husband of the woman who claimed to be my father's wife.

This, with all the wonderful events that followed, the next part of our story, entitled "SEVERED BY A WOMAN," will relate.

(To be Continued).

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MOTHER buried her sobbing face on my neck. We could not speak — "Pass in," said the minister. "Your husband lies there," pointing to the bed on which a grizzly old man lay, his face half covered with — "That's not my husband! That's not Dick Wilmot," the woman cried. "Yes, it is," returned Mr. Noel. "He is not Mr. Richard Wilmot, but he is your lawful husband, and Mr. — never was.

A hideous, scornful laugh broke from the woman, and rushing to the bed she

See "SEVERED BY A WOMAN," next week.

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Pritchard's "Vegetine" Pills are sold only by the David Macqueen Co., 12 Paternoster Row, London.
It was with strangely mingled feelings that our dear, kind friend, Mr. Noel, left Mrs. Quinton's bedside. Feelings of pain and sorrow at the awful revelations that had come to him of the sad life lived in some of the back London streets, and the adverse circumstances which surround so many lives.

But the feeling of gratitude, of gladness and delight that the woman's statement had confirmed the story my father had told, and that he was really freed from the horrible creature who claimed to be his wife, and that she had never in reality been his wife, out-weighed all the painfulness of the other side.

Light of heart, and with deep, fervent thanksgiving to God, he first of all hurried to a Post Office and sent us a telegram. Such a brief word, and he was well assured that we should understand.

To the outside world and to those through whose hands the message had passed, the words meant nothing, but to mother and I, and to our loved one upstairs, they meant worlds.

Mother buried her sobbing face on my neck, and my tears fell one by one on her head. We could not speak, and our souls' thanksgiving to God we could only just sob out, but the Lord understood.

As we stood thus, our bright, bonnie Jack came bounding into the kitchen. For a moment he looked at us in amazement, then, his eyes lighting on the telegram, that had fallen to the floor, he guessed the cause, and picked it up.

He had heard all father's story, and the message "All Correct," meant to him all that it meant to us.

"Dear old dad," he cried. Then, clenching his hands, he cried in the same breath: "That she-dragon! I'd like to have her for a football for an hour."

He flung his arms round the pair of us and hugged us like a bear, all the while muttering what he'd like to do
with the creature who had dared ever to claim to be his father's wife.

It was when Jack had left us, and our sobbing had subsided, that mother, picking up her Bible from the table, turned to the passage quoted in the telegram.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord;" she softly read.

"And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, but let the man of sin which bringeth workers to pass.

"Or of the woman," I murmured, as my mother's voice ceased, "who would have ruined all our lives.

"For ev'ry doer shall be cut off." I added, repeating the Scripture that followed on the portion. Mr. Noel had spoken.

"But those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth," my mother whispered. "That is the secret, Judith. What is the secret, Judith. Waiting on Him, resting, trusting, fully and entirely in Him, even in the bitter darkness of the trial.

"If I may ask, sir, how the good news up to my father. What passed between there isn't in my power to relate, but when I presently went up, father was sitting up in bed, his head pillowed on mother's knees, a beautiful, restful look of content filling each dear face.

"Did you know, dear, that he could do this? He asked.

"With us?" I said. "We have been directed to the foot of the cross, Martin, you know.

In telling out my father's story, I have omitted saying anything of the fact that I could not even name a secret, but rather, my life's love.

"Yes, I, Judith, though not yet sixteen, was really in love, and the object of my love was no less a person than our late dear minister's second son.

Edgar Douglas was about two years older than myself, and, during his father's three years' ministry in the Stoneligh Circuit, he had been engaged as clerk in one of the best business houses—the house my father served in.

He was a tall, happy-looking young fellow, and more than a score of the young ladies of our congregation were naturally in love with him.

I was but a child in years, compared with most of those, so that, when Edgar began to show me little attentions, such as contriving to walk home with me from the prayer-meetings, carrying my books, helping me on with my homework, and so forth, it never occurred to me that I was in love with him, and I never wondered filled my heart;—and, well, I had better confess the truth—a quite big love filled it, too.

Just at first I did not realize that it was love, I seemed such a child, in years. But it was, and from the moment I realized it I knew I loved a woman.

I kept my secret, at least I tried to do so, but I am thinking I did not thoroughly succeed in this, for more than once father remarked that I had changed wondrously in some way, and mother seemed to look at me questioningly with her dear, soft eyes, as if to make out my happy secret—the secret I was, as yet, afraid of confessing even to myself.

One day a startling announcement was made to me. It was on a Saturday, and father had returned from business affairs of the week. We never talked business, mother and ourselves often, and over his cup of tea, then always had a good hot dinner, for one of the rules of my mother's house had always been, that when I was good and had always been, cold dinners on sundays, so that we could all go to the morning service.

On this particular Saturday, the dinner was all ready on the table, and I was in the kitchen. When father came in, then always had a good dinner, for one of the rules of my father's house had always been, cold dinners on Sundays, so that we could all go to the morning service.

"What is the news that has filled me with such surprise?" he asked me, then he turned to the table and said, "What is the news that has filled me with such surprise?" I turned to the table and said, "What is the news that has filled me with such surprise?"

I looked up at the table and said, "What is the news that has filled me with such surprise?"

He looked up at the table and said, "What is the news that has filled me with such surprise?"

When, with the news that was to have been broken to me, I grew almost frightened, was I afraid that he and mother had discovered that I, their Judith, and not much more than a child in years, was in love?

When we were in the parlour alone, father took me by the hand, and gazed into my eyes.

"My little Judith!" he whispered.

"Yes, father. I managed to grasp.

"Does my little girl love anyone besides her mother and old dad?" he asked.

Oh, dear, my face went crimson again. I felt the hot flush rise, and did all I could to keep it back, but it was useless.

Dad smiled, and my eyes sank before his gaze.

"Don't be afraid to tell daddy," he said, stroking my head with his hand, oh, so gently.

"I like someone," I ventured to reply.

"Who's she, little girl?"

"Edgar," I murmured.

"Edgar Douglas?" he inquired.

I nodded my head.

"You can't help it, I half sobbed, and oh, daddy, I hope it isn't wrong.

He smiled. Daddy's face grew beautiful when he smiled.

"No," he said, "it is not wrong.

You won't tell him, I cried, a sudden fear taking hold of me.

"No, I won't tell him," he laughed back. "I will leave you to do that.

"Me? Me?" I gasped. "Oh, father!"

Father drew me into his arms, and kissed my flushed brow, oh, so tenderly.

"There is no need to be frightened about, dearie," he said. "Love comes to us all. It is God's gift, and, if rightly directed and used, it is a wonderful power for good.


"Edgar Douglas?" I repeated, touching my bold brow, to make sure that it was really my father speaking.

"Yes, dear," he replied. "He told me so himself.

I wondered if I could possibly be hearing aright, and I was conscious of sobbing out:

"Is it true? Is it true?

"Quite true, dearie," answered my father, "and he has asked me to give you to him for his own dear little wife, some time in the future—that is, if my Judith loves him,

he added. "If not, well—"

The flood-gates of my soul were flung open, and with a rush of feeling I leapt into my father's arms.

"If I love him? Oh, I do, I do! He is so good, so kind, and a real Christian!

"Yes, he is all that," returned my father, "and I love him, too," he added, "but, of course, he has his way to make in this world. I wish it would work itself all out, and we might not have to part."

It wasn't kept a secret-long, and for a time I had to endure black looks and not a few unkind, sneering remarks from the disappointed ones.

But Edgar's love so filled my heart and life, that there was no room for oubt else.

When, therefore, the following day, Mr. Douglas was removed to the next circuit, Edgar went into lodgings in the town, and Mr. Noel followed in Edgar's father's place.

It was the thought of Edgar, of losing his love, of losing him, that made the awful sorrow that hovered over me greater than it was for a long time. Probably, mother and I could not wait until I had passed my twentieth birthday.

That evening, Edgar came, and it was all settled; and I, the little Judith whom the score of young ladies at the chapel who had tried their best to win the minister's second son, and looked upon me as only a bit of an upstart, was engaged.

It wasn't kept a secret-long, and for a time I had to endure black looks and not a few unkind, sneering remarks from the disappointed ones.

But Edgar's love so filled my heart and life, that there was no room for oubt else.

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It was the thought of Edgar, of losing his love, of losing him, that made the awful sorrow that hovered over me greater than it was for a long time. Probably, mother and I could not wait until I had passed my twentieth birthday.

During the days of suspense, and when the cloud lowered over us, I saw but little of Edgar. I could not meet him. I could not be in his company, with such a weighty fear in my heart, and my father's illness had been such as to keep me largely in the house and in his

the receipt of the telegram that, as we believed, en
tiredly cleared our dear father; my first heart-cry was for dear father — I could see him now without the awful cloud between.

But oh, little did I think that, while mother and I were rejoicing in the fact that the cloud had so wondrously lifted, another was rising, even more dense and blacker still, and that, like the very pall of death, it was to fall upon us, and entirely obscure the light that had arisen.

CHAPTER II.
MR. NOEL PLAYS A BOLD GAME.

WHILE we were reveling in the good news the telegram contained, Mr. Noel was passing through other scenes in London.

After despatching the telegram to us so that we might be relieved from the crushing expense he knew we should be feeling, he hailed a cab, and asked to be driven to an address—not the one Mrs. Quinton had given him, but to the address of the woman who claimed to be his father's wife.

The driver smiled at the address.

"It's the queerest shop," he said, "and a good way there.

The fare will be five bob.

Mr. Noel mounted and bade him drive on, and for an hour they rattled through streets and thoroughfares totally unknown to the minister.

Presently the cab drove from the more open thoroughfares into one of a nest of back streets, at last drawing up at the door of a corner public-house, into which Mr. Noel went.

When, presently, he came out, he was accompanied by the horrible creature who gave her name as Mrs. Richard Wilmot, and the pair entered the cab, Mr. Noel giving fresh instructions to the driver.

After a quarter-of-an-hour's drive through fairly respectable streets, the cab turned again into the narrow, back streets, eventually arriving at the corner of a narrow court.

All these details were related to us by Mr. Noel afterwards, for he was most minute in all the description of his adventures.

The cab pulled up at the corner, and Mr. Noel, alighting, bade the woman follow him.

"Where are you taking me?" she demanded.

"To your husband," Mr. Noel returned.

She laughed in a low, chuckling way.

"Oh, I knew Dicky would club up," she cried. "I reckon he's come himself with the two hundred pounds, which, I think, is a easy way of letting him off, and letting him keep his goody-goody character down yonder at Stoneleigh, and also his present wife.

"Your husband will settle all matters with you," replied the minister.

"My business is to take you to him; so come along.

"An' he's well enough to come to town," she laughed. "I knew his illness was all sham; I could see through it all."

"Could you?" said our friend.

"He'll know me well enough," she went on, "and be glad to see me."

Presently Mr. Noel halted outside a poor tenement house about halfway down the court, then knocked at the door.

"Dick has not chosen a very aristocratic place to receive his wife," she said, glancing up at the house, "but there, that don't matter so long as the gold is all right."

The pair passed in through the door to the dark passage. Inside was a woman, to whom he spoke in low tones.

"Yes, the first door on the top, sir," she replied. Her fingers closing greedily over the coin he had slipped into her hand.

The pair then passed up the stairs. On the top was a door to the right, which Mr. Noel opened.

"Pass in," he said to the woman, "your husband is in there."

The woman obeyed, followed by the minister, who turned the key in the door behind him.

"There is your husband," he said, pointing to the bed in the corner, on which a grizzly old man lay, his face half covered with the dirty coverlet.

"That's not Dick Wilmot! That's not my husband!" the woman cried, in loud, angry tones.

"Yes it is," returned Mr. Noel. "He is not Mr. Richard Wilmot, but this man is your lawful husband, and Mr. Wilmot never was."

A horrid expression broke from her.

"Your sin has found you out," he added. "Your crimes and falsehoods have been brought to light. There lies your lawful husband—a poor, half-dead, half-blind fellow, whom you deserted after getting all the money from him that you could."

A hideous, scorpion laugh broke from the woman, and, rushing to the bed, she tore off the coverlet from the man's face.

The action roused him, and, paining as he was, he started up in the bed.

"Sall! Sall!" he gasped.

The man's recognition of her confirmed the truth of Mrs. Quinton's statement to Mr. Noel. He had played his game with a bold stroke, and the man calling her by name sealed the thing.

"Yes, I'm Sall!" returned the woman, unabashed. "And you are old Sandy. Fancy coming across your path like this after all these years!"
"You wicked jade!" hissed the man. "You raised my life, you did!"

"Not a bit of it," she cried.

"What have you come to torment me for, now?" he asked, and pointing with his lean hand to the door, added:

"Go! Out you go! You're nothing to me, you false Scandinav!

The woman looked at the man on the bed to Mr. Noel.

"There," she laughed, "you've heard what he said. This good-natured person says you are my husband," she cried in the old man's ear.

"I've never heard of the thing," he repeated. "Not I."

"There," cried the woman, with another mocking laugh, turning her bloated face to Mr. Noel. The old man, poor wretch, for one moment, remained speechless. His first thought was that old Mrs. Quinton had deceived him; and yet he had sworn she had spoken the truth.

A swift cry went up to Heaven for help; then, commanding the woman to stand aside, he bent over the old man and said:

"Some years ago you married a young woman named Sarah Jones."

The old man nodded his head.

"She robbed you of your money and left you," went on Mr. Noel. The man was going through the form of marriage with another man.

The old man had heard every word, and his face was strongly working

"The form of marriage was in me," he said, "not in the other."

Mr. Noel looked at the man dumb-founded.

"Thank goodness the judge was never my legal wife," the man went on, *demon that she was!*

"But you were married to her right enough," urged Mr. Noel. "Mrs. Quinton, whom you know, told me so."

At the name of Mrs. Quinton, the old man opened his eyes, and the woman made another audible sound in her throat.

"Oh, she never knew the truth," the old man replied.

"It didn't own it, cause, you see, the chicken hadn't come home to roost like, and I kept it to myself, like.

The old man was puzzling. He was slow of speech and gnawed for breath, and, to Mr. Noel's horror, he saw that the woman was enjoying what she termed the fun.

"Own up to the truth, Sandy," she called out, "and you shall have a fiver of Dicky Wilmot's money when I get it."

The old man ground his teeth at her, but somehow, with his whole bitterness against her, the sound of 'money' caused a new light to shine in his eyes.

Mr. Noel bent lower

"Tell me the truth," he said. "Tell me when and where you married Sally Jones, and what was it you kept back from Mrs. Quinton, tell me all you can, and you shall be well paid for it."

CHAPTER III.

ENTERING THE CLOUD.

The old man raised himself higher in the bed.

"I married her right enough," he began, casting his eyes across to the woman. "I married her at Church, in Whitechapel. She didn't know as she had been married afore, but I had; but I ain't the old gal, I had married afore couldn'titch it. We was a-living in Sheffield, so one day I was a-sinin', an' I tramped up to London wi' a bit of money as I had, an' left the old gal to look after herself."

Haven had enough of the old gal, I thought, when Sarah Forre made up to she did, I'd have her second, and well I know I had her, too. She, a deceased as she was, soon robbed me of my bit of money, and then fanged her hook.

"I never troubled to look after her," went on the man.

"You see, sir, she had only served me as I served my real wife; it was sort o' tit-for-tat like, leastways I thought so, an' I believed that the Almighty had a hand in it, for we never used to read something out of the Bible about what we measured out to others bein' measured back to us."

"Besides, you see, sir," he went on. "I had no more claim on her, an', thanks I, if I started after her, I might get myself into trouble; so I never said a word, not even to me friend Molly Quinton, but just grinned and bore it; not even when I heard as Sally had married a swell country bloke. An' that's the truth, sir, as my name's Sandy.

As might be imagined, the man's statement fell on Mr. Noel's ears like an awful blow. If what the man said was true, then there stood out the terrible fact that, as the woman's marriage to Sandy had been but a form, her marriage to my father had been a legal one, unless—

Oh, a world hung on that "unless."

Mr. Noel placed his mouth to the old man's ear, saying:

"Your first wife might have been dead before you married Sarah Jones."

Sandy smiled.

"Oh, no, sir. I said, 'she wasn't. I tramped back to Sheffield after Sal left me an' asked the old gal to forgive me. An' she did, an' a month or two month gone, she died, an' I buried her an' got the certificate in the box under the bed. Then I comes back to London again."

"Can't you make a look at the certificate if ye like," he added, "an' of the marriage one too. They'm all three in the box under the bed."

With all his hopes fast crumbling beneath his feet, Mr. Noel drew out the box, and a few moments later was putting over three facts to his eyes.

They were, the marriage certificate of Sandy to Mary Ann Frost, at Sheffield, the certificate of his marriage to Sarah Jones, and the certificate of Mary Ann Frost's death at Sheffield, dated nearly two years after his marriage with Sarah Jones.

Mr. Noel could scarce repress a cry of disappointment and horror. It was for his heart was breaking, it was for my poor father that he groaned aloud. Then, too, horror was in his soul at the awful revelation that had come to him. Never before had London low life been unmasked to him in actual experience, and the thought of its sin, its treachery, its misery, its falseness, appalled him.

"Now what have ye got to say for Dicky Wilmot," sneering the woman, "and say that he's not my husband, that I've no claim on him."

Mr. Noel suddenly drew himself up. A sudden thought had come to him.

"What of the theft you committed, for which Mr. Wilmot was wrongfully imprisoned" he asked.

Her face, red and blotted as it was, paled, and a frightened look was in her eyes.

"Do you know the penalty for such a crime," he asked, noting her fear.

Suddenly the frightened look in her eyes gave place to one of bold defiance, as she hissed forth:

I know the law as well as you, and you ain't goin' to frighten me."

There was nothing more to be got from the old man, the only thing left for our friend to do, was to prove the truth of the certificates, and that the woman was the identical Sally Jones whom my father, in his young, wild days, had been allured into marrying.

"Well, what now?" asked the woman, defiantly.

"You can go," returned Mr. Noel, "and you shall hear from me to-morrow."

"Not I," she cried. "I shall go straight back with you to Dicky, right back to Stoneleigh."

Mr. Noel gasped in silent horror.

"Good-bye, old chappie!" she cried, speaking to the old man on the bed, "when I get Dicky's money, you shall have a double fiver, that you shall. I'd give ye a sov. now if I had it, but 'pon me honour, I haven't a bob."

Mr. Noel heard her avowal that she had no money.

"Then she couldn't travel to Stoneleigh," he told himself, that time, was what he wanted, and time he must secure; and, as the woman was apparently moneyless, he could easily do so.

The pair left the house, and passed down the court to where the cab waited.

"Get in, sir," said Mr. Noel.

The woman obeyed him, and during the cab-ride he succeeded in securing, for a money consideration, the woman's avowal to remain in London, and to hold silence for three clear weeks.

When present at the public-house from which she had come, she alighted.
it was the following evening when Mr. Noel returned to Stoneleigh. We were all in the brightest of spirits, knowing nothing of what had occurred since the receipt of the telegram.

Something in his face, as the light in the little parlour flashed on it, caused a strange pain to clutch at my heart. He pressed my hand in silence, then asked for my mother.

"She is with father," I replied. "Won't you come up to his room and tell us all?" The news in his face has made him almost well again!"

The minister drew a long breath, his lips moved, and I caught him and held them. "God help him! Help them all!"

This cry increased the vagueness, intangible fear that had taken hold of me.

"What is it?" I gasped. "Is it anything we can keep from mother?"

He thought for a moment, then replied:

"No, I think not. She had better know all the truth."

With aching heart, I called mother from my father's room, and Jack, dear old Jack, came to the parlor, too. And there in the hushed evening hour, Mr. Noel told us out to us all the terrible details I have related already.

No sound broke from mother's lips, but her face, it was pious to behold, and her little form would have fallen had I not held her firmly in my arms. Jack, dear, outspoken, impulsive Jack, he could not contain his speech.

"The she-dragon," he roared. "Does she think she is coming here to mislead over me?"

Of course he could not enter, as mother and I could, into the thought of all this woman's claims meant to our dear mother, for though I could not speak, I knew that our darling was just entering her awful Gethsemane.

"My mother! Oh, my mother!" I at last moaned out; and she, burying her face on my breast, sobbed aloud in her son again.
The love of her life, her darling, had been taken. There was no more. She was so rejoiced to see the tears and hear the choking sobs, and a deep, fervent "Thank God" broke from the minister.

It was presently, when mother's weeping had subsided, and my own tears had been thrust back, that Mr. Noel spoke.

"Now," he began, "we must lock this thing fully in the face. God has permitted it to come. His purpose in it we cannot understand. The woman will remain silent for three weeks, then—then—"

He paused. Mother shook in my arms, and I, well, I just then entered into the very darkest of the cloud, for not only did I see our home desolated, and my mother and all of us branded with disgrace, but I saw Edgar Douglas, my own heart's love, for ever put out of my life.

Just then, Mr. Noel's voice fell again on my ear, saying:

"However hard it may be, there is only one right course, and it is better to do the right at all costs."

CHAPTER IV.

MIZPAH.

"NLY one right course!" I mentally repeated the sublime modern times. "And that right course," I told myself, "will mean nothing less than a terrible exposure, and—what would be a thousand times worse, separation from our loved father."

"It will kill him," I told myself, and in my distress I waited half aloud: "O God, take him! Take him now, make him to forget!"

"Let us pray about it," suggested Mr. Noel. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, for He cares for you," he added.

We all sank on our knees. For the first few moments we just breathed out our heart's burden, more in sighs than the articulate words of prayer.

"The Lord understands," whispered the minister; then presently he burst forth in such a torrent of earnest prayer as I had never before heard. As he prayed, a wondrous calmness fell on my spirit, even the fear of losing Edgar that had dogged my heart.

"There has been no sin, no wrong on your father's part," said Mr. Noel, after we had risen from our knees.

"He has been the wronged one, and the doer of another's lies and deception. And I am certain God will work out his deliverance, through the thought of your good father."

A thought has been given me," he added. "It was while I was praying that it came."

We all waited anxiously for him to speak, but Mr. Noel was a very cautious man, and never in a hurry.

"Mr. Noel," I said, "takes the form of a plan, and it is this—that your father and all of you move away from Stoneleigh for a few weeks. A change will do your father good. The house here need not be given up. You will only go away for a change."

I looked at mother, and mother looked at me; we were both thinking the same thing, namely, as to where we could go, and the expense.

"I have a friend," Mr. Noel went on, "who has a small furnished cottage in quite an out-of-the-world place, miles from here. This cottage is at my disposal for any Christian for a few weeks. This will be the place for you, I think, and—"

He lowered his voice as he added: "If God's will is to permit a separation, it would be easier and better these three hours."

We understood him; we knew that he was thinking of God's work as well as our feelings. And mother and I thanked God in our hearts for his tender, loving thought, and agreed to his proposal.

Then came the point as to whether father should be told any details as to his past.

A few minutes later, Mr. Noel came to the conclusion that he should not know—not in present, at least.

"It will be time enough, if God does not interfere, when the three weeks have expired," he said, "as to know the news now would be absolutely disastrous."

"It would kill him!" I sobbed.

It was this dear man of God, Mr. Noel himself, who went to father, and just dealt with him as directed by God, and broke to him the news that we were going to take him away from Stoneleigh.

"It will be all right," he said, when mother and I went to his room. "Mr. Noel says God will make it so. And, dear wife," he added, clasping my mother with his frail arm, "you are my own true wife, my spirit is knit to your spirit, my heart is knit to thy dear heart; nothing, no, nothing can sever such a union!"

I thrust back my tears, but oh, the ache of my poor heart, as I heard him speak thus.

Shuffling quietly from the room, I left mother alone with him.

That evening Edgar came, and he, dear fellow, little dreaming of the agony I was enduring, spoke to me of the time when I should be his own dear wife.

He had that day received a promotion in the office—a promotion that meant a considerable increase, and he was only planning his mind for our future home, though yet so distant.

He remarked that I was not looking well. "I know," he said, kissing me, oh, so tenderly, "I know you have been your dear father's chief nurse; but you need nursing yourself, or a really good rest and change," he said.

I then told him of our intended flight to the country cottage.

His face fell somewhat when he found that nearly a hundred miles would divide us.

"And you will be away several weeks?" he asked.

I nodded my head, my heart wailing. "Perhaps for ever!"

"Oh, sweetie!" he cried, "how shall I exist without you? It will be a sorry time, for how but if he benefits you, my darling, I will not mind," he cried, in the next breath.
Oh, it was almost unbearable, for in my heart of hearts I was thinking of that entire separation that would have to be, if—if—oh, not even in secret could I utter the word.

He drew me to his breast, and I allowed my face to lie there, pillowed on his dear bosom, for might it not be for the last time? I was telling myself.

In two days we were all ready. We were to leave early after breakfast the next morning.

Edgar came again. "It will be only good-bye for a little while," he said, as he held me in his arms. "I shall run down and see my sweetie in her little rural cot in three weeks' time, or a month at the most."

I shivered from head to foot at this announcement. "Three weeks or a month?" I inwardly moaned. "Oh, what, what would have happened before that time had expired, and where might mother and I be by that time?"

He noted the shiver. "You are cold, dearest," he said, and he clasped me more tightly in his arms, as though he would infuse warmth into me.

The woman, grabbing at the gold he gave her, reiterated her promise.

We bade each other not "Good-bye"—Edgar would not use the word—but "Farewell until we meet again," he said. Then he breathed the sweet word, "Mizpah," into my ear.

"The Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another." "How long would that be?" was the question that was tearing at my heart.

"For life? O God, it might be for life!" I told myself.

At last he left me. I caught the last glimpse of his dear form as he disappeared down the road, then I flew up to my room, and lay with my face pressed to the floor in silent agony.

But not for long could I indulge in the luxury of quiet grief. Mother was needing me, and Jack was calling me, so, bilder my hot eyes, I went down, and only mother knew something of what I had been passing through.

The next morning we quitted Stoneleigh. Crowds of the chapel people came to wish us God-speed, and to cheer my father, and not one of them knew the real cause of our departure, but all expressed the hope that he would soon return, well and strong again.
CHAPTER V.

IN THE FIRE.

The day flew swiftly along, each one bringing us nearer to the fate that Mr. Noel kept us supplied with letters. He was away in London and Sheffield a part of the time, and private slips were enclosed in his letters for mother and I, so that father might share the general letter with us.

It wanted but two brief days to the day that Mr. Noel had promised to meet the woman. All our hopes of deliverance had now vanished, for Mr. Noel's private letters had informed us that all the man, Sandy, had stated, proved to be perfectly true concerning his wife at Sheffield.

How mother and I lived I don't know, but we did, and for dear father's sake we were compelled to keep up a brave exterior.

Father had wonderfully improved in health, and with renewed strength he began to question us on various matters.

It was in the peaceful hour of evening, when all nature seemed hushed to a holy quiet, that Mr. Noel suddenly appeared at our cottage door.

Father was not in his room, for he was still unable to walk about without assistance.

The look on the minister's face betokened no good news.

He held my mother's hand in his own in greeting: "The Lord sustains thee," he faltered.

That was enough. I read the awful doom behind that cry. Mother was not my father's wife, and I and Jack and dear little Dolly were--oh, I could not endure the thought.

My face sunk forward on the cushion of the couch, and I sobbed aloud; and mother, she sat on the floor, her face turned to the dazzling sun outside.

But such weakness could not be indulged in long.

Springing to my feet, I held out my hands to Mr. Noel.

"What must we do?" I cried. "Oh, advise, direct us."

In his own quiet, thoughtful way he pointed out to us our next step, and my father's duty.

"Though, in God's sight," he said, turning to my mother, "you are his own true wife, yet in the eyes of the law that other creature is."

"My brother bowed his head.

"The woman don't want her father," I cried. "It is money, and he has money in the bank!"

"I know, I know," returned Mr. Noel. "But even though she could be for ever silenced by money, that does not make the thing right. There is only one right course."

And that was faltered.

He answered in a voice thick with emotion and tears:

"Separation!"

"Separation!" I repeated. "All to be cast adrift from our father and home! Oh, that it will be too awful--too awful for father and for us all!"

"Poor child," he murmured, and he laid his cool hand on my heated brow.

"The furnace is hot," he added, "but if the Son of God walks with you in it, all will be well; the fire will but consume the dross."

"To read of others, to listen to such talk, was altogether another thing than being in the fire oneself."

"The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is your God," continued the good man.

"Yes," I sobbed; "but, oh, their trial was not like ours."

It was at this juncture, at this most crucial moment, that the strength and nobility of my mother's character came out.

"God's will be done," she said, and it came from the depths of her soul.

"Darling," she whispered, clasping me to her side, "now is the time for trusting, for resting in God, for hanging our care on His heart...."

I had never heard her speak so before, and I gazed up into her dear face in surprise. There was an expression on her face that revealed to me, more even than her words, that my mother had suddenly become a heroine.

"Confess all, my dear, to Mr. Noel."

"You are wise, and can view the matter from a different stand-point to us. God must be first," she added. "His name, His honour, His work, must take precedence of all else."

Her request, and the manner of her preferring it, broke a wound that would relieve to our minister, and in his own kind, fatherly way he sat by my mother's side, and counselled her as though she had been his own dear child.

"The plan that I should suggest," he began, "would be this—that you and your children remain here, and that Mr. Noel must be removed to London, and await God's direction."

"You mean that we must separate?" asked my mother.

"Yes," returned Mr. Noel. "It must be so."

Mother bowed her head in resignation.

"Mr. Noel has money in the bank," Mr. Noel went on, "sufficient to keep things going for a time. You, of course, must take the largest share, as you will have the children."

"What of our house at Stonesleigh?" I asked.

"That will be safe enough, my wife will attend to that. And we know not what a day may bring forth."

I began to see the wisdom of Mr. Noel's advice. The Stonesleigh people would not know of the separation, and he would let the woman who claimed to be his wife know of his separation, and of his father's removal to London.

Oh, how I thanked God for such a friend! And dear little Dolly would only think that father was away on a visit, for Mr. Noel had a home already arranged for him in London, with a married sister, to whom he had confided our sad story.

But who was to make the truth known to father, for now he must know all?

This, Mr. Noel undertook to do. "But not tonight," he said. "To-morrow will soon enough. Let him have a good night's rest."

The morrow dawned. Father had slept well. Mr. Noel gathered with us in the little parlour to breakfast. Ah, that meal! To-morrow morning we should be bidding our father goodbye.

Mr. Noel divided our morning portion a part of the Prophecy of Zechariah, and there was a wondrous depth of feeling in his voice as he read the precious verse:

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and shall know it is the Lord, speaking in my name; for they shall no more be called after the name of their god, nor be instructed to the work of their god."

He closed the Bible, we all sank upon our knees, and the heart's cry of each of us was, "The Lord is my God." It was with these words on his lips and heart, that Mr. Noel went up the stairs to break to my father the woful news of our separation.

"All is well," he said, when he came down. "Your father is in the Everlasting Arms, and the waters will not overwhelm him."

He slipped away up to his room, and when presently, I ventured up and peeped inside the door, they were locked in each other's arms, and mother was saying aloud:

"Not our will, but Thine be done, oh, our Father in Heaven."

And father, his own dear voice all shaking with sobs, invoked such a blessing on the head of my mother as I had never before heard, and I crept away, feeling the moment and the scene all too hallowed and sacred to intrude on.

The next morning came back to the parlour, her dear face, though lined with pain and sorrow, bore a calm, peaceful expression—in fact, it bore the unmistakable mark of intercourse in the secret place with the King of Kings, and, as never before, some of the image of the Master shone from her dear sweet eyes.
CHAPTER VI.
SEVERED!

THAT day was one that must forever live in my memory, every detail of it stands out before me now, vivid as the light.

Mother was busy preparing dear father's clothes. She moved about with that hurry about her that death brings. She whispered to me, "Tell dear, news of the day." After keeping the secret for all the while, she was not thinking of herself in that awful seclusion that the morning would bring; it was only of him who would be going forth from our midst, going from our presence though not from us, for in spirit we should still be the united family.

After attending to certain things that fell to my hand to do, and while mother was making all her loving preparations for father's comfort, I shut myself up in my room. I had come to the conclusion that I must put Douglas Dolly behind forever. I recognize the freedom of my life. Never must he be linked to one whose name and family public disgrace might fall at any moment.

That morning I had received a letter from him—a letter couched in such tender, endearing terms as to cause my heart to throb, and the tears to come to my eyes. It had written to say that he should be down on the following Saturday for two days. This news had added a fresh pang to my heart, for I knew that if Edgar came, and found my father gone, he would have to bear something of the awful torture of the day. Besides, my duty was clear: I must be spared, I must be saved. Even to see him, with such a terrible secret between us, would be unbearable. It was for the purpose of writing to him that I locked myself in my room.

I re-read his letter, laid on the floor, and sobbed and prayed, then tried to write.

How to begin, and in what words to state that our engagement must be broken off, I knew not. I wanted to write truly for I had to do what was right and mean just telling him that I loved him more than ever.

Oh, it was a terrible ordeal. I wrote half-a-dozen letters, soaked them with tears, tore them up as useless, for each one breathed out something of my love, something of my heart, and such letters would have hurried his coming.

"It must be a short, sharp, business-like note," I sat last to myself, and then I, his little Judith, whose heart and whole being were full of the deepest love for him, actually wrote the following:

"Moss Cottage, Wood Glen, 5—shire.

"Dear Edgar—You must not come on Saturday. I cannot explain matters to-day, but can only say that our engagement is at an end. It is nothing on your part, all on my own. If necessary, you shall know the reason at some future date. I repeat my request that you do not come here. I love you, but—do not come. Please believe that I am writing this solely for your own good and future happiness, and believe me to ever remain—Your friend,

Judith."

My innermost heart recoiled from the words I had written, as well as the style of the note, and as I re-read it through I shuddered at its apparent coldness and cruelty. I placed it in the envelope, and sealed it. I could not trust myself to read it again, or, I am sure, also would have been torn in shreds as the previous ones had been.

I was on the point of running away to the nearest letter-box to post it at once, when the thought occurred to me that it would be best to post it on Saturday, so that he would receive it on Sunday morning. Thus, I told myself, he would have no time to write for an explanation, and I tried to assure myself that he was too much of a gentleman to thrust himself in our company and home when he had been forbidden to do so.

Relieved by this thought, I placed the letter, ready sealed and stamped, in a secret place, to be posted on Friday.

It was Wednesday to-day, and on Thursday morning father would be going from us.

That last morning dear father had us all in his room. All that he said to us I cannot repeat, but I know we all in turn were clasped to his heart, and a special blessing was invoked on us separately.

Little Dolly was the first. He held her in his arms, her golden head resting on his shoulder.

"The little lamb of the flock," he murmured. "May the dear Lord ever carry thee in His own dear, strong arms, Dolly!"

Dolly was then sent from the room, and Jack—dear, brown-faced, bonny Jack—dung himself on the floor by father's knees.

"The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad!" cried my father, and I could hear on the dear boy's head, he added: "I go, but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your father—yes, to the land that is afar off."

Poor Jack crept away from the room, sobbing as though his heart would break.

"Bury the new!" Father held me for some moments to his breast in silence, then, stroking my hair, murmured:

"My little Judith, my first-born, my priceless treasure, my dearest blessing, I give the precious mother into your care. Never leave her, be husband, as well as child, to her, ever and ever open her to me."

"Promise me," he pleaded.

"I will! I will!" I sobbed. "Not even Edgar shall have me."

"I believe it!" he cried, then lifting my tear-stained face to his own upturned, and whispered:

"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, and the Lord shall cover thee all the day long, and shall dwell under the shadow of the Almighty."

I, like Jack, crept away from his embrace, speechless, my heart too full for any unspoken word.

As I drew aside he held his arms out to mother. She flew into them, and they were folded about her.

"Oh, thou wife of my soul, of my love!" he sobbed.

I could bear no more. I could not remain to witness those last moments between father and mother, whose love had been so utterly one. I staggered from the room, and down the stairs, and out into the garden, leaving only God and the angels to witness that final parting.

Ten minutes later, the carriage that was to take father and Jack to the station drove up, and a few moments later father, leaning on mother's arm, emerged from the cottage.

Both my dear parents were marvelously quiet. What had passed between them in their last moments I could not tell, but they were being borne up by the Everlasting Arms now.

Father was placed in his seat, and mother's own hand tucked the rag about his feet, and I arranged his luggage. Then came the last clasp of the hand, the last kiss, the last murmured word which was not even "Good-bye," but "Mill Willie," and then they both arose, the form as the vehicle turned the corner of the shady road.

While absent one from another, repeated my mother, as the carriage disappeared.

I drew her hand through my own, and led her back, not into the house, but down the garden path to where a bed of beautiful lilies-of-the-valley lay sheltered under the wall. They were in full bloom, and their fragrance was lovely.

"God careth for the lily," she whispered.

"Yes," I answered; "but they had their winter. A few weeks ago they were in the darkness of death and decay, but a resurrection came, and they are blooming again with beauty and sweetness."

Mother understood the little parable. She clasped my arm, and smiled, and as she smiled she lifted her face to the closing skies. Her eyes were beholding, alight off the resurrection glory that follows humiliation, darkness, and death.

Turning from the lily patch, we went into the house, and when mother had settled herself—not to idleness, but to some little domestic duty—I went in search of Jack and Dolly.

Jack I found in the wood, lying full length under a tree, sobbing his heart out; and Dolly was picking a bunch of flowers, "to make dear mother glad and happy, she said.

The cottage seemed strangely quiet that day, but a great peace had fallen on all our hearts. The Lord was watching over us in the absence of our loved one; the cross had become buried beneath the Lord's will; we were in very truth dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty, the Son of God was walking with us in the fire, and the beat was not consuming us.
CHAPTER VII.
A WONDERFUL DELIVERANCE.

FRIDAY morning's post brought us a letter from Mr. Noel, telling us of their safe arrival, and that my father appeared to have come the worse for his journey.

The morning passed. That day Mr. Noel was to meet the woman who had wrought such woe in our lives; and that day the letter that was to thrust Edgar from me was to be posted.

We had just finished our simple mid-day meal, though none of us felt like eating, when a lad was seen approaching the cottage.

As he came nearer I saw that it was a lad with an orange-coloured envelope, and a minute later I was reading about this extraordinary wire:

"Imperative that you all come to London to-day. Come at once!"

As that other telegram, received that time at Stoneleigh, so now again Mr. Noel indicated another Scriptural text, Deuteronomy xxxix., 5.

While I was speaking with mother as to paying the led for the delivery of the wire, Jack had searched out the chapter and verse.

"It's just a splendid verse!" he cried. "Listen!" and then he read aloud:

"And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee. He will be with thee, and will not fail thee, neither forsake thee. Fear not, neither be dismayed."

Something in the precious promise thus given us quelled all our fears, for the fear had come to mother and I that dear father had been suddenly taken worse.

The lad was paid and dispatched; a time-table consulted, and Jack hastened off for a vehicle to take us to the station. And an hour-and-a-half later we were being whirled away over the same line that father had travelled the previous day, en route for the same house that had opened its doors to our banished one.

It seemed too wonderful for words, so we just sat looking at each other, and quietly praying for strength to meet whatever the hasty summons might hold for us.

It was quite late in the evening when we arrived at the address given us, and we were received by Mr. Noel and his good son, Noel, was in the room.

"Richard is well," said Mr. Noel, noting our anxious looks.

"Can you bear a great, a sudden joy?" he asked, clasping my mother's hands within his own.

"The same Arms that sustained in the sorrow will sustain in the joy," my mother murmured.

"The deliverance has come," cried our friend.

This announcement, for a second, seemed to overpower both mother and I.

"However you accept," he said. "And oh, is it true this time?"

I asked, remembering the past disappointment.

"Yes, quite true," he returned; "no mistake this time."

"The woman has been proved to have been a fraud," I cried, eagerly. "She was not my father's wife."

"No, not that," replied Mr. Noel, in a quiet, deliberate way. "That would have beenwar perhaps, but God's ways are higher than ours."

"She is dead," he added.

We all drew a long breath of relief, but all felt unable to speak except Jack.

"Thank God!" he shouted, adding: "I only hope she isn't a cat-woman, with nine hurrid lives, and that she will not come to life again!"

Mother gave him a reproving glance.

"Tell us all," I entreated, recovering myself. "Did the letter say more?"

"No," returned Mr. Noel. "She died three days ago, died from heart failure, through heavy spirit-drinking."

"When I went to the house," he went on, "where she had promised to meet her, I was shown her dead body, and told all the awful details of her sad end. It was a terrible death!"

"Quite sure," replied Mr. Noel, "and I have the doctor's certificate of her death."

This struck us as being strange.

"And so she was your father's legal wife, and the expenses of the funeral will come on him."

We saw it all—at least, mother and I did.

"A herring-box would be good enough for her!" chimed in Jack.
You are his own true wife, yet in the eyes of the law that other creature is."

My determination to place the story I had written, of the night of sorrow through which we had passed, into my lover's hands before our marriage, I carried out.

It was on the Monday evening, after the prayer-meeting and Edgar and I were alone together in our little parlour, for mother and father, and Jack and little Dolly, were in the kitchen, all busy in the preparation for the wedding. It was with something of fear in my heart that I drew out from a drawer the brown-paper packet containing my work of weeks.

Edgar sat with his dear eyes following me. He seemed so intent upon watching my every movement that it made me more fearful still, and it was with a strange tremor in every limb that I crossed to his side, and laid the packet in his hand.

"It is something I wish you to read, dear," I said.

A smile played on his handsome young face as he unfastened the string, and saw the closely written sheets of paper.

"Your own writing, darling," he said, recognizing my handwriting.

"You are his own true wife, yet in the eyes of the law that other creature is."
"I didn't know," he added, with a laugh, "that my intended little wife had turned authoress."

"Don't!" I managed to falter. "I am not a writer —"

"Ain't you?" he cried, running his fingers through the pile of MSS. "If this is not writing, I don't know what it is."

"Yes," I murmured, "it is writing, of course, in one sense, but not in the way you mean."

My timidity suddenly vanished, and looking straight into his dear eyes, I said:

"It is for your eyes alone, dear Edgar, at present; it is the expression of our life together, which we had to bear, and which meant much suffering and sorrow."

He took my hand and clasped it within his own.

"And you did not tell me?" he cried. "Oh, my darling, why didn't you let me share your grief?"

"I couldn't, dear."

He tried to draw me to his breast, but I held back, and recovering my voice, said firmly:

"Edgar, I could not be united to you, and hold this secret of the past from you. Nothing must be hidden between us, dear."

He looked hard at me as I spoke of a secret of the past, as though it had been some secret in my own life.

"Take the story home," I went on; "read it, dear, and think it through carefully."

I could not finish what I would have said, for the emotion that swept over my lover's face was too sudden and startling.

His arm closed around me, and I was drawn to his breast in a passionate embrace.

"I will read it, darling, every word of it," he cried, "and think it through carefully."

He passed now, as I had done.

"And if what?" I asked.

"I will leave the 'it' until to-morrow," he said. "We shall see," he added, "but I guess, little sweetheart, that my story has a different meaning to yours."

I could not understand him. His manner, as well as his speech, puzzled me. But though I could not understand him, I could trust him, trust his love and his judgment.

Then, presently, he released me from his arms, he brushed the hair back from my brow, and holding my face between his hands, gazed right down into the depths of my eyes.

"God has a wonderful fashion of working, darling," he solemnly said.

"He has," I murmured, wondering to what he was referring.

My darling was about to add something more, when Jack appeared at the door.

"Two people have got a wonderful fashion of existing without eating," he cried. He had evidently heard my lover's last remark.

"And a fine cheap way of living," he added, and then, with one of his boisterous outbursts of laughter, he continued, with a sly look at Edgar: "I think I'll try the same thing, only there is not another Judith in the world."

"No, there is only one such a Judith as mine," smiled my lover.

"Well, you must come and have some supper," cried Jack. "The meter and paper and Doll are all waiting, and I wouldn't let them have something real nice."

And a real dainty supper we found all ready on the kitchen table, for, despite the wedding preparations, my mother had thought time to think of the present need. But nice as it was, I could not eat, and I noticed that Edgar had not taken much, and that his eyes kept wandering to the brown paper packet of MSS. I had given him, that he had laid with his hat on a chair. And I thought that his eyes as often wandered straight from the packet to dear old dad, as though he was in some way connecting its contents with his own life.

I thrust this thought from me, telling myself that it was fearfulness or fancy.

After supper, dad took the good old Book, and turning over its sacred pages, read one of his favourite passages: "Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord; for he will stir up jealousy against the inhabitants of the earth." I read it through to-day. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

When father closed the Book, Edgar led us in prayer. His prayer was more of praise than petitioning, and as he thanked God for the deliverances He had wrought, and for salvation, not only from sin and its penalty, but from enemies both seen and unseen, I found many questions clamouring in my heart again.

It was just outside the door, under the lovely star-dirty sky, that Edgar and I parted.

"You will not see me again," I said, "until you have read my story."

"Not?" he said, with a smile, "not until I have read it." I little thought, when he spoke, that he had made up his mind to sit up that very night and read it.

He kissed me good-bye, and I stood watching his departing figure until it was out of sight.

My sleep that night was very broken, and what sleep I did get was disturbed by troublesome dreams, in which the dead woman, who had claimed to be my father's wife, and my lover were strangely mixed.

Of course Jack remarked on my tired, pale look in the morning, and expressed his opinion that it would be a good thing when the wedding was over, or Edgar would only have a shadow to marry.

Mother looked at him reprovingly, but it was no use.

The next moment, while munching and smothering his lips over the delicious sausages (mother's own making), he managed to ask me his opinion that I hadn't want to leave home, and that she was repenting having promised to marry Edgar, and if I liked he would inform the young gentleman that his sister preferred remaining under the old roof a while longer—at least, until she was of age.

Of course I answered him with my whole heart, with the result that a woful howl of pain broke from him, for the huge piece of sausage he had just placed in his mouth had badly burnt his poor throat.

"Here, I say!" he managed to gasp, "don't murder a fellow before you have finished your breakfast.

The next instant I was kissing his poor tear-filled eyes, and the next he was gulping down cold milk, and the next he was laughing all over his face, and asking me if that was how I was going to serve Edgar, and had been practicing on him. "I thought," he cried, "my wedding present to him shall be a packet of good advice—never to eat sausages for breakfast, especially hot ones."

Despite his burnt throat, Jack managed to put away a sausage-and-a-half more, and then repaid me for the pain I inflicted on him by telling me that when I visited him in my new horns he would return good for evil, by the way of making my jam tarts and other little dainties disappear.

That day was a strange one to me, and more than a dozen times I found myself wondering when I should see Edgar again, and what effect the reading of my story would have on him.

To my surprise, I heard his well-known step coming down the street quite early that evening, and as I opened the door to him I saw that he had brought back my story with him.

"You have not read it," I cried, as he entered our little parlour.

"Every word," he said.

"Well?" I asked.

"Well, he returned, and then he smiled.

"Did it not surprise you very much?" I asked.

"No, not at all," he replied.

I greeted all the news, and all the minor details, as revealed by your story," he replied: "but I knew that the woman who marched into the chapel that Sunday night claimed to be your father's wife, and that her appearance caused his illness.

"I also knew," he added, "that the poor creature was dying.

My lover's announcement fairly startled me. For a moment I could not speak; I could only look at him in amazement.

"And you knew all along, all the time?" I asked, recovering my voice.
"Not all the time," he returned.

"And it made no difference to you—I mean, to your love for me?" I cried.

His reply was to press me passionately to his breast, and lay his lips to my pale cheek. "I, too, have a story to tell, darling," he said. "You write yours on paper. I must tell mine. Shall I tell it now?"

"Is it connected with our past sorrow?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "for I, too, had a share in it. God gave it to me."

"Tell me!" I cried. "Tell me all!"

CHAPTER IX.

DRAGON LANE.

My lover drew me to the couch, and pillowed my head, not on the cushions, but on his own dear shoulder.

"You did not know, darling," he began, "that during your absence with your friends in that out-of-the-world corner, that I had four days with a friend, Lawrence Crossley, in London.

Lawrence wrote, begging me to go up. He and I, you must know, were great chums at school, and his father and mine were college chums before we were born, for both our fathers, as you know, dear, are ministers.

"Of course I didn't know what Lawrence's object was in getting me up to town. He is in a house of business, as Lane is, and has got a brief holiday, and he wished that I should have one, too.

"On my arrival, Lawrence met me, took me to his rooms, and as soon as tea was over, marched me off to a red-hot Methodist prayer-meeting. I had never been in such a meeting before. It was one of the real old-fashioned Holy Ghost Mission, and I noted that the burden of the people's prayer (they were all humble folk) was for what they termed the Dragon Lane Mission.

I also discovered, in that meeting, that my friend had become fired with the Holy Ghost; his words of exaltation and his prayers seemed like flames of living fire.

"Of course, on our way home I was full of inquiries as to Dragon Lane Mission, where Dragon Lane was, and who carried on the mission there?

Lawrence told me it was at the East End, down Whitechapel way, and that he, with two others, had started the work there, and were responsible for the carrying of it on."

"As to the congregation, old boy," he added, with a smile, "and the style of the preaching-place, you shall see for yourself to-morrow.

"Of course," he added, patting my shoulder, "you will have a word, only it mustn't be a sermon. We have to get the Gospel unto their ears in their own way or not at all.

"We have plenty of singing," he added; "real Gospel songs, and instead of having a long prayer there, we meet and pray before we go; for I assure you, he added, "one of our needs wouldn't be safe if we stood there many moments with eyes shut.

"I must confess, darling," my lover went on, "that I longed for Sunday afternoon to come, for my friend's description of the place, the people, and their plan of service, made me curious to see it.

"I will tell you how it stood us on our knees in my friend's room, and when we rose from our knees he began to divest himself first of his watch and chain, and his pocket-book and purse. Next his black coat came off, and it was replaced by a rusty brown tweed, that made my friend look more like a coal-cutter than a person."

"I was soon attired in my new costume, for in addition to his rough tweed coat, I saw on him a furred rimmed hat across his neck, in place of his faultlessly white collar and white silk tie, and I did the same; and in place of our black silk hats we each wore an old soft brown felt.

"You wouldn't have known me, Judith," Edgar paused to say, "no, you wouldn't have passed me in the street, never dreaming who I was."

I did not argue the point with my lover, but in my heart I differed with him, for I am quite sure I should have recognised his bright, laughing eyes among a thousand, whatever his attire.

"Half-past two," he went on, "found us in Dragon Lane. I had heard a good deal about the East-end and its horrors, but I must confess that I was unprepared for the sights that met my eyes.

"Without entering into details, darling, I may say that the lanes and courts, and the slums and streets, were some of the most horribly dilapidated houses possible to imagine. On the door-steps were seated half-drunk men and women with real blotted faces, many of them—both men and women—with black eyes and broken noses, some with their heads and faces bandaged. Statue-like, half-dressed children were playing in the gutter.

"The filthy language, the squalid calls, appalled me."

"Keep close to me," said Lawrence, and I walked on between him and another worker, glancing at the scene in surprise and horror.

"I was, however, wonderfully struck with the effect Lawrence's appearance had on the people. He had come bright, kind word for all, and talked back to them in their own language in a way that fairly startled me.

"Where's the mission hall?" I ventured to ask.

"Here, duck," said Lawrence, and we entered a little corner shop, and in the door-steps the ground our seats.

"A little farther down, a half-dozen young fellows, the most of them in their corduroy clothes, joined us."

"I looked at Lawrence, and the door-steps and the ground our chairs," he said.

"They have been converted, here, in the open air. All the people know them, and recognise the change in their lives.

"The young fellows all had a word for Lawrence; then three marched in front of us and three behind, and almost immediately the lane was ringing with the lusty sung hymns:

'We are bound for the land of the pure and the holy,
The home of the happy, the Kingdom of Love,
Ye wanderers from God in the broad way of folly,
Oh, say, will you go to the Eden above?
Will you go?
Oh, say, will you go to the Eden above?"

"The chorus was repeated three or four times; but there were several breaks in our line of march, once, one of the young fellows whom I afterwards learned had been nicknamed 'The Devil-driver,' sprang aside, and catching hold of an old woman's arm, shouted, 'Come, sick girl.'"

"Oh, say will you go to the Eden above?"

"It is his own grandmother," said Lawrence, "and he wrestles with God for her three times a day. She brought him up."

"By this time we had reached a part of the lane where another street, called Boot Lane, ran across it. Two of the corner sites were occupied by public houses, and the door of each was crowded with poor, wretched, debased men and women, and they continued to pass in and out in such a horrible procession as I shall never forget."

"This was the preaching-place, and in a moment or two, Lawrence was mounted on the candle box, and the workers in a ring round him.

"By the time we had reached the corner, our procession had wonderfully increased. Hundreds of shoeless children joined us, and not a few men and women.

"Without a word, my lover went on giving out the hymn we had been taught, and I thought there seemed a wonderfully solemn calm come over the bulk of the uncanny crowd, as his clear voice, so full of pathos, rang out in the following verses:

"In that blessed land, neither sighing nor anguish,
Now, hold the faith, in the presence of the loved one.
Ye heart-burdened ones, who in mercy languish,
Oh, say, will you go to the Eden above?

"A man's voice from the back broke upon the crowd as Lawrence paused, saying,

"There's no languishing here, governor, when you've got a pint of good fourpenny!

"He who has no money, not so much as a drop of water in hell," cried out Devil-driver, as they had once nick-named the leader of the bodyguard.

"The answer was the man flung back at him was drowned in the singing of the verse which Lawrence had given us, and a quiet hush came over the gaping crowd as he ceased.

"No poverty there! No, the saints are all wealthy,
The heirs of His glory, whose nature is love.
No sickness can reach them, that country is healthy.

Oh, say, will you go to the Eden above?

"This verse was sung more lustily than ever, and then came the next, which brought forth a chorus of 'Hallelujahs' from the converted costers."

"Each saint has a mansion prepared and all furnished, Ere from this clay-house he is summoned to move, its gates and its towers with glory are buttressed. Oh, say, will you go to the Eden above?"

"It was while Lawrence was repeating the last lines of this verse that 'a continuation of tearful screams fell upon our ears. They seemed to proceed from the public-house at the left corner."

"It's that creature that's a-dying, I guess," said a blood-stained woman at my left side. The next minute, she had pushed her way to Lawrence's and added, "You're wrong, you'll be a-doin' a bit o' good. She've bin screaming, off an' on, for hours."

"I must keep the meeting going, here," Lawrence whispered to me. "You go, Edgar, maybe God has sent you here with a message for that poor creature."

"Not with her - the tearing and shrieking of the flesh that it felt, I said I would go."

"Pray, pray for me, I said to Lawrence, and he assured me that he would."

"Here, Devil-driver, I said, to the restless woman, you'd never get to yourself."

"The tall coster escorted me across the road, and within a few moments, I found myself ascending a dark, dirty staircase, Devil-driver leading the way."

"We needed no guidance to the room the wretched woman occupied, for her sayings were recorded again, and quelled, as we could hear, from a room on our right, a little way along a dark, narrow passage."

"The coster strode forward to the door, just as a woman came out - a woman who, despite her slatternly dress, dirt-grimed skin and loosened turn of her hair, seemed a softened, kindly expression in her face. She evidently knew the coster, for, on seeing him and me, she cried out:

"'Is it one o' the preachin' men you've a-brought?'"

"To the coster's nod of the head, she said:

"'It's jest awful to hear a prayer, now, and to feel the poor thing. She's dyin', drunk herself to death. I've bin tryin' to say a hymn to her that I learned at Sunday School, down yonder, in a little village cottage, when I was a little, innocent gal. I couldn't mind it all.'"

"Her voice grew husky and her eyes dim, as she added:

"'It was about a green hill far away, where Someone was Crucified, Who died to save us, an' about the pain He had to bear, and the Blood He shed, and something about a price He paid to unlock the door of Heaven to let poor sinners in.'"

"While the woman was speaking, Judith, my lover sat, pressing me to his side. 'I heard the name of your father and Stoneleigh screamed out by the woman in the room.'"

"Richard Wilmot, preacher, saved the woman, screaming in continuance.

"I big pot at Stoneleigh, an' I, his wife, a-dying fur want of a drop o' spirits!'"

CHAPTER X.

THE DRINK-CURSED VICTIM.

As Lawrence paused, I sprang up. I knew that it was that poor, wretched creature whose death had freed my father, whom he, my lover, had so strangely come in contact with.

And you saw her, you heard her, you know her claim? I cried.

"Yes, darling," she replied, drawing me back to his side.

"My friend the coster and I made our way into the room, for, as you will guess by this time, my curiosity, as well as my compassion, was aroused by the sight of your father and the name of our little town, uttered by her."

"I shall never forget the sight that met me as I entered that room." As Edgar spoke, he shuddered, and covered his eyes, as though to shut out the awful scene.

"On a wretched bed," he went on, "strapped down, lay the drink-cursed victim; but she at the first glimpse of her face, distorted, horrible as it was, I recognised her to be the creature who had marched into our chapel that night; and, of course, in a moment, all the circumstances of that dreadful night came back to me. I remembered how your father, who was preaching, suddenly fell helpless in the pulpit, and I seemed to hear again that awful creature's laugh."

As he approached her bed, she glared at us. Her eyes were terrible to see; they were bloodshot, and filled with madness and terror. At first I thought she recognised that someone was in the room, the next instant she was making the most desperate effort to spring up, and with her hands, tried to clench the empty spirit bottle that stood by her chair.

"Not a drop!" she groaned. "I, Dicky Wilmot's wife, and not a copper to buy a drink wi'."

"A loud, diabolical laugh followed, and then, with a frenzied light breaking from her blood-red eyes, she checked:

"Only three more days, an' Dicky's two hundred will be mine. It's not him, it's the money I want, she went on. 'Let him go on wi' his preachin an' livin' wi' the goody-goodie creature as thinks she's his wife. It's the money, the money and not the man."

"I cannot tell you all that followed," continued Edgar. "but what I learned there, my darling, made my heart bleed for your father, and for you all: and somehow, your father's combined illness and then your departure from Stoneleigh, had made the creature, together with the long absence of our minister, Mr. Noel, from our midst, all became clear to me, for, with your father's name, Mr. Noel's was frequently mentioned by the raving woman."

"Of course, Judith, I did not know all the details, I only knew that this awful creature claimed to be your father's wife. Suddenly her manner changed. Compassion seemed to return to her, and she felt herself dying; and her cries were of hell-fire, of demons dragging her down.

"I in these flames? she yelled, 'and Dicky not, I, as he's married to! He shall come, he shall!' she went on."

"Oh, Judith, never to my dying day shall I forget the horror of that hour."

"Pray! Pray! I said to the coster, and down he fell on his knees; and if ever I felt that the dear fellow had been rightly named when his pats nicknamed him Devil-driver, it was then. Never before, or since, have I heard such a prayer, and as he prayed, the atmosphere of the room seemed to change. It seemed of a very truth that the demons were driven back to that place of darkness; and when his voice ceased, the woman fixed her eyes on us, and in them was the look of earnestness.

"She embraced the coster, and, bending over her, whispered the name of Jesus, and went on to speak of the atonement for sin, and of His power and willingness to save the vilest.

"She listened for a moment with a strange quietness, and when I said, 'Then,' as the publican did: 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' She repeated the words after me. To my horror, however, the next moment she was raving again, and though we lingered in the room for some time longer, there was nothing of return to common sense.

"The coster and I both knelt and prayed again, then arose in spirit, passed out into the open air again.

"The meeting outside was just over, but the crowd that had gathered were left to disperse, and at my suggestion, for I thought that by chance the words might reach the ears of the dying woman, we gave out the grand old hymn:

"'There is a fountain filled with Blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins, And sinners plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains.'"

We sang that, then the Devil-driver, in his deep, far-reaching, solemn voice, gave out the next verse. His voice, I noticed, was chiefly directed to the upper window of the public-house where the woman lay.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see, That fountain in his day.

"Here Devil-driver paused, and said:"

"The thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his dying hour."

"And there may I, though vile as he, Wash all my guilty stains."
"I knew that the woman who marched into the chapel...claimed to be your father's wife, and that her appearance caused his illness."

"You may know, Judith, that it was with varied feelings filling my heart that I left Dragon Lane. Lawrence questioned me as to the poor woman, but I never told him of the revelation that had come to me about her connection with Stoneleigh."

The next day Lawrence and I visited the public-house, with the hope of seeing her again.

"She's dead," said the landlord. "An' worse luck for me. She owes me a fine old penny. You see, she was to have two hundred pound in a day or two's time. The minister as come with her and said he should be here to see her such a date. I heard him tell her when he brought her in a cab."

"Was she sensible when she died?" I asked.

"Can't say," said the man. "My missus says as she was a-trying to repeat summut as were sung out here on Sunday, about a fountain. That's all as I knows."

"My mind was full of thought all the way back to my friend's lodgings, and I had come to the conclusion that our good minister, Mr. Noel, knew the secret of it all, and that there was reason for the thing being kept secret as it had been.

"I hurried home the next day with the express purpose of seeing Mr. Noel, but, on my return, found that he was away. I determined to say nothing. Then came your letter, written from London, preventing my visit to the cottage. And when, a few days later, Mr. Noel returned, I went at once to see him, and told him of my visit to Dragon Lane, and what I had discovered. His surprise, as you may imagine, Judith, was great; then he told me all the details of the case, as repeated in your story.

"It was arranged between us," dear Edgar went on, "that, for your sake, and the sake of your loved ones, you should be kept in ignorance of the fact that I knew of your father's trial. But oh, my darling, day and night I prayed for you all, and praised, too, for the deliverance which God had wrought out, and for your own decision, darling, that I was to know the secret are, because my precious wife, you would not have known that I, too, was in the secret, and that I had been permitted to tell that poor, dying creature of a Saviour, able to save the sinner."

If my story had been a strange one, the story which Edgar had told me was equally strange, and when he had finished, I was weeping aloud.

"And you knew all the time?" I sobbed, "and it makes no difference to your love?"

"Yes, it made a great difference," he returned, kissing my tear-stained cheeks. "It made my love grow deeper, wider and stronger. And, darling," he added, "I am so glad I did not let you know, because, if I had, you would never have written that story, or rather, you would never have placed it in my hands for my special perusal; and then, darling, I might never have known how much you loved me, and how dear I was to your heart."

Edgar hugged me to his breast, and we stood there, in each other's arms, in the silence of our great love, with no secret between us, nothing hidden from each other, and with the joy of knowing that our loved father could never be wrenched from us; and there was also the faint hope in our breasts that, like the dying thief, the poor, drunk-cursed women, whose sin and deception had wrought such woe in the lives of others, had tried to God for mercy and pardon.

CHAPTER XI.

LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS.

The surprises were not yet over. The next morning, as I was dusting our little parlour, and mother was busy in the kitchen, a hurried knock came at the front-door. Thinking it was a tradesman, I hastened to open it, and, to my utter
in the person of the old man who had married that poor wretched woman who claimed to be your father's wife.

I perfectly gasped at my lover's announcement, but he went on:

"It came about in this way—when Mr. Noel was in London a few weeks ago, an irresistible feeling came over him to go and see the poor old man whose life had been so strangely intertwined with that woman's and your father's. It was his soul that Mr. Noel was troubled about. He went, and found him in the same room, and condition as before, only more helpless."

"It was after half past midnight when I spoke to him of the life after this; of his spirit that must live for ever, of the love of Jesus, His death on Calvary, and of Heaven, and loved ones there, that the old man burst into tears. Long-forgotten memories were awakened, and, as though inspired by the Spirit of God, he sobbed out a terrible confession."

"It was then that Mr. Noel learned that he was the long-lost brother of my dear mother—in fact, he learned all the truth. In a strange way the man had discovered that he had married a minister, and had secretly watched her movements, resolving never to let it be known that he was alive, for though he had sunk so low, such was his respect for my mother that he would never let her have the horror of knowing he was her brother."

"I listened breathlessly. "And you have seen him?"

"No; he is dead," returned Edgar. "He died penitent and trusting in Christ; but though he lived in such poverty, he was the possessor of over a thousand pounds, and to me, the son of his favourite sister, he bequeathed and willed.

"But for Mr. Noel's visit to him, all his money would have gone in a totally different direction. So you see, darling, that out of seeming evil God has brought good, and light out of darkness, for not only will my Judith not be added to a poor man's; but above all, my poor, wretched, surcharged uncle was led to the sinner's Savour!"

As Edgar ceased speaking, I stood on my face buried on his breast, too overcome for words. It was all so wonderful, so beyond that one could ever have thought possible. And there came to my heart the subdued passages in the Scripture that had been given me in the darkest moments of our sorrow.

"Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you this day!"

To-morrow is my wedding day, the day that is to see me united to my precious Edgar, and already he has begun to use his husbandly authority, for he has just returned and is burst into my face the joy and rapture that could be made known to the depths of my eyes with his own laughing brown ones, he said in real sober tones:

"There is one matter, little woman, that I shall insist upon after you are my own personal possession. That is the story of my wife's father, with its strange keeping. It shall be put into print, so that others may know what a wonderful fashion of working God has."

"Will it be, I wonder? Will Edgar get his way over it? I guess he will, for he spoke as though he really meant it. And I mean to be an obedient little wife."

CHAPTER XII.

FOUR YEARS AFTER.

I have been a happy wife for nearly four years now, for Edgar has been the most devoted of husbands; but we no longer reside in London. The eight hundred pounds made to Edgar by his newly-discovered uncle, and which he had intended investing in business, never invested.

It was a few months after we were married, and for several days I had noted that he seemed perplexed, when, on returning from our reading and prayer together, he threw me into his arms.

"Dear little wife, sweet little helpmeet," he whispered. "It was always inexpressibly sweet to be called his dear little wife, but never before had my beloved one called me his wife, and so overjoyed was I at being given such a name, that I flung my arm round his neck, kissing him so passionately as, for the moment, to hinder his further speech.
When I had relaxed my clasp of his neck, and he had recovered breath enough to speak, he began:

"Little helpmate, God has given me a heavenly vision, and I want you, my darling, to help me to be like Paul, to be not discouraged by the vision, but to be obedient, and thus must not suffer with flesh and blood."

His words made me astonished.

"You know, dear," he went on, "that it was my intention, when we married, to sink that eight hundred pounds (that was left me) in business; but it is not yet done. I couldn't do it, Judith. Every time I thought of starting business, something seemed keeping me back. And I see, I know now, that it was God's hand restraining me.

"And, dear one," he went on, "ever since that visit to Dragon Lane my heart has been in that mission work, and my soul has been going out to those crowds of wretched people in a way that I could never describe. Every time I have prayed the scenes of that Sunday have come up before me. Every time I have thought of business I have seemed to hear the cries of the dying and the unsaved, as I heard them on that memorable day."

"But, dear one, and myself," he said, "ever since that visit to Dragon Lane my heart has been in that mission work, and my soul has been going out to those crowds of wretched people in a way that I could never describe. Every time I have prayed the scenes of that Sunday have come up before me. Every time I have thought of business I have seemed to hear the cries of the dying and the unsaved, as I heard them on that memorable day."

"And, dear one," he went on, "ever since that visit to Dragon Lane my heart has been in that mission work, and my soul has been going out to those crowds of wretched people in a way that I could never describe. Every time I have prayed the scenes of that Sunday have come up before me. Every time I have thought of business I have seemed to hear the cries of the dying and the unsaved, as I heard them on that memorable day."

"Yes! my little helpmate, what is it to do? What answer shall I give to God?"

I threw up my head and gazed into his dear eyes.

"You must say 'Yes' to His command; and my heart echoes the same cry, 'Yes, my dear Lord.'"

So our little home was given up, and we moved from our pretty cottage to a crowded street in the East-end of London; for nearly four happy years my loved one has been carrying light and salvation to the tenement hundreds who sit in darkness.

Two little jewels have been lent to us to love and care for, a boy and a girl, and we named them Jack and Dolly; and my precious one has had his way—the story of 'My Father's Wife' is to be published.

(FINIS).

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CHAPTER I.
THE SHADOWS ON THE BLINDS.

NIGHT, grim, dark, and still. Nature is lying hushed in silence. The cattle are resting in their stalls. Men are sleeping in their quiet homes, their woes and joys alike forgotten in the oblivion of unconsciousness. But all are not sleeping in the little village by the river Lee, for down through the narrow, straggling street the slow, measured tramp of the policeman’s step breaks upon the silence of the midnight hour.

On, still on he tramps upon his lonely beat, his eyes glancing upward to the curtained windows which peep out from beneath the thatched roofs of the warm, cozy rooms in which his fellow men are sleeping peacefully.

Presently he emerges from the street into a lonely, leafy lane, in which a house stands all alone, a house of the old-fashioned type, with large, low-ceiled rooms and winding stairs, broad passages, and open hearths, where, in the winter time, huge fir logs blaze and crackle between the polished dogs, drying to perfection the rows of home-cured hams and bacon sides which line the broad, open chimney, down through the top of which the sun, moon, and stars, in turn, peep and smile.

It was thus that Jan found her.
The policeman halted, for from two windows of this old farm-house bright lights are glimmering still.

One is shining in a downstairs room, a room called the living-place, and upon the blind the shadow of a man appears—a man in kneeling attitude, with head thrown upward, and clasped hands extended towards the low, thatched roof.

The other light is glimmering from an upper room, a room with floor of oaken planks, bare, white-washed walls, and sloping roof, under which a bed with snow-white coverlet stands, which, like all the other appointments of the room, speak of a cleanly woman's touch.

Though fine as the livery of costly furniture have found their way up the winding stairs, yet the room is replete with all that is necessary; and the sweet scent of lavender, mingled with the fragrance of roses which peep in at the low, broad window in the summer time, make it, despite its bare, white walls and roof, a very pleasant, cheery apartment.

No roses are now entrusting that low, deep window, for their bloom and beauty have departed; but upon the hearth a bright fire slowly burns, casting its cheery glow on everything around.

As the policeman outside glimpses up towards the window of this room, he sees here also a shadow on the blind, but this time it is not the shadow of a man in the attitude of prayer, but the shadow of a woman, who, with restless, restless eyes, are darting glances round the room, as if seeking the position of a child pressed to her throbbing breast; then her head bows low over it, and she pauses in her pacing, only to resume again with more rapidity than before.

The watching constable outside is touched with tender pity at these shadows on the blinds, for he understands the meaning of them all, and he sighs for the stricken hearts within.

"God help them!" he murmurs, as from his eyes he brushes two warm, silent tears away.

"Why, the little had to them if it be Thy will," he prays again. "If it be not Thy will, oh, then let the mother know that Thou dost all things well, and that Thou dost take away as well as give in love!"

The shadows still lingered on the white blinds, but the occupants of the room knew nothing of course, of the sympathy or of the prayers that had gone up through the still night air to Heaven's throne from the heart and lips of the tender-hearted man out in the midnight gloom.

The policeman moved on down the dark lane road, still thinking of the shadows on the blinds, and of the deep, unuttered sighs and heavy, long pauses of prayer the very day, that "the baby, the only son of Jan and Jean Tremont would not live to see the rising of tomorrow's sun!"

A brief history had passed from both Jan and Jean when, in the little church which nestled in the dell, they had uttered vows which made them man and wife.

That "good Jan," as he was called, should marry at all had taken the folks of Nestleton by surprise, and, most of all, that he should have wedded Jean, the proud, self-willed daughter of the owner of Lee Farm, and who, for twenty years, had kept her father's house, ruling with an iron hand all within its ivy-covered walls.

At the end of twenty years, tired of his daughter's rigid rule, Ralph Brown had brought a new, young wife to the old-man's side. Jean, indignant at what she termed her father's cruelty to herself, and his idiosyncrasy in marrying a second time, and choosing for his wife a fair, sweet-tempered woman who was no older than herself, left her father's home before the home-coming of the wedded pair, and took lodgings with a widow in the village.

This widow was Mrs. Tremont, Jan's mother, who owned a small, old-fashioned farm which Jan managed. Here Jean made herself useful, and ere six months had passed, her husband had become as her husband, and she had nursed and tended her to the last, and had wept when she died, for she had grown to care for the white-headed old lady.

Jan was left master of the low, rambling, thatched house and the small farm, and, moved with a strange sense of pity for Jean, he resolved to make her mistress of his home.

With much evident confusion he asked her if she would marry him, and Jean, being homeless, as she had made herself, and proud of the prospect of becoming the mistress of Bank Farm, had readily acquiesced.

There had been no amorous love scenes between the pair—in fact, neither had made any declaration of love to the other before their marriage day; but, somehow, though perhaps neither would have confessed it, they had felt it in their hearts, and, were far happier than the village folk had prophesied they would be, or had ever thought it possible they could be.

Jan made the best of husbands to Jean, in the sense that he was docile in her hands, and ever thoughtful for her comfort, yet he allowed her all her ways, and appealed to her for her opinion and advice on things connected with the farm outside the house.

Under these circumstances it was easy for Jean to care for her husband, and enquired as she was by his constant care and help, as she was, and, being a woman, he valued her capabilities, and appreciated and praised her management of the house, and so constantly sought her help in business matters, her nature had opened out, as the flowers do beneath the warm, bright rays of the shining summer sun.

When, however, two years later, a child was born to her, a son given to her when all expectation of such a gift had long since died, even if it had ever existed, it seemed that a deep mine of love, which had ever lain dormant in her bosom, suddenly broke into life, and her whole nature flowered; and she did for that little babe which now nestled in her breast.

When a year old, little Benjamin, as his parents had called him (Jean discarding the name of Isaac, which Jan had suggested for the son of their old age), was a picture of perfect beauty —epitomizing in his own person an ideal of beauty —a child with an idolatrous love, a love which absorbed her every thought, and which unwisely yielded to every whim of the fair, blue-eyed boy even in those early days. Her love, too, was, after all, selfish, soulless, and earthly, for Jean, though born in the name of Christian in the nominal sense, had not yet learnt the blessedness of personal consecration to the King of Kings, not yet having received Him as her Saviour, or His gifts as loans only from Himself, and to be used for His glory.

Thus it was that Jean, pressing her boy to her heart, would cry, in her almost frenzied passion of love:

"My own, my very own, of whom no one can rob me! Yes, my own for ever and for ever more!"

Jan would watch her, marvelling at her devotion to their child, then from his heart there would ascend a silent cry —a desire for a babe of his own; and that of vengeance, that of justice, that of love, which, like the deep mine of love, would break into life when the years, and the months, and the days passed, and at last their number was ended, and the need had arisen, would have died for him at any time.

But Jan's was a different love; he loved the little laddie, and had welcomed him as a gift from Heaven, and ever since his birth he had held him only as a treasured loan, to lend him to Jan and Jean, to be held in trust and trained for the King of Kings, realising that, as his parents, they were only the earthly stewards, to whom had been entrusted the priceless jewel of an immortal crown.

His wife's attitude towards the child troubled him greatly, and he grew angry at times. Only the Lord and Master did he want to tell the secret burden of his heart, and it was only from Him that he obtained rest and quiescence of mind and soul.

With the passing of time, Jean's idolatrous affection for her child increased; he became the god of her life, and, as the Israelites of old, she adored him and worshipped his defense of the command of Jehovah:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."
CHAPTER II.
STRONGER THAN DEATH.

"Judge not the Lord by seethe sense, But trust Him for His grace.
Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan His work in vain; Go, carve His own interpreter, And He will make it plain."

TWO days before the opening of our story, Jan had been suddenly summoned from the barn, where he was treading, to the house.

He found his wife white and frightened, with little Benjamin upon her lap, the face of the little one, which had been so sweet and fair an hour before, now pain-drawn, and every feature distorted with convulsions.

"Rise for the doctor, quick!" sobbed Jean, as her husband entered the room. "Gallup for your life, Jan! Oh! fly! fly!"

Her frenzied cries rang through the house, when, on the doctor's arrival, he said, in low, grave tones, and with tender, sympathetic manner, that he would do his best, though he feared to bid them hope, that the little one would live.

Poor Jan's heart was sore with a great trouble, and he prayed the doctor to spare no trouble or expense if only the little one could be spared.

Hour after hour Jean had sat in the chamber beneath the sloping roof, watching in agony the little, suffering, distorted form upon the white-covered bed.

Jean prayed as he sat watching thus, but not so Jean. Each paroxysm of pain that convulsed her baby-boy hardened her rebellious heart, until bitter speeches were hurled against the Eternal God, Whom she accused of cruelty to those to whom He had given life.

Her bitter breathings fell with unutterable pain upon poor Jan's ears, yet no word could he utter in reason, and only with the hope to bend over her, and lay his hand upon her bowed head, and softly murmured: "Trust Him, Jean, my poor, poor lassie, for He is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind."

Then she had raised her stormy face to him, and there was a look in her eyes that caused the heart of poor Jan to grow cold with dread.

Through the long hours of the silent night the pair had kept watch, and far on into the next day, the doctor had told him that the child would not see the breaking of another morn.

Jean, creeping to the door, had heard his words. With white, set face she crept back to the bed, and when Jan came back he found her with the last-sinking child clasped as with arms of steel to her wildly heaving breast.

She spoke no word to Jan, but low, incoherent mutterings fell in a constant stream from her hot, parched lips.

The hands of the clock moved slowly round. Hour after hour passed, until the short hand neared the midnight-hour, the hour in which the doctor thought the spirit of little Ben would take its flight to the tender bosom of the Eternal Father.

Then it was that Jan, poor, dumb Jan, had staggered down the winding stairs into the living-place, and throwing himself upon his knees, had pleaded, not that the child's life might be spared, but that the will of God might be done on earth, even as it was done in Heaven. For, in his heart of hearts, poor Jan, notwithstanding the deep, unselfish love with which he loved his boy, had the feeling that he would rather have him safely housed in Heaven, even though it meant the loss of his pitiest, gentlest ways, and his sunny presence in the old farm-house for the little while of life.

"Not my will, but Thine be done," he cried, his tear-filled eyes raised heavenwards.

"And, please, dear Father, pity, and do the best for poor, dear Jean," he added, earnestly.

The hard, broken heart there came a sudden thought, and once again he murmured: "Maybe that if God took the little lad across the river to Himself, He might be God's magnet that should draw his mother's heart from earthily to heavenly things, for she would want to dwell with her little laddie through the great eternity!"

So the simple-minded Jan prayed and talked, and as he did so his heart grew calm, and the terrible sorrow of his soul grew less, and it was while he knelt thus in prayer that his shadow had spoken to the policeman on his lonely street.

While Jan, in holy consecration, had thus resigned himself and the little son of his love to God's will, Jean, in the upper room, paced the floor, her child folded to her bosom as with bands of iron.

"No! not! I shall not die!" she repeated again and again.

"He shall not! He is mine—yes, mine! And I will—"

The breathings of her rebellious soul found no further voice, but God read them which she uttered not. She shut her eyes together, and continued her pacing for a time, her eyes fixed on the face of the child in her arms.

She wept not and knew no tiredness, but ever and anon her eyes lighted to the clock.

The midnight hour came, and the hands continued their onward course. She looked upon her child; the distorted features began to relax, and slowly a quiet, peaceful expression overspread its face.

Was it death thus stealing over it? Was the spirit departing from the little clay Tabernacle?

He sat quietly where he had sat in the house, was almost that of death, but a few moments later the regular breathing told the watching mother that the crisis in her child's illness had taken a favourable turn.

"He sleeps! he sleeps!" she murmured. "My darling sleeps, and she is asleep of life, not of death. I have saved her, I have!"

She crept back to the bed, and laid him upon the blanket, then sinking upon her knees, she buried her face upon the pillow.

It was thus that Jan found her when, after the fatal hour had passed, he stumbled upon the stairs. He bent with the hope of comforting his wife, whom he expected to find bereft of her child, since he had noticed that the pacing overhead had ceased, and that all had grown so quiet there was no sound from the upper room.

"God help her!" he moaned, as he paused in the open doorway, for the candle-light, playing on the sleeping child's face, gave it the look of death.

Jean did not hear his step, for her long overtaxed nerves have given way. The last, and with the sleep of life that came to her child, weakness had overcome her, and she now knelt motionless and dazed.

Jan stole to her side, and laid his hand upon her bowed form.

"The Lord help thee, my poor lassie!" he murmured.

"The Lord is blessed when He gives, and also blessed when He takes. And He'll keep the dear heart safe enough for ye up above. Ye can have him again up there, Jean."

"Then, as she did not speak, he went on: "We'll go together to Him, shall we, Jean?"

As he spoke he laid his other hand on the child's brow.

He started, for it was warm to his touch, and for the first time he noticed its low, regular breathing.

"He's not dead!" he cried aloud. "Not dead; no, not dead!"

The word "dead" roused his wife.

"Dead?" she gasped. No; he lives! My love was stronger than death! I defied death!"

She staggered to her feet now, and confronting her husband, who was shaking like an aspen at her words, she said, with triumph gleaming from her eyes:

"I defied death! I defied God to snatch him from my arms! And I have conquered. I have triumphed; my darling lives!"

"Oh, Jean, Jean!" broke from Jan's white lips, and he sank back in his chair, with a look of anguish of soul.

"You know not what love is," she said. "Love such as mine would not sit quietly down and yield to death's cruel demands. My child had done nothing to deserve such a fate, end—and"

"Don't don't, Jean," sobbed her husband. "It might have been better for the child if he had been taken, taken, taken from the evil to come!"

Jean frowned on her husband, and her eyes flashed angrily as she recorded: "No evil shall come to him while I live!"

And turning to the bed, she threw her arms about the little form, and passed the embrace.

"My darling! my little love! my life!" she cried. "No—"
thing shall harm you! Mother will ever guard you from all evil."

Then laying her warm, weared body down on the bed by the child's side, and keeping her arms about its sleeping form, she fell into a deep, sound sleep.

Jan sat in the chair, his face aged and stricken. He did not sleep, and no sound passed his dry lips.

When the first grey streak of morning light crept in through the low window under the thatch, he rose to his feet, and with one long, sad, yearning look at his sleeping wife and child, whose outlined forms were just visible on the bed, he crept noiselessly out of the room, and down the winding stairs to the kitchen below, then on out to the barn. Throwing himself on his knees on the straw, he bowed his face to the ground, and wept long and sore.

The news that Jan Tremlett's son lived caused wonder and surprise through the whole village when, on the following day, it became known.

"It is nothing, short of a miracle," the doctor said, when, later on, he stood in the low-roofed room, where Jean sat with her child resting peacefully in her arms.

"A mother's love and will proved stronger than death," said Jean. "I would not yield him up. Why should I? He had done nothing to deserve so a doom."

The doctor inwardly shuddered at her words.

"It is better to be resigned to the will of God," he said. "Death is sometimes better than life; and little ones like this, we know, go safe home to the Father in Heaven."

"God grant," he added, solemnly, "that you may never have to say, 'Would that my child had died, and not lived!'"

A shadow swept over Jean's face, but the low, murmured reply that broke from her lips the doctor could not catch; then she laid her cheek on her child's face, and held him closer still to her throbbing breast.

In a very short time little Ben was about the house again as of old, his pretty, prattling ways and sunny laughter making music in Jean's heart. With the passing weeks and months she became more indulgent than ever. Jan would sigh sometimes as he looked on, for in his heart there was often a strange dread. He saw that his wife had no hope or aim beyond her child, that God was in none of her thoughts, neither did she ever seek to teach the little one of Jesus, the children's Saviour.

CHAPTER III.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

BEFORE the fast-dying fire-logs on the open heath in the low-rooted kitchen of Bank Farm, Jan and Jean sat, looking ever and anon at the dying embers to the brass-faced grandfather clock that stood in the dim, shadowy corner, and from the clock into each other's eyes.

Time has wrought change in the pair. Jan's locks have grown quite white, and his beard, too, while age and care mark his every feature. And when he rises from his old arm-chair, to make his way once again, as he has done several times before during the last hour, to the court beyond the house, his steps are feeble, and there is a strange moon in his back.

Jean also has changed. Her sprightliness of step and form have gone, her face has grown thin and careworn, her eyes are dull, and full of sad, silent sorrow.

Her hair, too, is thickly threaded with white, and her fingers clutch at her shoulder-shawl nervously, and she makes an effort to pull it more closely round her shivering form.

Jan returns from the outside court, and, with a sigh, throws himself back into his chair. Jean asks no question, for her husband's look has conveyed to her that his journey has again been fruitless.
Slowly the hands of the clock move round, and its
sounding ticks echo weirdly in the silent kitchen.
At length twelve long, measured strokes break from it.
With the last stroke Jean rises to her feet, and pulling
her shawl over her head, passes out into the chill, midnight
air. She passes on down the "pitched" yard, through
the garden gate, and down the lonely road. The moon is
almost up now, and the trees throw long, grim
shadows over the roadway, and ghost-like phantoms,made by other shadows, meet her here and there as she
staggered onward.

She is not afraid, she knows no fear, for the burden
of her soul is too great to think of or fear might
else.

She moves away from them. She hears steps in
the distance, but she tells herself that it cannot be the
steps she has been waiting three long hours for, for
the coming ones are firm and steady.

She resumes her walking, and a few moments later a
man's tall figure looms in sight. He pauses as he reaches
her.

"Mrs. Tremont, is it you?" he asks.

It is the village policeman, the policeman who, twenty
years before, on that lone, midnight hour when the little
fat lay on the point of death, watched the shadows on
the blinds, and played for the stricken parents, and the little
boy whom the doctor said would not see the morning sun
rise.

"It is I," Jean replied, and throwing back her shawl,
she gazed anxiously into the officer's face.

"Have you seen him tonight?" she asked. "He is not
home yet."

"He is there by yonder gate," he replied, his heart
aching for the woman. "He is sick and ill with."

He did not add "with the demon drink," but Jean knew
his meaning.

"I was coming to you," he went on, "coming for Jean
to help me to bring him home."

"No, no; not Jean!" she exclaimed. "I will; I will."
He looked at her. "You are not able," he said. "Be-
sides, it will be too strong; I am strong," she interrupted; "strong enough for
that."

The pair moved on down the road together in silence,
then a sound broke on Jean's ear that filled her breast
with horror and shame.

It was the incoherent raving of a man, followed by a
fit of vomitting. A moment more, and her eyes are upon
the form that is grovelling on the damp, cold ground.

She falls on her knees by his side.

"Ben, Ben!" she shrieked. "Oh, my Ben!"

"Get out, you brute! Get away!" he bellowed, and
thrusts out his heavy-booted feet as though to kick a
dog from his presence; then flinging out his arms in a wild,
delirious fashion, he repeated his senseless cry:

"Get away! Begone!"

But this struck his mother's face, half-blinding her with
pain, but she made no moan, gave no sign of having
been struck.

A half-hour later the stricken mother and the policeman
began, all drink-reeling and senseless, as he was, in
the yard, and up the pitched path to the door of
Bank Farm, and then on through the passage, but not
to the kitchen, and up the stairs to his room.

"You will not report him, Burridge?" said Jean, when,
presently, the policeman turned to go.

He looked anxiously into her face.

"Oh, be merciful," she pleaded. "Spare his father."

"It is my duty," said the officer.

"Yes, I know, I know; but he is ill—sick and ill. Oh, help
me, and spare Jean.

"His face, his meaning."

"Yes," he said, "he is ill, poor fellow?"

"God help you, Mrs. Tremont," he added, and then,
with one half-pitiful, half-scornful look at the wretched
man on the bed, and a brief "Good-night," he passed
down the stairs, and crept into the darkness. She is
numb, as he strode away.

"Her cup of sorrow is not yet full. To have had him,
the bright, beautiful, innocent laddie, in Heaven, would,
I reckon, be Heaven to her now, rather than to see him
the drunken brute that he is."

Left alone, Jean covered her eyes with her hands, and
sunk back into a dreamless sleep. The sight of her son on the bed was
more than she could bear at that moment, for he had
fallen into a drunken sleep, and his debased and blotted
face was terrible to behold.

As she sat with covered eyes, there rose before her
mental gaze the vision of the golden-haired, fair, innocent
boy whom, years before, she had deemed God to claim, or
death to snatch from her arms. She remembered every
detail of that night twenty years before, and of her sense
of triumph when the midnight hour had passed and her
child lived.

Then she had lain him in her first sweet, quiet sleep
upon that same bed, and throwing herself at his side,
had slept with him.

Now a bitter cry escaped her, as from the bed there
rose an unconscious sob. She uncovered her eyes, but
turned her head in horror from the sight— the contrast
of twenty years ago and now was more than she could
enquire.

"Would that he had died that night!" she groaned.

"Would that I had died ere I defied the God of Heaven!"

Jean, at that moment, would have given her life down
to have recalled that past, and to have been able to think of
her Bennie as the little one in the City of Light.

She did not pray, she could not; she only moaned in
her sorrow, and then when her son's heavy breathing
told her that he slept again, she crept down the stairs to
the kitchen, where her husband still sat by the tireless
hearth.

"Jan," she whispered.

He looked up into her pale, weary face. There was a
look in his eyes that spoke her soul. "To bed, Jan," she
said.

"Is he come?" he murmured.

She nodded.

"And in bed?"

She nodded again; and Jan, accustomed to her ways,
took the candle from her hand and went up to bed.

Jean, after winding up the old clock, and locking the
door, dragged herself up the stairs again to her son's
room. Through the long, dreary, cold hours she kept a
watch by his side. She knew not what to do, and was
not safe to leave him alone. And during those
terrible hours she lived over and over again the long-ago
days of the past, when Jan was the glad, grateful father,
and the creature on the bed the winsome, blue-eyed babe
at her breast.

With the breaking of the morning light Jan came to
the door with a cup of tea and a slice of toast. He knew
what her night's absence from his side had meant, and
he was early astir.

"Bring the lad a cup," she murmured, as she took
her own from his head at the door.

Jan's first impulse was to say "No!" to her request;
but the pitiful look in her eyes overcame him, and he
turned away, murmuring as he crept down the stairs:

"Poor, poor mother! She bore him in travail and pain,
so for her sake I must, I will yet be patient with the lad.

With extra care he tossed another slice of bread, and
made a fresh pot of strong tea, and returning to the door
of his room, he gave it to his wife without a word. Then
gone back down the stairs to the old flagged kitchen,
betraying his own morsel in loneliness and sorrow.

CHAPTER IV.

HER BITTER REAPING.

B EN TREMONT'S downward career had been a
rapid one.

At a year old, he had been the babe at the
portico of the Celestial City, from whence he
had been snatched back by his mother in her rebellious-
ness of heart, defying God and death; and the Lord had
allowed her that which, in her selfishness and blindness,
she desired and claimed. She little dreamed what the
result of obtaining her sinful, soulless desire would cost
her.

When ten years of age, the boy Ben, whose life had
been one of indulgence, openly defied his mother, and
left on her legs the black marks of his small, nailed
boots, and on her heart, a wound deep and sore.

At fifteen, he cursed her, and at seventeen, staggered
home from the village feast, reeking with the fumes of
strong drink and rank tobacco.
The following day, with a low, muttered oath, he told his father he should no longer work on the farm, and that he had already engaged himself to a firm of brewers in the town.

The two years he spent in the town, we cannot linger to describe. At the end of that time he returned to the Bank Farm, penniless and in rags and tatters, branded as a sharper, a gambler, and a habitual drunkard.

He had been discharged at a moment's notice, caught in the act of a very shady transaction. For six months he had been working on the farm, and had then returned, the awful wreck that he was, to his mother, whose mind had almost given way at her son's disappearance, and with all the terrible things she had heard from the manager of the brewery.

With a profession of sorrow and penance, in conjunction with Jean's pleading, his father re-established him on the farm.

For one bare month he kept the temperance pledge his mother had induced him to sign, and kept away from his old village haunts. But one Sunday night, he broke through all restraint, and white Jan was at the house of prayer, he made his way to the village public-house, and that night reeled back home in a half-stupified condition to Bank Farm.

From that time until the present, he had spent the most of his evenings bland his mother with a gang of idle drinking pals, either at the village public, or visiting others in the neighbourhood. At times, he would have a week's drinking bout, and return home blessed of everything.

But Jan had almost broken down beneath the trial, and had more than once said to Jean, that the lad was killing him. Jean herself was weighted with the trial, for not only was the hope of her life cut off by the dissolve life of her son, but the secret torment of her soul was, that she was reaping that which she had sown in the indolent, selfish love that she had lavished on her boy, she was reaping in its bitterest fruit of woe.

Such scenes as that described in our last chapter, had occurred frequently of late. Night after night Jan and Jean, with their whitened hands bowed with grief, had set up until midnight waiting for Ben; and Jean saw, with something of terror, that Jan was slowly but surely sinking down with sorrow to the grave.

He bore all, however, with a strange silence and patience, only now and again, he had sobbed into Jean's ear that the lad was killing him. Never once did he refer to her past indulgence, or to that time when the boy lay sick unto death. No word of blame found any place on his lips; if anything, he grew more gentle and tender towards her, and would often draw her to his side, and, holding her there, would murmur her name softly, and stroke her lost-whitering hair in silent affection and compassion.

It was almost noon of the day on which Ben had been carried up to his room, drunk and ill, in the early morning hour, when, in a half-dressed, unshaved, muddled condition, he stumbled down into the kitchen.

Jan was in the barn, and Jean, with white, tearful face, was preparing the mid-day meal, when her son came in, and threw himself down upon the settle in the chimney corner.

He was shivering with cold, and he held his shaking hands over the fire, his knees knocked together, as though he was chill throughout and through.

Jean watched him in tearful silence, telling herself that it was the damp ground of the previous night that was causing his shivering.

"Give me a cup to warm me," he said, his teeth chattering together.

His mother fetched a kettle and placed it on the fire, then proceeded to grind some coffee; and a few moments later, she held a cup of the steaming beverage towards him. He took it in his hand and placed it to his lips, then, with an oath, emptied the cup in the fire.

"It's not that stuff I want," he muttered. "It's spirits!" "Spirits, I say," he repeated, as Jean stood looking at him in speechless horror. "I have none," she moaned.

"You have," he cried. "You always kept a bottle in the cupboard upstairs." "I did," she returned with a sigh, "but never since.

She paused, with a catch in her breath, and signed again, deeply((-...)

"Never since when?" he demanded, with an oath. "Never since you began to break my heart with your drinking ways," she sobbed.

"Curse you!" he muttered.

"Oh, my son," she moaned.

"Curse the day that I was born," he added.

"Ben! Oh, my Ben!" burst from the anguished Jean's lips, as she sank back in a chair, and covered her face with her apron.

The shivering scoundrel stumbled to his feet.

"Give us a bob," he demanded, "for I must and will have a drink I tell you, and I'm cleared right out.

"I have no shilling, nor a sixpence," sobbed his mother.

"It's a lie," he roared.

He reeled over to her side, and a moment later had gripped her two arms, and plunged his other hand into her pocket.

In her struggle to retain her purse, his heavy hand struck her face. The next instant, he had her purse in his hand, and, with a mocking laugh, he swung it over her head.

A pitious cry broke from her, for in her purse there lay their half-year's rent for a part of their land, all in gold.

Regardless of her cry, he opened it, and, as his eyes fell on the golden coins it contained, he broke into a hellish laugh.

At that instant Jan appeared in the doorway; but as he could grasp the horrible truth that his son had robbed his mother's pocket, the deeply sunken wretch had fled from the house, clutching the purse in his hand.

CHAPTER V.

A NIGHT ROBBERY.

THE people of Nestleton and its neighbourhood awoke one morning to find that a crime had been committed in their midst.

A farmer, returning very late from a distant town, had been waylaid, robbed of fifty pounds he had brought with him from the bank, in gold, and left by the roadside, insensible, the result of a blow on the head.

The horse he was riding had made its way home, and it was through this fact, that the search had been made, which led to the discovery of the uncoincarnate farmer, in the early morning hours.

The poor victim was conveyed to his home and attended by the medical man who had been summoned, while search was being made by the police authorities for the perpetrators of the crime.

When the farmer recovered consciousness, he could reveal nothing as to his assailant's identity, only that it had been a man, his face masked, and that he wore a white muffler round his throat, and a long dark cloak.

At a certain lonely part of the road, that skirted a wood, the man had sprung out from under the shadow of the hedge, and had dealt the blow which had stunned the farmer, and he knew no more.

That robbery had been his assailant's motive was proved by the fact that all the money he had drawn from the bank was missing, though his watch was left untouched.

This was significant to the police; the money, being in gold, could not be identified, whereas the watch might have been.

The two officers made notes of the farmer's statement, and,甲状腺 gland, then hurried together, then left the house again, keeping their own counsel.

An hour later, they appeared at Bank Farm. Jan and Jean, though it was late in the morning, were seated by the kitchen fire, the breakfast untasted on the table.

Both their heads were resting on their hands on the table, and the plates appeared in every way, told of a sleepless night, and of deep heart trouble.

At the sound of approaching steps on the pitched path, Jean lifted her eyes, and a ghastly pallor overspread her face at the sight of the two police-officers.
Jan answered the door, in response to their knock, and followed them slowly into the kitchen.

"Is your son in?" they asked.

"No," murmured Jan.

"Where is he?"

"I can't say."

The strange officer looked into the old man's face impatiently, while Burridge, the local policeman, fixed his eyes pitifully on Jean's bowed form.

"What time did he return home last night?" demanded the officer of Jan.

He didn't come home at all," said the old man, with a sigh.

"The officer looked at Burridge, then, turning to Jan again, asked:

"What time did he leave here last evening?"

"He didn't leave here at any time last evening," returned Jan.

"What do you mean," cried the official, "that he was not out last night? That he did not leave the house at all?"

Jan glanced at Jean pitifully, then murmured:

"He didn't leave the house last night."

"Then he must be here," returned the officer, "and you said a moment ago that he was not. Be careful what you say, Mr. Tremont, and speak the truth.

"God forgive me if ever I speak otherwise," replied Jan, with a glance heavenward.

"When did you see your son last?"

"Three days ago."

"The old man's voice was full of emotion as he spoke, and he clasped his hands together nervously."

"Three days, eh?" queried the officer. "Where did he go to on leaving here?"

"I can't say, sir."

"Why did he leave?"

Jan glanced at Jean pitifully, then murmured:

"I'd rather not say, sir," and he glanced again at his wife, and the officer, noting the glance, transferred his questioning to the poor, stricken mother.

"Of course, you know where your son is, Mrs. Tremont," he began.

![Little Bennie became the one earthly sunbeam in his long, lonely hour.](image)

Jean shook her head.

"To all the questions he put, he only obtained in response a shake of the head."

"I must search your house," said the officer, producing a warrant, "for we have reason to believe that your son is guilty of the foul crime committed on the edge of Hook Wood last night."

"Crime? Crime?" sobbed Jan and Jean at the same moment. "Oh, God help us! What crime?"

Burridge, observing that the news of the robbery had not yet reached them, related the circumstances, the other officer keeping his gaze fastened on the faces of the old couple.

As the news fell on their ears, Jan sank back in his chair, and a low moan broke from Jean.

A few moments later, the two police officers began their search of the house, Ben's room being the first into which they intruded.

The search, however, proved useless. Ben was nowhere to be found, though the scattered garments in his room, and other signs, revealed the fact that his flight had been sudden, and that some mystery was surely attached to it.

At last, after a survey of the out-buildings and further questioning of the stricken parents, the officers left, their conviction more than ever deepened that the disolute Ben Tremont, whose character in the town had followed him back to the village, was the perpetrator of the Hook Wood robbery.

In a very short space of time, the news spread through the village that Jan Tremont's villainous son was suspected of the crime, and that a warrant was out for his arrest. This suspicion was strengthened, a few hours later, by the news that a young man wearing a long coat, and a white muffler round his neck, had gone by an early morning train from the town station, and in buying his ticket, had displayed a handful of gold, the clerk adding that from what he could see of his face, it was blunted and blemished like that of a heavy drinker, and bore some resemblance to young Tremont, who was discharged from the brewery some two years before, for theft.

Jan and Jean were spared the hearing much of the
village gossip, for they had never made friends in the village, and the one or two persons who called at the house, refrained from broaching the painful subject.

In the old, low-ceiled kitchen, the pair sat, hour after hour, each in their own soul believing their son guilty.

"A son that would rob his mother," Jan told himself. "I would not have that a stranger." And Jean, remembering with horror, how her son had taken her purse with her little board, saved up for the rent, and had spent the whole of the money in six short days, and then, with a laugh, had flung the purse back into her lap, she groaned aloud in her agony and anguish of soul, and once again she moaned in bitterness of soul and keenest grief.

"Would to God I had yielded him up to death and Heaven, that night when a babe, ere sin had cursed his life, and brought you, his father, and I, in sorrow to the brink of the grave!"

Jan heard her cry, and it pierced his soul. He lifted his face from the blackened embers on the hearth, his eyes were full of tears, and his lips were quivering, as he silently prayed:

"God help her, and, if it can be, let me bear her sorrows!"

Then, with the help of his stick (for of late he had grown strangely feeble), he got up on his feet, and drew his chair close by her side.

"Don't grieve overmuch, poor lassie," he whispered.

"It was the mother-love, stronger for her child than for God!"

He fondled her hand as he spoke.

"How thin it has grown!" he thought, and with a newly-awakened pity and love, he drew it up to his breast and held it there, repeating his murmured cry.

"So thin and weak!"

Jean made no effort to draw her hand away: her husband's tender compassion was breaking her heart more than her son's sin.

"Poor Jan!" she murmured, "it is hard for you; but it was wrong was mine. I see it now—now that it is too late!"

"It is not too late for God, Jean, dearie," whispered her husband, in low, hopeful tones.

Her utterance had inspired hope in her soul, for it was the first acknowledgment of her sin he had ever heard from her lips.

Were his prayers of so many years about to be answered? he asked himself. And was the dark day of their trial and shame in their son to be the day in which the desolate mother should find favor with the God who had failed her, the living God? For nearly twenty-five years he had pleaded for her and day, and with strong cries and tears he had besought God to draw her heart to Himself. And now it seemed as though the desire of his soul was to be granted.

But oh, what a way of suffering had led to this hour! Surely no creature had been brought to lower depths of humiliation, disappointment, and shame, than themselves, his poor Jean especially.

"Jan, I've sinned, I've sinned!"

The broke suddenly from his sobbing wife.

"I forgot God," she continued, "and bowed down and worshiped the creature, and my sin has found me out, and it is too late!"

Her head sank lower, and her speech merged into a wail. Jan put his arm about her, and drew her white head down on to his breast.

"The Lord waits to be gracious to thee, my poor lassie," he said, "his love and mercy have been full of long-suffering. He will forgive, and blot out the past.

"Tell it out, Jean," he said. "Tell Him, Jean, just as you told your poor old Jan.""

Jean sobbed her sorrow.

"I can't, I can't," she moaned.

"Help her, Lord," cried her husband. "Let her know that Thou knowest all already, and are waiting to pardon.

"Tell it out, Jean, oh, pray!" sobbed her husband; and Jan, with mingled feelings of joy and woe, sank upon his knees by the chair. Jean knelt by his side, and the old man, putting his arm about her, sustained her shivering, weeping form, and lifting his eyes up to Heaven, he poured out his heart's burden for poor Jean.

Over that scene we cannot linger; but presently the arm of Jean stole round the old man's neck, and she laid her whitened head upon his shoulder, and murmured: "Oh, that I had done, deed as I should not! Then, maybe the lad would have been the Lord's, too!"

That night the pair sat up long into the early morning hours, with the bare hope in their hearts that Ben would return, and clear himself of the crime of which he was suspected, tenderly only. The bereft couple went to bed, but the sparrows were beginning to chirp beneath the thatch ere Jean closed her eyes in sleep. Her waking hours had been partly spent in soul-prayer to Heaven. For the first time in her life she really prayed to the God of the helpless and sinful.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRY IN THE STORM.

Winter storms were sweeping round the old thatched house of Bank Farm. The cattle were housed early, and Jan and his wife crept close to the burning logs on the hearth, grateful for the shelter of home.

Long months had gone by since Ben disappeared. No trace of him had been discovered, and the robbery of Farmer Brown had become almost forgotten in the village, because it was thought the villagers at large had forgotten and had long since ceased to think of the suspected Ben Tremont, Jan and Jean had not forgotten, and the wanderer was constantly in their troubled minds, though of late they had spoken less frequently of him to each other.

A wondrous change had taken place, years ago, when Jean thanked God for the gift of His Son, whose stoic work had provided a ransom for one so vile as herself. Then she had prayed for her prodigal son. Such a piteous prayer Jan had never heard before. It drew her, binding tears to her eyes, and he had gone back to the barn, and had buried his face in the stacked corn to stifle his own sobbing cries.

When he re-entered the house, Jean was at her stocking-mending. Locking up, she had met his gaze—a gaze of quiet gratitude and sweetness. He had never filled his deep, grave eyes before. Bending over her whitened head, he had laid his lips to her brow.

"Thank God for home and shelter, Jean, dearie," he murmured, "more still for the precious blood of His dear Son, in whose shelter we find pardon and peace, and for the home He is preparing for His redeemed ones."

Jean leant her face against Jan's side, and rested there in silence.

The storm outside ranged fiercer and fiercer. The rain beat against the chimney, and the wind howled dismally across the moor, and through the trees that skirted the north side of the house.

Jean shivered.

"What of our poor lad?" she murmured. As she spoke she pressed her head more closely to Jan's side, the thought of her son being a wanderer weighing heavily on her heart.

"The Lord will help him," answered Jan, "and all poor, homeless creatures on such a night as this.

Jean resumed her stocking-mending, and Jan drew his old arm-chair closer to her side, and when, presently, Jean laid her speckled stockings, all neatly mended and folded, on the table, she nestled her hand in her husband's lap, and the pair sat on in silence, leaning over the burning logs.

Suddenly Jan started.

"What was that?" he asked, his eyes wandering towards the kitchen window.
"It was like a child's cry," he added, in response to Jean's look of inquiry.

"It was the wind wailing," she returned. "It wails and howls through the lead at times, and sounds like a human cry."

Jean turned his eyes to the hearth again, and spread his hands over the red embers. A moment later his eyes turned to the window again, for the noise was repeated.

"A child's cry," he shouted to his feet, "for if ever I heard a child's cry that was nice."

Jean smiled faintly, assured in her mind that Jan's ears had deceived him.

The old man, making his way to the door, opened it, and peeped out into the court.

The rain had ceased, and the green world was beginning to shine between the dark, breaking clouds.

As he opened the door he distinctly caught the sound of a child's cry proceeding from near the window. He strained his eyes, and moved a few steps upward. A moment more, and in the dim light which shone from the window he discerned a dark object huddled up on the ground.

Breathlessly he hurried forward, and stooping, he saw, to his horror and amazement, that it was a woman, with pale face and motionless, as death, her dressed hair hanging about her shoulders, and her black garments saddened with the rain.

At her bosom, enroiled by one of her arms, was a child, and as Jean approached, its piteous, wailing cry was repeated.

"Poor creature!" mumbled Jan; "driven here to the light of the window by the storm, I reckon. An' the poor bairn, too!"

He put his hand out and touched the child's face, then his fingers wandered to the woman's face.

"She touched her brow lightly, murmuring: "God grant that she may not be dead!"

He started again, for her brow was cold to his touch.

The next instant he had managed to take the child from her breast, and hugging it up in his arms, staggered back to the door.

"It was a poor child's cry right enough, Jean," he said, "and here it is, and —

Jean looked round to the door, from whence the sound of her husband's voice had come, and where he was standing with the child held cut towards her in his arms.

With a cry she sprang to his feet.

"A child! a child!" she screamed. "A baby, and at our door!"

"Take it," he said, "and lay it on the settle. The poor woman is lying outside, dead, or very like it."

Jean gave another startled cry, and doing as her husband bade her, she took the child from his arms, and laid it on the wooden settle in the chimney corner.

Something in the fair face, around which saddened golden locks peeped from beneath the hood that was tied closely under its chin, reminded her sadly of her baby. Her of long years ago—her Bennie when he had been the innocent babe at her breast.

With a low, smothered cry she left it, and followed her husband out into the court.

A few moments later the pair returned, half-dragging, half-carrying the form of the storm-drenched woman between them.

Piling pillows and cushions on the floor before the fire, they laid her there.

"A doctor must be sent for," said Jean, raising her eyes from the white, lifeless face. "It may be there is life left.

"Saddle the old mare, and ride for him," she added.

"It's a bad night to be out, but I think it is —

She paused, and Jean, interpreting what she would have said without adding:

"It is what we should like others to do for us, isn't it, Jean? And what the Master would do?"

"Yes, yes, Jean; it is," she replied; and the next moment Jan had gone.

"Poor thing," she murmured, as she proceeded to undress her, putting on a cloak and dress. "Who can she be and what could have taken her out such a night as this?"

The woman was young, and slight of form, her pale face pinched and wrinkling; she was perfectly unknown to Jean.

Jean glanced down at her left hand; it was ringless.

"Poor, poor thing!" she murmured again, "she must be either the victim of some man's sin, or —"

A sudden movement of the woman's lips checked her questioning, and a moment later her eyes slowly opened, and a name broke from feebly from her lips, then her eyes re-closed, and she lay again white and still as in death.

The name the woman had uttered had been "Ben." Jean had heard it, and in an instant her thoughts had flown to her own wandering soul.

Leaving the woman, she went to the settle, and looked down upon the child. It was lying quiet now, its bright blue eyes wide open, watching the blazing logs. Jean staggered as she looked at it, for it was the very picture of what her Ben had been when a baby. Crossing to the dairy, she found some milk and warmed it, then taking the child in her arms, she began to feed it, strange feelings stirring her breast.

Thus Jean found her on her return, the child still in her arms, and her eyes, which were bent on its little face, were full of questioning.

"The bairn is all right, ain't he?" said Jan, coming to her side.

Jean nodded; and Jan, coming nearer, bent over the child. As he met the gaze of those bright eyes he gave a sudden start, and settled his face on one side.

Jean noted his action.

"What is it, Jan?" she asked.

The old man sighed deeply, and to Jean's second inquiry brokenly said: "The little bairn made me think of our own baby laddie, that was all."

Jean's eyes fell again on the face of the child. She was not alone, then, in those inner soul-feelings.

When, a few moments later, the doctor arrived, Jan took the child from his wife's arms, and making back on the settle, held it on his knees, his eyes riveted on the fair, bright face.

After the medical examination, the doctor and Jean bore the poor sick stranger up the low, winding stairs, and laid her on the bed which had been Ben's; and with a few more whispered instructions the doctor left, promising to come again early in the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECOND CHILD BENNIE.

BANK FARM? Am I at Bank Farm?"

The question broke from the strange woman's lips two days after she had been carried up to Ben's remnant's room, and laid on his bed.

It was the first really intelligently conscious question the woman had asked, and Jean, bending over her, slowly replied that she was.

"Are you his mother?" murmured the sufferer.

"Whose mother?" queried Jean, her voice scarcely above a whisper.

"Ben's mother."

Jean's face blanched at the question.

"I had a son named Ben," she murmured. "What of him?"

Then God I came right," moaned the woman, regardless of Jean's query. Then she lay still again, leaving poor Jean to the fears and anguish of her own heart.

That same day, when the early night-shadows had crept over the earth, Jean, sitting by the woman's side, heard her broken whisper.

"It was a story of deception and desertion—a story so sorrowful and sad that, even and anon, as the woman repeated it, anguish'd cries and moans escaped the lips of the listening Jean.

The woman was Ben's deserted, half-starved wife, and the child was his child.

Not a word did Jean doubt of all the woman said; she only bowed her head on her breast, and wept at this fresh revelation of her son's sin.

It was only when I felt death was coming to me that I resolved to find Bank Farm," the woman added, "and that for my child's sake."

"Will you give it a home?" she pleaded. "Oh, let not the father's sins be visited on my child's head. Say you will care for it."

She made an effort to take Jean's hand as she spoke, adding: "My darling is the picture of his father. You need no other proof."

"And Thank God I came right," moaned the woman, regardless of Jean's query. Then she lay still again, leaving poor Jean to the fears and anguish of her own heart.

That same day, when the early night-shadows had crept over the earth, Jean, sitting by the woman's side, heard her broken whisper.

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It was only when I felt death was coming to me that I resolved to find Bank Farm," the woman added, "and that for my child's sake."

"Will you give it a home?" she pleaded. "Oh, let not the father's sins be visited on my child's head. Say you will care for it."

She made an effort to take Jean's hand as she spoke, adding: "My darling is the picture of his father. You need no other proof."
Jean promised the woman all she asked, for she knew she was dying—the doctor had said so.

Presently she crept downstairs to Jan, who was in the chimney corner, with the sleeping child in his arms. Amid sobs and tears she repeated the woman's story.

"And this is Ben's child?" murmured Jan, with quivering lips.

"It is, Jan. Look!" added Jean, "look! Isn't he the picture of Ben as he was when a baby?"

Jan looked on the child in silence, both he and Jean understanding now those inward emotions that had stirred them on the night that the little one came to them through the storm.

"The poor mother is dying," said Jean, breaking the silence. "Sorrow has killed her."

"She is his wife?" queried Jan.

"Yes."

"Thank God for that," returned the old man.

For a few moments longer the pair talked and wept together over the sleeping child.

"It is a wee lamb the Lord hath sent to comfort thy heart," said Jan.

Jean sobbed aloud, Jan knowing full well the thought of her heart as she murmured:

"The Lord hath sent the Lord hath sent."

"Where is Ben? Does his poor wife know?" asked Jan.

"No; never a word has she heard from him since he left her before the birth of the child."

"O God, forgive him!" sobbed Jan.

Poor Jean's cup of bitter woe and remorse was very full at the moment, as she thought of the helpless, fatherless babe, and the dying woman upstairs, both victims of her son's sin and cruelty.

Jan saw how she was suffering, and he placed the child in her lap.

"Another in his place," she whispered.

Jean laid her lips to the child's cheek, and strained him to her heart. Her lips moved, but Jan could not catch her utterance.
On Bennie's third birthday another deep sorrow befel Bark Farm. Jan was brought in from the barn by two men who had carried him on the floor there, where he had fallen in a seizure.

They bore him up to his bed, and for three days he lay blind and speechless. On the fourth his sight returned, and he raised his eyes pitifully to the face of his weeping wife. His lips were silent, but an audible sound came from them, still Jean thought she traced the words he would have spoken to her:

"God's will be done."

From that day poor Jan became a bedridden sufferer, and though partial strength and speech came back, he was never able to leave his bed, or to express himself fully in speech. Little Bennie became the one earthly sunbeam in his long, lonely hours. The child would seat himself on the old man's bed, and repeat the little verses Jean had taught him, and then, laying his curly head on the pillow, he would press his fair, soft cheek against Jan's bearded face, and whisper in his pretty, broken language:

"Bennie love g'andal to hyb-ly sleep."

He would close his little eyes for a while, then, peeping out of the corner of one, he would look to see if Jan was sleeping; or at other times would ask: "Is you gone to sleep, g'andal? Bennie is quiet, Bennie go to sleep."

On poor Jean there fell not only the nursing of her husband, but the management of the business part of the farm. The days were filled with work. Spiritual strength seemed given her, as well as patience, and she became a wonder to many of the villagers, and was spoken of as the woman in whom a wondrous miracle had been wrought.

One summer came and went, and once again the winter winds swept around the old thatched house, and still Jan, tormented on earth, his chief companion being the little Bennie, who had come to them in the storm four years before.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BLOOD-STAINED HAND.

BANK FARM lay mantled in soft white snow. For two days it had continued to fall, then the skies had cleared, and the snow and ice had settled, and a solemn stillness brooded over the old house and all the country-side around.

Few people were about; only those who were compelled left their warm firesides. Among the few who were compelled to sally forth this evening was Jean Tremont, a special matter of business connected with the farm taking her to the steward of the estate.

She had bent over Jan before leaving the room, trying to make him understand that she was going away, and missing his response, she had, in his poor, half-dumb way, tried to keep her from venturing out in the chill night. But she had kissed him, and smiled, saying the cold would not hurt her, but turning to little Bennie, bade him take care of grandad until she came back.

Delighted with his commission, Bennie curled himself up on the bed, and by way of showing his grandmother how he would perform the trust she had committed to him, he began to smooth the pillow and the sheet, and to stroke Jan's face, murmuring pretty, endeared words as he did so:

"There! like that, Bennie will take care of grandad," he said; and Jean, kissing his fair, sweet lips, left the room well content.

Leaving all safe in the kitchen, she passed down the yard, and out of the gate into the snow-covered road, all unconscious that she was being watched by a man who stood looking in the shadow of the high hedge on the opposite side of the road.

The man watched her until out of sight, then, with swift steps, he made his way over the soft, white snow, and into the house where she had just left.

He stood within the low-ceiled kitchen, and glanced swiftly around; then, with a low, muttered utterance, he passed up the winding stairs, and a moment later stood in the doorway of Jan's room.

Bennie was lying down, his eyes riveted on the bed, then springing forward, least over the old man and demanded money.

His face was masked, and his voice thick and hoarse.
The old man tried to speak, but only a low guttural sound issued from his throat.

"Money I must have!" hissed the ruffian. "Money, I say!"

The poor old man flung up his hands, and once again tried to speak, while little Ben burst into a head, frightened cry, and clung to the distressed Jan in real terror.

Over the terrible scene enacted in that room we draw a veil.

When, half-an-hour later, Jean returned, the loud sobbing of the child arrested her.

Hurry ing up the stairs, she encountered a sight that chilled her very life's blood.

Across the top of the bed lay the form of Jan, a crimson stream flowing from a wound on the temple. The child was sobbing by his side, and calling upon him to speak.

With a groan Jean reached the bed, and little Bennie, seeing her, sobbed:

"The man, the man, the wicked man hit grandad, and — and —"

A low moan broke from Jan.

"Thank God he is not dead!" cried Jean, and with deft fingers she bound up the bleeding wound with her handkerchief, and succeeded in drawing him back in the bed.

At that instant she caught sight of an open drawer in the chest that stood on the other side of the room. She had left it locked, for in it was the rent money, and the little wrongdoer had had his way a rainy day.

She staggered across the room, and, to her horror, saw that the lock was broken, and the little box that had contained the money was empty.

She groaned aloud, and little Bennie sobbed out again:

"The man, the man, the wicked man broke the drawer."

Like a flash the awful truth came home to poor Jean. Not only had her poor, helpless husband been half-murdered, but they had been robbed of their little all; robbery had been the motive.

Before the last sun rose on the following morning, over the white-crusted earth, Jan Tremont died. He had recovered consciousness for a few moments, and had tried to speak, but the one word which Jean thought she saw framed on his lips filled her soul with horror.

Sitting round her crisis, she kept watch by her husband's side until the spirit, escaping its tenement of clay, fled away to its Creator.

In the last few moments of his life he had raised his right hand heavenward, which sign Jean interpreted as meaning that he was dying to be with Christ.

Once he stroked little Bennie's golden head, and the little fellow had nestled his face to Jan's cheek, and he was lying thus when Jan breathed his last.

A verdict of wilful murder against some person unknown was returned, and, so far as the doctors opinion was that death had resulted from the temple wound. So once again Nestleton and its neighbourhood was plunged into a state of horror and consternation over this second tragedy that had been committed in their midst.

The faces of many paled as they whispered together, and in the minds of many the name of Ben Tremont, Jan's own son, who was suspected of the robbery, of Farmer Brown, was also connected with the Bank Farm tragedy.

Of the people's suspicions Jean knew nothing, and of the awful fear of her own soul she breathed into no ear save God's.

Snow still covered the ground when Jan was laid in his last resting-place, and on the gleaming white snow Jean and little Bennie stood, and watched the coffin lowered into its mother earth.

Poor Jean shed no tears; she had wept their fount dry.

Little Bennie, as the coffin disappeared, clasped her hand and sobbed aloud, asking if going down into that dark, cold hole was the way to Heaven.

Jean quitted her best she could, but her sobs rent her heart as he kept calling for his grandad to come back.

It was a desolate home to which the poor, bereft woman and the sobbing child returned. And that night poor Jean lay sleepless through his long, tedious hours, living over again that night, when she defined God to take her child home to Himself.

"Oh, would that he had died then!" she wailed. "Would that I had died ere I gave birth to a son whose hand and soul have become red with his own father's blood!" for the secret belief of her own heart was that Ben was the robber and murderer of his own father.

Time passed on, and Jean, despite the advice of the villagers to leave the house in which such woe had come to her, remained at Bank Farm.

To herself she would constantly murmur: "The curse of my sin and folly has followed the lad, I, I, I am the guilty one."

With the passing days, her remorse, and the grief for the sin of her early married life grew more and more acute, while, at the same time, the mercy and grace of God became more wonderful and comforting to her soul.

From that time she prayed for her wandering son with greater earnestness than ever. Night and day she pleaded that he might be arrested by the Spirit of God, and led to the Saviour Who saves even thieves and murderers: while her heart, uppermost, though yearning to return, would return, would come back as the prodigal of old did.

"And if so," she murmured, "he must find his mother in the old house-place."

But when, one day, it occurred to her that her son's return home meant prison and the gallows for him, she bowed her head and wept in the horror and darkness that surrounded her.

From that time she spoke no more to little Bennie of his father, resolving in her heart that she should never know of his father's sin and crime.

* * *

While the stricken mother was praying in the old farm-house, an ex-prisoner, who was known to her as Blue-black Bob, was, for the first time in his life, held spell-bound at a street corner in the great city, listening to a hymn as she sang and told out the Gospel in the words:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, They shall be as white as snow.
Though they be red like crimson, They shall be as wool."

And before the service was over there broke upon the audience the sobbing cry:

"Can a murderer's blood-stained soul be made white as snow? Can a thief be pardoned? Is there mercy for such a sinner?"

The prayer had broken from the lips of Blue-black Bob. All eyes turned to the closely-shaven ex-prisoner as this cry broke from him. His few pals who were near passed strange glances to each other. That Blue-black Bob was a thief there was no doubt about it, and, speaking from the hearts of his former companions, there was a sense of a universal explanation of the audience looked aghast, and shrank from the spot where he was standing.

The full purport of his cry had not reached the lady-preacher, and in louder and more agonising tones than before he repeated his cry.

This second cry reached her. She paused, looked around, and then her eyes lighted on the villainous-looking ex-prisoner.

"It's me! it's me!" he cried. "Can such sin as mine be washed?"

"Yes, yes, praise God! Yes!" called out the lady-preacher. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

Said, friends," she said, and then, whispering something to the workers by her side, she made her way through the crowd to Blue-black Bob, and while she was fearlessly speaking with the criminal from whom timid women shrank with fear and dread, the band of workers took up the hymn the lady had partly sung, and once again the invitation rolled out in song:

"Hear the voice that entreats you: Oh, return ye unto God! That is of great concernment,
And of wondrous love,
Hear the voice that entreats you,
Hear the voice that entreats you, as it entreats you,
He'll forgive your transgressions
And remember them no more."
CHAPTER IX.

A SAD CONFESSION.

WEARY, worn, footsore, and with his last bit of strength fast ebbing away, the man of our last chapter, Blue-black Bob, under the cover of evening shadows, staggered down the road towards Bank Farm.

For four days he had been walking, sleeping at night under whatever shelter he could find, for he was absolutely penniless. His journey was the result of the Spirit's work of conviction in soul, as recorded in our last chapter, and the day following the meeting he had turned his face towards Nottingham, with its special objects in view.

His soul agony, and the very tortures of hell which had got hold upon him, we can never describe. And more than once during that terrible journey the fear was upon him that he never would accomplish his purpose. Twice he had begged bread, and for one whole day no crumb had passed his lips. Still on he crawled, and on the evening of the fourth day, in the grim, grey shade of night, he staggered across the moor, and into the leafy, silent road that led to Bank Farm.

As the old thatched pile came in sight the church clock in the village tower struck the hour of nine. He combed the hour stroke by stroke, strike, strike, gruesome moments crowding upon him as he did so.

His legs grew almost powerless as he approached the gate that led into the yard, and his eyes lifted to the window of a room beneath the thatch.

That window was in darkness, but a sigh of relief escaped him when he caught sight of the light that glanced from the latticed window of the kitchen below.

Controlling himself as best he could, he crawled up the yard, and crouching on the ground, pressed his head against the diamond panes.

The curtains were drawn, but from the side he was able to see into the room. Though it was not winter, logs lay blazing on the wide, open hearth, and on the table the evening meal lay spread.

On one side of the kitchen, in her old arm-chair, sat Jean Monroe. She was an old woman now, her hair was as white as snow, and on her wore a white-frilled cap tied beneath her chin, and the expression of her face was that of refinement through suffering.

Opposite Jean sat a young man, barely twenty; he was the second Bennie, who had become the earthly comfort and support of the old woman's life, for though so young, Bennie had taken upon himself the management of the farm, and every day and hour of her life Jean blessed God for her second Benjamin He had given her.

During the years that had gone by no word of her lost son had come to Jean, and she had long since given up hope of meeting him again on earth, though she had never ceased to pray for him.

Her grandson is reading—reading from his grandfather Jan's well-used Bible. Every now and then the lad pauses to comment on some of the precious promises he has read, and to reply to the questions his grandfather asks.

The man outside, as he watches, grows half-aloud:

"The old man is dead, slain by his own son; but she knows not whose hand dealt the fatal blow."

There was a movement inside the room. Jean and the strange young man knelt by their chairs in prayer, and the listener was unable to catch the words of their utterance, knew that it was the lad's voice leading in that evening devotion.

As they knelt thus, the watching Ben, unable to bear the sight any longer, sank back with a groan of pain.

It was five o'clock, and the man knelt by the fire in the kitchen, but it did. The young man, as he rose to his feet, heard it, and without a word to Jean he passed out to discover from whence the cry had proceeded.

A few moments later he returned to the kitchen; his face was pale as death, and Jean, started at the pallor of his face, looked into the interior of the room of mystery. In reply he whistled something in low, hoarse voice.

Jean fell back in her chair, and the next instant the man from outside had crawled to her feet, and on her ear there fell the anguish-laden cry:

"Mother! oh, my mother!"

Jean looked down upon the grovelling form, and a cry of amazement broke from her lips as she met the gaze of his sunken eyes.

"Ben! Ben!" she moaned. "Is it you? Oh, is it you?"

The man grew out of his assumption.

"Oh, my son, my son!" she wailed. "Thank God you have come! My prayers are answered before I die."

"You have prayed for me, mother?" he gasped.

"Always, my boy."

"Of God, help me!" he groaned. "For she knew not for whom she prayed."

His words brought surprise and hope to Jean's heart. "It was for you, for you!" she cried. "I have come back to die, mother."

Jean looked into his face, and saw that death was written upon it.

"But not to die in the way you think, mother. I have come to confess my crimes, and to give myself up to the law and to the hangman."

Poor Jean shuddered. That long-ago conviction that her son was the murderer of his own father was true, then! "I did it, mother!" he cried, throwing up his hands.

She tried to take his hand, but he drew it back with a sudden shudder. "You knew it!" he gasped. "You knew it, and yet prayed for me?" she cried. "Knew it, and allow me to be here?"

"I did," she returned. "For I, too, have sinned, and perhaps my sin was greater than yours."

The poor, returning wanderer looked up into his mother's face in speechless wonder.

"Listen!" she said. "When you were a babe, pure and innocent, of my breast, I treasured you as one priceless jewel of my life. I set God above, and you became my only God. With my Eye on God, I wept over you, and I knew I could not be trusted with you. You lay at the point of death, at the verge of the river, close, close to Heaven's gate; but I, in my sin and selfishness, defied God, defied death to claim you. I would not yield you up. In the awful wickedness of my heart I told God that if He took you from me my body should fill the same grave; that I would destroy my own life, the life He had given me. My awful, sinful desire was granted. You did not die; I snatched you back from death's brink; you were given back to me, as though from the dead, to the astonishment of the doctor, who declared that a miracle had been wrought. From that time I became a hundred times more indulgent to you. Your every whim and desire were granted; correction or rebuke had no part in my training. I only yielded to the idolatrous love of my wicked heart, and pampered your every desire.

Before you reached the age of ten my soul found me out, and I began to reap the bitter fruits of my folly. And when you were fifteen I would have given worlds, had I possessed them, to have been able to have undone that one terrible act of my life, for you, the son whom I had snatched from Heaven's gate, cursed the mother who bore you. Oh, to have had you safe in the grave, safe in Heaven, would have then been Heaven to my soul, but..."

The poor, aged, stricken mother paused, her voice broken by sobs, while the wretched man before her buried his face in his hands in speechless horror.

"You know all that followed from that time," she presently resumed, choking back her sobs; and the bowed, fallen figure before her, made her own did he not possess him the memory of all the sins and crimes of those long, black years. He remembered the debauchery, the many times, even before he was out of his teens, when he had reeled home to his waiting father and mother in a drunken condition. He saw again, like his face, that face, that hands, that mother's despair. He remembered his master's acts of theft, the brewery he had robbed; worse still, he had stolen his own mother's purse from her pocket. Then, in after days, there had followed that highway robbery of Farmer Brown, and still more terrible deeds that had followed in other parts of the country.
Then had come that awful time when, maddened for want of money, he had crept back and robbed the old home, and had dealt that murderous blow to his poor, speechless father, which had ushered him into eternity.

Another and another black, hideous crime rose before him. He saw the bright-faced, trusting girl, whom he had wooed and won, grow pale, haggard, and stricken before his eyes. Under his cruelty she had writhed in her agony, and then, one day, dealing her a cruel blow, he had deserted her, leaving her to starve and die or struggle as best she could.

Of this latter wrong he supposed that his mother knew nothing, and in his penitent anguish he sobbed out the name of Annie—the Annie whom he had wronged.

As Jean, who had remained silent, caught the sound of that name, she lifted her tear-stained face.

"Annie lies in yonder churchyard," she said, "lies by your father's side."

As her words fell on the wretched man's ears, he cried, in a voice such as Jean never forgot:

"Annie lies here, in her grave? O God! then she found you out, and—-and—-where is the—"

Here he utterly broke down, but Jean, divining the question he would ask, whispered something in his ear. What she whispered caused a cry such as had never escaped the wretched man before to break from his grey-blue lips, and falling forward, he lay with his face on the ground, while before his terrified eyes there rose the vision of the fair-haired child who had clung screaming to the poor, speechless Jan that night he had dealt him that fatal blow. The one earthly witness of that foul deed had been his own child, the child of the dead Annie, who was another victim of his sin.
CHAPTER XI.
FATHER AND SON.

Bennie!

It was Jean's voice calling to her grandson, who, with white, stricken face, had left the house when the returning prodigal began his awful confession. He had gone out to the barn, utterly unmanned by all that he had heard.

At Jean's call he rose from the heap of straw on which he had flung himself, and came towards her. Her face was blanched, and her form quivered with agitation. He placed his arm about her in support.

"God help you and sustain you, gran'ny," he murmured, huskily.

"And God help you, Bennie," she sobbed, "for he is your father.

I know, I know," he returned; "and I have been praying for help.

"Come to him," pleaded Jean. "It is the Lord Who hath brought him back in penitence.

"Help me! oh, help me, Lord!" cried Ben.

The lad's prayer reached Heaven, and brought down a swift reply.

"I will go," he said, and he proceeded to the house, followed by Jean.

On the floor of the kitchen grovelled the sin-stained man. He did not hear the approaching steps or any sound until on his ear there fell the low, broken cry of his father.

He raised his head, and his eyes met the pitying, sorrowful gaze of his unknown son, Jean's second Bennie.

Something in the depths of those deep blue eyes, and the expression of the pale, firm face, pierced the man's soul as nothing before had done; at the same time hope was inspired within his breast.

"My son! oh, my son!" he cried.

"Be merciful, oh, be merciful!" he pleaded, as his son stepped back for a moment, staggered at the sight of his father's face.

The young man, with another inward prayer, laid his hand upon his father's shoulder. "Yes, father," he said, "even as God is merciful.

He helped him to his feet, and placed him in the old arm-chair that had been Jean's.

And thus it was that the sin-degraded father first looked upon his known son's face, and his first cry to him had been for mercy.

Jean had stood in the background, a silent observer of the meeting, and when the son, seating himself by his father's side, began listening to his broken confession, Jean slipped away to prepare a basin of hot milk for the half-starved wanderer.

Space forbids our detailing all the confessions and explanations that followed.

Jean, with tears coursing down her cheeks, delivered the young man's dying message of pardon and forgiveness.

"She forgave me?" gasped the prodigal.

"She did, fully and freely," replied his mother.

"And my son forgives me?"

As the man spoke he raised his eyes to the manly face of his son.

"Are, father, I do, I do," responded Bennie.

"And you, my mother?" enquired the surprised criminal.

"Even as God forgave me, my son," answered Jean.

"But, mother, God! Will He pardon a murderer?" was the next question that broke from the returned man's dry lips.

"The lady preacher," he added, "said He would. She said that our sins, though red like crimson, red with blood, could be made white as snow.

A glad cry broke from Jean.

"It is true, all blessedly true," she replied; and in the joy of that moment she repeated aloud the words of the hymn:

"The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day; And there may I, though vile as he, Wash all my sins away.

"The thief was pardoned," she said, "and——" But I am a murderer," groaned the man, "a man-slayer, the slayer of my own father.

"All manner of sin, the Bible says, shall be forgiven," said Bennie. "And you, my father, may be pardoned," he added. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin—all, my poor father."

And there, in that low-ceiled kitchen, fraught with so many past memories, the sin-stained man knelt, and by his side knelt his son, pointing to the Saviour of sinners.

"He is poor, broken-hearted, yet rejecting Jean—her—you, Bennie, his son, "

There was a long silence, and the words held the hearts of both mother and son.

"I must give myself up to the law, and bear the penalty of my many crimes." Jean looked into her grandson's face. What she read there answered to her own soul's conviction. Her criminal son had resolved on the right course; but oh, the awful grief of the mother's heart, for before the mind's eye each there loomed not only the prison, but the gallows.

Even now, Jean told herself, if her return home was known, he would be dragged from her to prison.

"It is right, it is what I deserve," said the criminal, reading the unspoken thought of the mind.

"Besides," he added, "I am already death-doomed; the verdict is gone forth. Soon I shall be at God's judgment bar."

Poor Jean listened, and unable to restrain herself any longer, she flung her arms about her stricken son's shivering form, as though she would retain him, despite his sin and crime.

"Oh, my son? she moaned.

The next instant, with a glance heavenward, she cried:

"The Lord's will be done, even unto death—the death of the gallows!"

CHAPTER XI.
HER LESSON LEARNT.

J ust before the breaking of the morning the returned criminal bade his mother and son farewell.

The few brief night-hours after his arroval to give himself up to justice, there had been spent in the old barn, then came the leave-taking, over which we draw a veil.

With the low, tender words of both mother and son falling on his ears, he passed out into the yard.

The sparrows had not yet begun their first twittering, and a strange, brooding silence reigned everywhere.

With one long, last lingering look at the old home, as it lay shadowed in the semi-darkness, he made his way slowly down the road.

To his mother's entreaties that he would remain with them in secret for a day he shook his head, firmly resolved to carry out his purposes, first to visit the graves of his father and wife, that side by side in the village churchyard, then to go on to the town, and surrender himself up to the police on his own confession of robbery and murder.

The first grey streak of dawn appeared in the east as he passed in through the lych-gate to the silent little God's acre. He shuffled at the sight of the many graves, and the white stones that met his view, outlined as they were in the grim, shadowed light. A few moments later he had reached a secluded corner.

It had been the Tremonts' burying spot for the past three generations.

With a cry that shivered the silence of the still morning, he threw himself across the two outside mounds, and snatched from the dust of his two mounds, his slain father, and wife.

There the penitent man poured out strong cries and tears, and to Heaven there rose the repeated groaning cry for mercy.

He was all unconscious that he was being watched by his son, who had silently followed him from the house.
Presently his cries ceased, and he lay silent and still across the graves. Then Ben cry out of the grave-yard, and back to Jean, whom he had left bowed in her arm chair in silent woe.

The news that the body of a dead man had been found lying across two graves in the Tremonts’ burying corner spread through the village with great rapidity, and by nine o’clock the rumour had become rife that the dead man was Ben Tremont, the long-lost wanderer from Bank Farm. Rumour was true, Ben Tremont was dead. The sexton, on passing round to the end of the church at eight o’clock that morning, had discovered the dead body lying across Jean’s grave and the grave of the young woman who had died at Bank Farm nineteen years before, and who, it was reported, was the deserted wife of Jan’s wandering son.

The lifeless body was borne back to Bank Farm, and laid upon the bed under the thatched roof, the bed on which he had lain when a baby-boy high unto death, and on which the poor wife, Annie, had died.

Shut in with death, Jean spent one long, bitter hour. What passed between her and God none knew, but when she came forth, her face, though pale as death, was calm and serene, for in her soul she believed that her son’s cry to Heaven for mercy had been answered, and that, like the penitent thief of old, he had obtained pardon through the Good Man, Christ Jesus, who had been wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities.

At the request, Jean and Bennie gave the details of his sudden return home; and the doctor’s examination proved that rapid consumption, in conjunction with a drink-wrecked system, had been the cause of death.

Ben was laid in the Tremonts’ corner in the burial ground, by the side of his father and wife. There the three graves lay side by side, where Jean and Benne, knowing the awful truth that he had been the cruel slayer of both father and wife, for both had resolved that that terrible secret should be buried in the grave of the dead.

Jean and Bennie still live on together at the old homestead, Jean aged and feeble now, but tenderly and lovingly cared for by Bennie, who is a fine, manly fellow, and the light of her life.

In Jean’s soul there still lives the awful memory of her early sin; but the one expression of her heart and lip in every detail and dispensation of life now is:

"The Lord’s will be done. Let Him do as seemeth Him good."

Through much suffering she had learnt that God is too wise to err and too good to be unkind, and that all His ways are right.

Both is not living without an aim and mission in life, and though his place for the present is in the old homestead, and his especial care is his only grandmother, he is looking forward to the time when he shall go forth into the world and lift up his voice against the demon drink.

He is already working in his own village and surrounding neighborhood, and the terribly sad history of his own father is an address more weighty and painful than any moral argument he can bring forth against the deadly poison that worked such woe and death in his own family.

Death, death is in the man-made, filthy drunkard’s drink; he cries out, ‘but,’ holding up a glass of clear, sparkling water from the spring, he added, ‘life, life, health, peace, and prosperity, are in the beverage pure from God’s own hands.’

And as he speaks, and poor Jean listens, the thoughts of both travel to the burial-ground, but they do not remain there, for from the grave they lift to the Cross of Calvary, and from the Cross to the Throne in the Glory, where He sits on the right hand of God. Who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and whose Blood was shed for the poor drunkard, as well as for the thief. And with renewed power there comes to their hearts the precious truth that He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto Him.

(Fin.)

NOTE!—Suddenly a noise made her (the burglar’s wife) start; a noise so slight, however, that, had it not been for her nervous fears, she would not have noticed it. She looked up greatly surprised to see her husband whom —— “Put the light out quick, Katie, and don’t make any noise,” he said hoarsely. She waited hour after hour in silence, darkness, and suspense before he spoke again.

A sigh . . . issued from the place where he had been standing, and a moment later the feeble glimmer of a light came from the eye of a small, round lantern. “Oh, Jim,” she gasped, “what does it all mean?” “Come . . .” he said cautiously, “I thought I was followed, I——"

READER! for full particulars see next week’s (No. 365)

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CHAPTER I.

"Just one wrong step, and the track is lost.
Lost in a mist of doubt and sin.
Then pause and ponder, and count the cost,
Will you take the step, or remain within
The path with its limits of love?"

—E. P. C.

The purple heather stretched away over the hills, giving the country-side the appearance of being bathed in a rich sun-set glow. Here and there a narrow footpath or sheep-track might be seen, winding down the slopes or leading up to one of the few scattered cottages, which formed the hamlet of Dewsley.

Through the heather a little group of men and women moved slowly, looking, in the distance, like a small black spot upon the beautiful landscape.

In front walked a grey-haired man, down whose rugged face, a slowly-moving tear from time to time forced its way in the lines and wrinkles worn by sorrow, time, and exposure.

Close beside him a girl walked, with bent head and tightly-clasped hands. She heard the low murmur of voices, and knew that the friends and relatives behind were talking about the loss she had sustained in her mother, whose well-loved form had just been laid within the shelter of God's Acre; knew, too, that they were arranging and planning for the future welfare of her father, and the guidance of the little farm-house which she called home.

It is possible that she lifted her eyes from the ground and seen the tears upon her father's usually stern face. Katie Watford's whole future might have taken a different shape—on so small a pivot does the wheel of life turn.

Many thoughts crowded through the girl's brain as she walked in utter silence back to the house, of which she must henceforth be the mistress.

Just as its low, white-washed walls came into view, a figure could be seen on the brow of the hill, following the windings of the narrow path-way up which the funeral party had to go.

With the strange interest we often feel in outside matters when our hearts are too bowed down with grief to know that the brain is receiving and noting new impressions, Katie Watford raised her drooping head as the figure drew near, and her eyes met, for one moment, a pitying glance.

Her heart was aching for sympathy; and though her relatives and neighbours had done all that they could to help the stricken household, they had not been able to tender that silent, healing sympathy which has the power to comfort.

Their words of pity had wounded, for her heart was too sore to bear the very lightest touch, but in the look that she had caught upon the stranger's face, there was nothing to hurt, and so it remained photographed upon her memory, the one bright spot in a dark day.

Outside the garden gate, the party scattered.
and Katie, as she watched her father unlock the house door, and carefully remove his black coat before he went to feed and tend the stock, felt that even the luxury of indulged grief could not be hers, and her feelings, already bitter and rebellious, were intensified into a rebellious outcry against God.

The old life must go on as though the angel of death had never entered the lowly homestead.

With a stifled sigh, Katie removed her black hat, and tossed it in a corner. Her black, impassive movement, as though its signs of mourning were responsible for the sorrow, and as she did so, a heavy footstep crossed the flagged floor.

A shade of colour flowed into Katie's face, for the sight of a white shoulder, a lover, James Freeman.

He was a quan, grave-looking man, several years older than herself, and had been trying to wear pretty Katie for months past. Now he tried to comfort her, awkwardly enough, but the words that fell from his lips came as a quiet dignity when she quoted from the Book that was his guide and stay.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, which loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your heart," he said, gently, and, for a moment, Katie's rebellious heart was oozed into stillness.

The image of his kind face, and a vivid picture of the face she had seen a little while before, and it seemed to her that James Freeman looked weak, and his words, as he began to talk hopefully of a future in which she shared, were halting and commonplace, and she was not overcome by them.

When the tea was set, Katie went across to the cowhouse, and, as she did so, the stranger whom she had met a little while before, crossed the path and lifted his hat with rather elaborate courtesy.

To do Katie justice, she scarcely noticed his action at the time, for her grief was genuine, albeit somewhat selfish.

"Katie," her father said suddenly that evening, "I have asked your Aunt Maria to come. See that the children don't give her more trouble than you can help."

"On a visit, father?" Katie answered, questioningly, with an icy intonation.

"No, to stay," he answered, shortly.

Katie's face flushed, and it was all she could do to keep down the rebellious tears, while she said:

"Why, father, you know we never get on, and—"

The sentence was never finished, for Mr. Watford, dreading some reference to his wife, left the room.

"It is not of father, Katie thought. "He knows I hate Aunt Maria. I suppose he's afraid I shouldn't make him as comfortable as—he's always been, and her children, and her husband, and her friends, and her home. It's not going to trouble about the children. If she comes here, she must manage them herself. I can't understand father wanting her to come, he says it's as much as we can do to pay our way now. I suppose he thinks anyone will do to fill mother's place, but he will find, if it's comfort he wants, that he's got the wrong person."

Katie spent the evening busily enough, but all the time her thoughts were at work, her thoughts were dwelling on what she considered her father's fragility. While, poor man, was absorbed with thoughts of his dead wife, he had not thought of his his home, and in spite of his quick temper, and a good woman, might find a home in the little, white-washed farm-house.

The next morning Aunt Maria appeared, and an acknowledged end began in the Watford's home. Katie's father, who might have set matters right in a few words were less inclined to do this if she did not.

His wife had been the only being in the world who had ever fully understood the loving nature that lay hidden beneath the silent, uncommunicative manner, and now that she was dead, he grew more and more reserved.

Directly his duties on the farm were over, he would go into the little kitchen, and sit looking at the empty hearth, and when Katie came in, he would ask if she was hungry. Pretty Katie was walking over the heather-clad hills with one who was almost a stranger; for, finding no rest from the dissatisfaction that possessed her whole being after her mother's death, Katie had hasted with pleasure into interest awakened in her life by an acquaintance.

...and the young Londoner, James Moore, who was spending a brief holiday amidst the lovely hills of her home.

He had such a pleasant, deferential manner, talked so well, and seemed to fully understand how much she missed her mother, and how bitterly she resented the appearance of her Aunt Maria on the scene.

Gradually the acquaintance between the two young people deepened into something warmer; and one evening, after Katie had been away for several days, he began to speak of his loneliness in the great city where he lived, and then pleaded with the fair girl at his side to promise that, as soon as ever he could make a home, she would come to be his bride.

Hastened, half-hesitant, Katie consented to give the desired promise, but just as her lover clasped her in his strong arms, a slight noise caused her to raise her head, and she caught a glimpse of the sternly set face of her old lover, James Freeman, who strode past the young couple without a word.

"Who is that, darling?" James Moore asked, seeing how white Katie looked.

"A friend of my father's," she faltered.

For a moment, Moore was silent, then he said thoughtfully:

"If I must see Mr. Watford. Would to-night be a good time?"

Katie hesitated. She had never told her father of the repeated walks and talks she had had with James Moore. Indeed, she had never even mentioned his name to her friends at home, knowing well that her father quite expected to marry James Freeman. Her momentary hesitation arose from her fear that if her lover did not at once proceed to her father, to ask his consent to the engagement, he might be forestalled by James Freeman; yet, on the other head, if she could only be sure that her heart and soul were kept safe, she thought she would rather prepare her father more gradually for the news that she had engaged herself to the stranger who had come to stay in the village.

Seeing her hesitation, and partly divining its cause, James Moore knew her anxiety, and thought it best to offer her a home in his new house on the outskirts of the town, and then and there poured into her ready ear plans for the future.

The next day he went away without seeing Mr. Watford, and Katie spent the whole day in a state of feverish anxiety, watching to see whether her old lover would arrive. He came just as the sun was setting, and Katie, who saw him approaching, flung a light shawl over her head, and hurried down the garden path to meet him.

His first thought was to pass her with a brief "Good-bye," but her eyes told him something stronger. She was pale and anxious, and the memory of his own pain and disappointment faded, and he thought only of her welfare, and instead of the rebuke Katie had expected, only tender words fell from his lips.

"Katie, I've known and loved you long enough to be able to claim a brother's right. I don't want to interfere or mar your happiness, but tell me dear, are you quite, quite sure that you are acting wisely? I don't say that because you have passed me by. I always knew a plain, homely fellow, such as I, wasn't good enough for you. But the man of your choice one who will help you to live nearer to God?"

Katie hung her head, but did not answer.

"Take my advice, little Katie," he said softly, "and tell your father all about your hopes, and don't do any injustice to any of your mother. God bless you, and make you happy."

The last softly whispered words had scarcely died away when he was gone.

The girl did not hurry into the house; she felt sure now that nothing would be said to her father, and so she paced along the path under the gray twilight, thinking deeply about the young stranger, James Freeman, as though so loving Heavenly Father was near at hand to listen to her voice, no tender Saviour to claim the life she had given her own.

When she re-entered the house, her mind was fully occupied; she had made her choice.
About a week after James Moore returned to the city, Katie, who had been looking pale, told her father that she had known for some time that the man for whom she had been working in the market-town, in a small village not much larger than Dewsey.

"I can go in with John," she said, purposely choosing the prettiest of her brothers, "and you can call for me next evening.

Her father gave his consent, and the next morning Katie appeared at her cousin's door, accompanied by her brother John, a quiet, shy boy of about fourteen years, who set down his sister's box without a single comment on its size or weight.

A week later, her father called to take her back, and was met with the startling news that she was not there.

Meanwhile, Katie was hastening towards Liverpool, the city where James Moore was now living.

In the train of the previous day, the ticket clerk only confirmed the statements made by the two cousins who had accompanied Katie to the station—she had taken a ticket to the town nearest to Dewsey.

Alarmed and perplexed, Mr. Watford returned home, hoping against hope to hear that Katie had arrived. It was just possible that she might have left her box at the station, and gone in to see a friend, and then been persuaded to stay for the night. But the hope was vain, for Katie, as she knew, was many miles away.

Mr. Watford was left in false clues; but Katie, with the aid of her lover's directions, baffled all efforts made to trace her.

Directly James Freeman heard of the girl's disappearance, he set off at once, and with no less time in telling Mr. Watford all he knew. But even with this clue, they failed to discover any trace of Katie, for the address that James Moore had given was a London one, and, on enquiry, it was found that he had only spent a couple of days in the house, and no one knew anything at all about her.

For a few weeks, excitement ran high in the quiet little hamlet, but gradually curiosity died away, and only the deepened furrows on a father's face, and a little piece of news chronicled in a local paper remained as evidences of Katie's flight.

The latter was a notice that James Freeman had tried for and obtained a post as master of a workhouse in a northern town.

Strange to say, Katie saw the notice, read it, and re-read it, little thinking that one day the fact that she had done so would play an important part in her life, and the life of another, dearer than her.

It occurred in a small room, in one of the many side-streets of Liverpool that Katie sat, reading and re-reading the local newspaper. She was still Katie Watford, although nearly three months had elapsed since her flight from Dewsey, and during that time, she had only once seen James Moore.

He had planned to meet her at the railway-station, and take her at once to some, quiet lodgings, but as the train had steamed into the busy depot, Katie had strained her eyes in vain for a sight of the bright, handsome face which had won her girlish heart. She knew that she had gone to look for her box, and as she did so, her lover came from the shadow of an archway, and stepped forward to greet her.

In the first glow of delight, she did not notice how pale and wan he looked; but as he sat beside her in the cab he glanced into the room he had spoken of, she noticed how ill he looked.

"Why, Jim, whatever is the matter?" she asked, in dismay.

"Matter enough, my sweet girl," he answered, gloomily. "I've just had a letter from my firm, ordering me off to London for three months, and—" "Oh, is that all, Jim," she exclaimed, "why I should like to see London. It's your birthplace and home. It will be lovely!"

He coloured and then stammered out: "But that is not the worst, Katie. They have chosen me because I am not a single man, and they want me to sleep in the house. I'd write and refuse, but the money they offer would help furnish our home. So now, sweet heart, you see why I am troubled."

"Her stock of money, small to begin with, had been considerably lessened by the expenses of the journey, for she had no home to be a base for any route, changing from one line to another whenever it was practicable to do so.

Her faith in James Moore was unbounded. It never occurred to her that he might prove unfaithful; but her pride was sufficiently strong to prevent her accepting any part from him until she saw her own home, neither did she mean to write home for help.

"Surely," she thought, as she saw the numberless streets and shops of the city, "there must be plenty of work to be done in a place like this, so I shall be all right here in a day or two."

James Moore had half expected her news to be met with tears and distress, but Katie's perfect trust made him feel most uncomfortable.

"Poor little girl! How I hate to deceive her," he thought, hugging hard at his mustache.

The house in which he brought her seemed small and close to Katie, but the woman who came to the door had a kind face.

"I have brought my future wife to you, Mrs. Dear," he said, "I know how much you care for her until her return."

Then, as the door had closed after the mistress of the house, Jim turned to Katie, and held her close in his arms.

"I wouldn't say anything to her about your father."

She had thought that he was an orphan, and didn't want any connection with his future. She had no idea that she could have foreseen this, and she had a special licence. But not now I dare not stay longer, I must go, or—"

He paused, and Katie, seeing how distressed he looked, tried to smile cheerfully.

"I don't think that she had not seen her lover, but still time had not hung heavily upon her hands. In an interview that she had with her landlady, she discovered that James Moore had paid for her rooms and board. This the girl would not allow, and begged her landlady to return the money to him when she should come back, and for the present, hold her responsible for all expenses.

Poor country Katie! She soon discovered how quickly money flies, and how difficult it is to earn.

At first, she went out with high hopes of obtaining remunerative employment at once, but it was not long before she discovered that even with good recommendations did not always command a market for their labour; while for girls like herself, whom no one knew, there seemed no place in the great, busy city. But one morning, about three weeks after her arrival, as she was passing down one of the narrow streets through which fared not far from her lodgings, she noticed a placard in one of the windows of a tall, dingy factory.

She crossed the road to read it, and saw that two hundred hands were needed, experience not necessary.

Upon seeing this she determined to try, and at the time appointed, found herself one of a large and somewhat noisy crowd of girls and women.

Katie felt shy and awkward, and had not been for the fact that her little store of money was nearly exhausted, she would have turned away timidly, long before the huge iron gates opened slowly to admit the applicants.

Just as the crowd went pushing through the entrance of the factory, a tall, dark girl, with a plain, kind face, said to Katie: "Strange, aren't you?"

"Katie nodded. "Been out long?"

"Never been in," was Katie's half-whimical reply. "Keep close to me, and answer bright and sharp; you'll get paid. There is a very good job for you, who is to be respectable, or they won't have you. There, that's the manager, the girl continued, pointing to a grey-haired man, whose keen eyes were noting the different figures that made up the motley crowd.
Whenever a chance occurred, the two girls edged nearer the front, though they did not join in the rough scrambles that occasionally took place amongst the rougher members.

"We've a fairly good chance, they are not refusing many," the girl said, hopefully, just before their turn came. "If you like to come up when I do, you'll hear my answers, and know better what to say," she went on.

Katie wondered, even in the midst of her anxiety, what it was that made this stranger so kind and thoughtful, and she wondered still more in the days that followed, for she was one of the accepted candidates, and had plenty of chances to watch her new friend.

"You don't seem like anyone else, Ruth," she said, one day, when she had grown sufficiently friendly to call her new friend by her name.

There are some atmospheres in which deeds, good or evil, seem to assume a clearness and definiteness that forbids any attempt at disguise, and it was in such an environment that Katie Watford found herself on the evening she was first introduced to the club.

On the way down to the room in which the members met, Katie had been speaking of her approaching marriage, and so interested had both Ruth and her companion become in the subject, that the room was reached before Katie had thought to ask any questions about the place.

The sound of rather noisy but cheery voices issued through the half-opened door, and Katie hung back shyly.

"Come right in," her friend urged, "or the girls will think you are proud."

Thus pressed, the shy, country girl went into the brightly-lit room.

It was not pretty, but a huge bowl full of wild flowers gave it a wonderfully home-like and pleasant appearance in Katie's eyes. There were about twenty girls in the room, nearly all of whom were sewing, and an elderly lady sat at a small piano; and, just as the friends entered, she said:

"Shall we sing your favourite, to-night?" and immes-
It was indeed a happy moment to Katie. All the doubting, questioning fears were speedily forgotten, and Ruth, seeing she was not needed, slipped away. Nor was she much surprised to miss her friend from the factory next morning; but she was surprised when she called at her lodgings two days later, to hear that she had been married the morning, and gone away to be married again.

Ruth Murray had grown to really care for the pretty, bright, country girl, and felt quite hurt when she heard the news of her departure, and for many days lived in the hope that a letter would arrive from her friend; but she began to waver.

Sometimes, when the ceaseless noise of the ever-moving wheels in the dark factory jarred Ruth's nerves, she would close her eyes for a moment, and picture the heather-clad hills of which Katie had so often spoken.

One day, when she was thus engaged, Miss Amy came in, followed by the overseer, who beckoned her to leave her work and join them.

Wondering what could have happened to bring anyone into the workroom during business hours, Ruth crossed the room, and then saw, for the first time, that a man with grey hair and bowed, bent head, was standing in the doorway, his eyes eagerly searching up and down the long rows of girls and women, as though seeking for a familiar face. He looked so sad and anxious, that a great wave of pity swept over her heart, and she could not explain to herself what he wanted, and hoped that whatever it was, he would be successful in his search.

"Katie! What could it mean? That was surely Katie's photo that Miss Amy was holding in her hand! Was it possible that she had married?"

These thoughts flashed through her mind with lightning rapidity, while Miss Amy was drawing out of an envelope a small photograph.

"Do you know the face, Ruth?" she asked, watching eagerly for some sign of recognition.

"Oh, yes, I know her, Miss Amy. Is the child I do! It's Katie," was the quick response.

Before she could say another word, the man who had been standing in the doorway almost leaped to her side, and in thick, passionate tones, asked:

"Where is she? My girl, my little Katie! Is she here?"

Ruth shook her head.

"She's married, and I don't know where she has gone, now. I hoped she would write, but she hasn't done so."

To everyone's surprise, the man suddenly dropped to the floor, and lay so still and motionless, that, for a moment, all feared that he was dead.

A thrill ran through the room. No one, except the little group immediately round him knew what happened, for, though orders had been given to stop all work for a few minutes, the music of the factory had not come in, none of the girls and women had left their posts, but all were standing ready to re-commence directly the first whirr of the wheels should announce that work had started.

All sorts of stories circulated round the great room, and Ruth was besieged by eager inquirers when the bell rang that set the busy workers free for an hour; but, although Katie was not then in the factory, Ruth was too loyal to her old friend to tell the story that she had married, and had gone away, leaving no address; that Mr. Watford, when he had at last recovered consciousness, and was able to sit in the manager's private room, and question Ruth about his lost child,

"You were a good friend to her, my lass," he said, gratefully. "I'm sure she was for you, a good friend, and look here, if ever you'd like a taste of real, fresh air, write me a line, and there will be a welcome for you—mind, you're not too forgetful; and if I shouldn't find Katie, and you should come across any trace of her, you'd let me know at once, wouldn't you? Maybe, some day, she'll be the one in need of a friend, and maybe she'll think of you and turn to you for help and comfort, and then you'll tell her, won't you, that she's not to be a-fearing; whatever she's done, tell her she's forgiven, and tell her," he continued, brokenly, "if she'll only come back. And you may tell her too, that, so long as her father is alive, there will be somebody looking and waiting for her to return."

"Katie will always find a friend in me, Mr. Watford," I
"By love, serve one another."

"Mr. Watford felt certain that Katie would in all probability drift to a city, and, having business in Liverpool, he thought he would make some enquiries. But, as you can imagine, the size of the city bewildered him, and he would probably have given up the search had he not met with a police-officer who was touched with his story, and instead of only sending him to the Police Office, advised him to take Katie's photo to be copied, and then send or take a copy of the photo to all the institutes in the city for women and girls.

"This one was left at our central office, and Miss Smith showed it to me when I was there last night, and told me to look out for a girl like that. I felt sure I had seen her face, but could not remember where. But suddenly, in the very middle of the night, I remembered the stranger you had brought to the club, and so I lost no time in calling on Mr. Watford, who is staying for a week not far from here."

"Oh, I wish we could hear of the foolish girl. It seems so strange that she did not write to her father directly she was married. I cannot understand why she has acted so foolishly. At any rate, we should all be glad to know whether Mr. Watford would not like her to marry a man he knew nothing about."

"Mr. Moore, before the marriage has taken place," said Miss Amy, thoughtfully pushing back her soft, grey hair rather wearily. "For my own part, Ruth, I do not see what steps we can take to trace Katie. The woman with whom she lodged says that Mr. Moore lodged with her for about two months, but she does not even remember hearing him mention the name of the firm he was with; but she believes he was a commercial traveller, because he used to be away for several days at a time, and generally carried two or three bags with him, and never seemed quite certain how long he would be away."

"She supposes that, in the excitement of going away, Katie and Mr. Moore both forgot to leave their future address, but putting that omission together with the fact that the address he left in Dewsbury was a useless one, I cannot help thinking that this Moore has some strong reason for not giving his address to anyone who would be likely to help in a search for Katie."

"It may seem strange to some people that Katie, the object of all this care and solicitude, could possibly have been happy—so happy that her father had not been told anxiety on her account, and yet this was the case."

"Katie was happy—fiercely happy. Her husband lavished on her all the most loving care that any wife could possibly wish to receive, and the little home to which he had taken her was the one place where the fancies of a constant source of joy and pride to her; while the frequent excursions that she and Jim took to the large furniture warehouses, to pick and choose the articles needed to finish furnishing the little house, were times of great happiness."

"Let her life was one of unrest, and she dreaded un- speakably the long hours when her husband was away from her side, and the little maid who helped her in the house had gone to sleep."

"I wish you could always come home at night, Jim," she would say, whenever he was able to be with her, and he would laugh, and call her a foolish, anxious child, and tell her that they were to begin to stay at home, the little home would soon be sold up."

"A day or two after her marriage, Katie had written to her father to tell him of her marriage, and given him the address of her husband to post, but, as no answer had come to her appeal for forgiveness, Katie supposed that her father was too angry to write, and tried to put away all thoughts of home."

"Once or twice, too, she had spoken of asking Ruth Moore to go to her, but her husband had checked the desire by saying that he would rather no one who knew her in the factory should know her now."

"I shouldn't like anyone to think that I had allowed my little wife to work for her living, when she came up to be married at once," he said, and Katie, though she did not share his feelings, agreed to lose sight of Ruth, much as she wished to keep the girl's friendship."

CHAPTER III.

"The downward path is easy, come with me an it please ye."

We shall escape the uphill by never turning back."

—Amor Mundii (C. G. Rossetti).

It was rather a stormy night, and the wind came in low, soft, mournful gusts, that gained in power as the darkness deepened. Katie had sent the little maid to bed, and was sitting up alone to finish some needlework. A vague uneasiness had taken possession of her mind, a nameless, indefinable dread for which she could find no name or reason.

"If only Jim were at home!" she thought, and the thought of her husband caused a happy little smile to play round her lips, and for a moment drove away her unaccountable fear. But suddenly a noise made her start, and she found it was so slight that, had it not been for her nervous fear, she would not have noticed it. Then she looked up, to see her husband, whom she had believed to be miles away, hastening towards her.

"Put the light out, Katie, and don't make any noise," he said, hoarsely.

She obeyed, wondering what dreadful thing could have happened. It seemed to her that she waited hour after hour in silence, darkness, and suspense before he spoke again.

"Then a sigh of relief issued from the place where he had been standing, and a moment later a feeble glimmer of light came from the round eye of a small lantern.

"Oh, Jim, how you frightened me!" she gasped.

"What does it all mean?"

"Come, considerate thing," he said, kindly. "I—I thought I was followed."

Katie turned, and by the feeble ray of light, sought to read her husband's face. She had never doubted anything he said to her, but the sentence, "I thought I was followed," seemed to give a new and sinister light to many little things that she had never, never thought about before.

She felt her domestic happiness falling around her like a house built of cards, and her tongue refused to speak. Silently she followed her husband's lead, slyly she laid down beside him. Would he explain? she wondered. Why had he looked so frightened? How had he entered the house? Katie knew that the front door, which was always left unbolted so that he could use his latch-key, was not the way in which he had effected his silent entry. She was the one, and why? She turned to him slowly and asked.

"Jim, what is wrong? Who did you think was following you to-night?"
THE BURGLAR’S WIFE.

He tried to follow his usual course of action, and put her off with a few loving words, but found it impossible. Doubts, once aroused, could not thus be hilled to sleep.

“Don’t ask questions, darling,” he pleaded. “I do not want your pretty little head bothered with business worries. You know the old saying, ‘Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise’?”

But, for the first time since they had met, Katie insisted on having her own way, and bit by bit she drew the truth from her husband, and learned that the home she had been so fond of, the food she had eaten, the pretty dresses she was wearing—all were the wages of evil doing.

James Moore, who was really fond of his pretty wife, strove in vain to comfort her. She begged and pleaded with him to give up his present mode of life. But he showed her how impossible it would be for him to get any kind of employment, without a reference, and to her plea that she could, and would work, he turned a deaf ear.

When at length he fell asleep, she lay awake, her lips moving unconsciously as she murmured:

“A burglar’s wife! A burglar’s wife! A burglar’s wife!”

And with the thought came a sickening recollection of a conversation she had once had with her husband, when he was her lover, about the old-Hall, which crowned the summit of the hill on which she had been born and reared.

“Could he even then have been seeking information that would be helpful to him at some future date? She sat up in bed, and by the dawning light, scanned her husband’s features, shivering with dread lest she should read on his handsome face the truth, the bitter truth.

One of his hands lay outside the coverlet, and Katie remembered how often it had caressed her, and wondered whether at any time it had taken part in deeds of violence as well as crime.

It was a relief to Katie to see no change in the face she loved, and sleep had banished the quick, furtive expression that occasionally crossed his countenance.

She knew now that her marriage had been delayed because, owing to the capture of his colleagues, Jim had been obliged to leave the neighbourhood until the hue and cry had somewhat abated.

How thankful she now felt, that all communication with her old friends had ceased. How thankful that they, at any rate, need never know her humiliation. Thoughts of a life away from Jim flitted through her mind, but then he had thrown himself upon her mercy. She loved him. As she had chosen before, so she chose again. It was the downward path; if she tried to trace her steps, it must be alone, and therefore she would go on. She saw clearly how difficult it would be for her husband to change his occupation now; and two lines she had once read passed through her mind, like the knell of departing days:

“Nay, too steep for hill mounting; nay, too late for cost counting.

The down-hill path is easy, but there’s no turning back.”

And she did not know that a voice, mighty in power, was saying:

“When the wicked turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive, because he considereth and turneth away... he shall surely live.

“Turn ye to Me with all your heart... turn unto the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful.”

But, for away, in a little farmhouse, a grey-haired man was praying, thus:

“Thou hast promised to watch over and bless the prodigal child, and in a little attic, Ruth Murray was praying earnestly that God might bless her absent friend.

But from Katie’s lips, no prayer ascended from her heart, only the thought that God would watch over and bless the prodigal child, and in a little attic, Ruth Murray was praying earnestly that God might bless her absent friend.

The morning after the night on which she first learned the truth, found Katie dry-eyed and sleepless. She rose early, and without waking her husband, went downstairs to help the little maid prepare the morning meal.

When she had set the table, the girl said:

One by one they removed the tatty garments.
"You've put a cup too many, ma'am," and Katie felt a hot flush on her face as she answered:

"It's all right, Mercy. Your master came home last night," and she hurried away up stairs to save herself from any more remarks, for it seemed to Katie that the girl must read the shame and fear she felt upon her face.

As she entered her room she feared to look upon her husband's gaze, and saw the shame-faced look upon his face, hastened to greet him brightly. Her idol, for which she had given up all, had, she knew, clay feet, but he was still her idol, and so she endeavoured to clothe the clay with a covering of white.

She seemed relieved, and by tacit consent neither of them mentioned the subject that was uppermost in their minds.

Only once did her self-restraint nearly gave way, and that was when her eyes fell on the little lantern which he had brought by night.

"Perhaps it is as well she knows," thought James Moore, as he noted how well she seemed to bear the strain he had put upon her devotion to himself.

In her innocence, she might have done me untold harm by some careless word; now, her love for me will make her cautious."

And James Moore was right. Katie lived in dread and fear lest her husband should be caught by the police; but his skill and daring had, so far, stood him in good stead.

On the previous night he had had a most successful time, and had intended going to spend the hours that intervened before daylight in a room which he and his col leagues used as a sort of office; but on his way there, he had seen a man that he knew belonged to the family; so he had turned and doubled several times, and then, so as to attract no attention to his own late return, he had dropped noiselessly over the back wall, and opened the window which led into the scullery. The stolen goods and money he had left in the care of a man who had been waiting with a horse and trap at some little distance from the plundered house.

Generally, James Moore brought his wife some present after his absences from home, but, on this occasion, he judged it best to let her see nothing of the money he had earned. Even her conscience, blinded and deadened as it was, could not have borne that last straw.

From the hour that she knew how her husband obtained his money, she bought no more pretty things for herself, and took no pride or pleasure in the dainty little luxuries that she had gathered about her. Had it not been for the knowledge that their marriage and courtship had been prosecuted under the shadow of deceit, she might have spoken more strongly about his mode of earning a livelihood. Every hour, she knew that her silence was a sign of consent and agreement.

Oh! she was paying dearly for the past, and she dared not look forward, for even her present shuttered happiness might be replaced by deeper misery and open shame.

Still her heart cried out in times, with a deep yearning, for the old, pleasant days in the cottage, and here he turned up the hills. She grew thin and pale, and the roses in her cheeks, which had managed to live even in the city air, died away in the atmosphere of care and sorrow in which Katie now lived.

James Moore, whose one redeeming quality was the love he had for his wife, grew very anxious, and at last decided to take a cottage far out in the country.

At first Katie did not like the idea at all, for she feared that in a quieter place Jim's movements would attract attention. Still, in her fear she accepted a small agency, which served as an excuse for his frequent absences from home. It was not all remunerative, but Katie felt that, if asked any questions, she would be better able to account for her husband's frequent absences.

As the world drifted past he began to make Katie more and more into his confidence. To tell the truth, he found her quick, womanly wit of no small help to him, but he had to be most careful never to let her know that she was aiding his work in the very slightest degree, for her husband's nurses still went on as usual.

"Where are you going, James?" she would ask, with a feverish desire to know all his plans, although the knowledge only added to the keenness of the anxiety and misery she endured while he was away.

He always told her his plans of action, and took special notice of her remarks, for love had made her keen to see any weakness or fault in his schemes; and though she never once helped him by suggesting a different course of action, her exclamation of dismay, when she detected an unwise movement, or when she felt that he had made her especially careful in carrying out that part of his plan.

Poor Katie! The meshes of the net entangled her feet more and more. Love for her husband, and hate for his delusions, caused her to return without joy, while she hated the success of his work. At times she pleaded with him to entangle, but he always laughed at her fears, and did not at all realise that Katie hated the sin and shame as much as she dreaded and feared the risk of detection.

But there was one thing that adhered to Katie. For wide mouth of the river, intervening between her and the busy, crowded city, Katie for a time grew more contented with her lot. In her first home every footstep (and there were many passing up and down) had caused her to flinch; but now, she was often of the opinion that the approach of any member of the police force, caused her heart to beat wildly. But now the comparative quiet of the little cottage was only broken by excursionsists who came out from the town to enjoy the fresher air and the sight of the green lands of the valley.

One day Katie was seated at her bedroom window, looking out over the green hill which slopped up to the observatory, a favourite resort of the pleasure-makers, who bled out of the town on Saturdays. Suddenly, Katie was attracted to a couple of young people who paced up and down the stretch of green sward just outside her garden gate. Why she watched them with such interest she hardly dared to tell herself. In her window she had placed a little notice, "Tea supplied." At first her husband had said much would he would rather that she should have delivered it herself, but he saw how much pleasure it would give Katie to earn some money to buy material to work up into certain tiny garments with which her fingers were often now employed. He consented, guessing the truth she would have her husband, and that she hated the thought of the money he earned, or, rather, stolen, going to buy the clothing for the expected little stranger. This notice attracted the attention of the solitary couple, and they opened the garden gate, admiring the place. As a rule Katie hurried down and welcomed such stray visitors, for her cottage was removed from the beaten track, and not yet known to the people who frequented the hillside and the valley, but today Katie, who had drawn back into the shadow of the curtains, did not move, and as knock followed knock she held her breath and dreaded lest a nervous fit of coughing, with which she was threatened, should break the silence, and cause the waiting couple to renew their efforts to gain admission.

Snatches of their conversation floated into the open window, but strain her ears as she might, Katie could not hear what she most longed to hear, and that was how these unknown others.

At length, tired out with waiting, the couple turned away, with a laughing comment on the tea with which they had not been supplied; then darkness—a blinding darkness—fell on Katie, and she slipped to the ground.

How long she lay there she never knew. As she recovered consciousness, she found herself leaning over the bed on which he had placed her. In reply to her faint inquiries she could tell him nothing, for the events of the afternoon were so confused that she could not, try as she would, remember either a fact or a face or a dream.

"Did I see them," she asked herself, "or was it but my fancy? It must have been a delusion; they could not know each other. And yet."

Then the poor, tired brain would try to recall everything that happened, every word she had heard, but in vain; facts and faces were hopelessly mingled.

It was several days before Katie could get up, and then she went about the house in a languid way, that caused her husband much anxiety. For several days the little notice was taken out of the window, Katie explaining that there must be something wrong with anyone who might come; but in reality she feared lest the two whom she had seen might come again. But as the days passed by, her desire to gain enough money to buy dainty clothing grew stronger than her dread, and Katie told herself that her
CHAPTER IV.

"Before his sweetest mystery still
The heart in reverence knows,
The wonder of the primal birth
The latest mother feels.

"We need love's tender lessons taught
As only weakness can;
God hath His own interpreters.
The child must teach the man."

PUT it close beside me, nurse, please," said a faint voice from the bed, while two tender grey eyes shone with a wealth of mother-love upon the little baby, which had come to gladden the home. The sun was setting, and the placid river, which could be seen through the diamond-paned window, had changed into a mass of liquid gold, reflecting on its undulating bosom the glory of the sky. A ray from the setting sun found its way into the room where Katie Moore lay in all her pride of childhood, and turned her hair into waves of gold, which made an aureola about her head.

"My precious, precious one!" she murmured, as she felt the tiny hand pressing against her cheek. Then looking up at the kindly-featured old Scotch woman who was tending her, she said: "It's a lovely child, isn't it, nurse?"

Katie asked the question in a tone that showed she had not ceased to cherish the subject, and only asked for the pleasure of again hearing the woman's raptures over what she termed the "bonnie bairn."

"Bonnie! Losh, keep me! it's just the brawest wee doo ever ye clappit yer e'en on," was the nurse's reply.

For a time Katie forgot all her troubles in the new joy of mother-love. The woman's fingers that had softly brushed against her hand thrilled her heart with a wealth of love and pleasure; it seemed to her that life had suddenly become full of sunshine and rapture.

"It's too weak to think much, but it was enough to lie still, Katie thought, and feel the little, living babe beside her."

"My baby!" she murmured the words over and over again, with quiet content; but suddenly a wave of fear ran through her.

"Jim! Was he safe? He was baby's father, and so had gained a new interest in her eyes. How could she have forgotten him for so long a time, she wondered.

"How pleased he will be, he has always wanted a son," she thought. Then her eyes wandered round the room. It was not rich; nor was it lovely; but its plainness gave her an instinctive delight, and this dainty nest; but its prettiness gave no pleasure to Katie, for the sorrow of her life had been stirred up and was even now poisoning the cup of pleasure she was tasting.

A son! What if he were to follow in his father's footsteps? Then a great hope rushed to Katie's heart. Perhaps love for this little son might work so mightily upon his husband's heart that he might..."

Much as Katie disliked the thought of suffering for her baby, she knew that she would rather tramp about the country, carrying him in her arms, than have him fed and clothed and housed with the profits of his father's crime. If she had been away for over ten days, he would have an unusually large and dangerous piece of work in hand, and all that time she had had no news of him, for he was always careful that no letter bearing the post-mark of the town where he did his dastardly deeds should reach his wife.

"I had better write to you again, for I have an important letter to you, but no one must connect James Moore with the prisoner; for your sake and my own, I would give another name, you may be sure."

Katie thought of these words as she lay, hour after hour, with that which was an anxiety making her ill, and causing the good nurse no little perplexity, the bed-room door opened softly, and James Moore came in and hurried towards her with a smiling face.

The nurse hurried away, and Katie, with all her mother joy rising once more, cried: "Jim, Jim, look at our baby! Isn't it lovely? And a boy!"

He stooped and kissed her tenderly, thinking how pretty she looked in the first flush of motherhood.

"Yes, Katie, he's a fine boy," he replied, as he gently uncovered the sleeping baby's face. "I can tell you it was hard to be away from you at such a time, but I did a rare good haul. The little chap's brought me good luck, I believe! Why, it was just the nearest, cleanest little sweep I've ever had."

A troubled look clouded her face, and the tears welled into her eye.

"I was so frightened, Jim, so frightened! I always live in fear while you are away. Give it up, for baby's sake, don't you think?

"No, no, Katie, a little woman! We must live. There's no harm in helping rich people to get rid of a little of their superabundance, and this little stranger will need his share of this world's goods. No, Katie, I have no fears; and now I can begin to look forward to a time when this young man will help us. Then I will stay at home with you while he carries on the business."

"No, no, no, Jim! Anything but that! I'd rather he died," she cried, passionately.

"Why, Katie, little woman, haven't we always been happy together?" he asked, wondering at the vehemence of her words.

Her only reply was a sob, and, alarmed at her agitation, and fearful of the consequences, James Moore hurried away to send the nurse back.

"I wish she need not have known," he said to himself.

"I sought the one way of escape, and I am black in that occupation. I'd take her home for a bit to see if that would cheer her up, but I know it's too risky. That father of hers is so straightforward, that if he once guessed the truth, he would clasp me into gaol. No, I dare not risk it, and yet it's hard on Katie. None of my pale wives would suit her, or they would be safe friends. Well, perhaps now that she has the kid, she won't have so much time to fret and worry, poor little girl. Why can't she look on it sensibly, and do as so many do—just shut her eyes to things she dislikes, and put her mind wandered off to other matters. For months past he had been scheming how to gain an entrance into the castle near Katie's old home. He dared not appear in the neighbourhood undisguised, because of Katie, and yet he had gained enough information, while in the village before to make the attempt an alluring one. The only thing he didn't want was for any harm to run down," he told himself. "I know the wife is longing for home news, and I shall take care that she never knows, if I am successful at the castle, where the loot comes from. She'd fret, I know, if she thought I'd made use of anything she told me.

A week or two later, when Katie was well enough to sit with James Moore, with his beard and moustache shaved off, started for Dewsley. He was wearing a totally different style of dress to the one he had previously worn in that neighbourhood.

Travelling down with him, although not in the same
The Burglar's Wife.

Carriage, was a tall, dark girl with a plain but sweet face, who watched the ever-varying face of the countryside with much interest.

At the station she was met by a cart, and James Moore, who had held in memory for faces, recognized in the driver, Katie's father.

"I'm glad you've come, my lass," was the greeting he gave to the girl. "How did you leave your husband?"

"Quite well, thank you, Mr. Walford. How lovely this is. I had thought to talk to you about your hills and streams, and James has tried to describe them but they are far more beautiful than my wildest dreams!"

James Moore listened to the scrap of conversation, meaning to treasure up every word for Katie's benefit, for he knew that her heart was hunging for news of home.

The cart started, and before he could hear any more, and he was left to tell slowly up the hillside, while the couple who were driving took the longer road, which wound round the hillside.

You have no news for me, Ruth, I suppose?" Mr. Walford asked anxiously, directly they were beyond ear-shot of the few passengers who had come to the quiet station.

Ruth shook her head, and for a time silence reigned between the two; and in that silence, Ruth's thoughts trended back to the past, over her past life, while her eyes roved on the beauty of the scene before her. She had known so little of joy, love or beauty until lately, and now it seemed to her that she had suddenly stepped out into life's sunshine.

The early life of Ruth had been shadowed by the cruelty of a drunken step-father, who ill-used her and her delicate mother, spent their earnings at the public-house, and added all his own time loafing about the streets with his boon companions.

He had early found employment in a factory, and in the din and noise of the ever-moving wheels, she had spent the greater part of her girlhood's days.

Every morning, at six o'clock, she had joined the crowd of breadwinners who poured through the gates directly the great gang sounded that summoned them to work. Some had grown old in her father's weary past, pat, pat, that accompanied the whirring sound of wheels in motion, and as the boxes filled with cigars fell in perfect order from right to left off the little ladders which rolled ceaselessly up and down, she would shut her eyes and recall to mind the warring girls and trees she had once seen when she went with her Sunday-school class to the country.

It was Ruth's work to watch the ladders when she first entered the factory, but afterwards she had gone up to the packing-room.

The firm for whom she worked was just and humane, so that Ruth did not dislike her daily toil, but there had come a time in her life on which she always looked back with mingled feelings of pain and joy, that she had grown in her factory life, and she, with two or three hundred other hands, had been turned off. Her mother was ill, and work was slack everywhere.

From factory to factory she tramped, vainly seeking work. The children were crying for bread, and her father angry because she could not get money enough to satisfy his craving for drink, wreaked his vengeance on the sick mother and weak children.

Poor Ruth, after much trouble, obtained a post in a rope factory, where, working from six o'clock in the morning until six at night, she was only able to earn five shillings a week.

Her work, feeding the machines with the raw fibre, hurt her hands, and the oil irritated her skin; then, most of her companions were rougher than the girls she had been accustomed to, and she found her well-meaned kindness and held herself somewhat aloof, but when Ruth ate of her dinner hour, the other girls would form into little groups seated on the great heaps of untwisted rope, and help each other comb the fibres from their hair, Ruth, wearied out with work, would fling herself down to sleep.

The close shawl of Katie's place told fearless upon her health, and she suffered agonies of pain in her head. Yet she dared not give up, and so one weary day followed another.

Most of the girls brought strong tea with them to drink, and Ruth soon got into the same habit, with the result that she became ill and nervous.

One day, as she lay half asleep on a heap of fibre in the darkest part of the dark factory, she was awakened by a noise, a rustling of cloth, and when she opened her eyes, "I beg your pardon. Do forgive me," a strange voice said. "I was trying to find the way upstairs. Could you show me where the steps are? I used to know the place well.

Ruth raised her aching head and saw a lady, with soft, grey hair framing a kindly face. But the lady, whose eyes were not yet accustomed to the darkness, saw nothing, or she would have noticed how ill Ruth looked.

"It's round the corner," the girl said, wearily. "I was trying to find the way upstairs, but the dim shadows don't go up with them up there. They then turn, and then we look down on us.

"That's a pity," the lady said, gently, "for I know there is a cozy room up there, and I was going to ask you to come up and help us to sing. I have brought some books with me, and I thought it would be nice if we could join together."

Ruth had stumbled to her feet, shown the stranger to the foot of the ladder which led to the floor above, when, with a sharp cry of pain, she leaned her head against a bundle of ropes, and her hand to her breast. "Help! help!" she cried, faintly, and the lady gave her her hand and led her to the floor above. She had found herself walking out of the great yard, in which the men sat playing cards and eating their dinners.

She felt ill and weak, and was glad enough to let the lady put her in a tramcar, which took her quite close to home.

This had been the beginning of brighter days for Ruth, who soon grew to know and love her new friend, Miss Amy.

On a pleasant afternoon she spent with her, and it was through her help that Ruth had obtained employment in a box factory, where she was better paid. But the best thing that had happened to Ruth during her stay in the factory, which had seemed so hard, was that there she learned to love the Lord, and, above all, to love Him less and less. He loved and cared for her, for she had listened to the talk amongst the other girls and women, most of whom had found life so hard, and Christians so wanting in Christliness, that they did not believe that God was love. But, once Ruth Murray grasped the truth, she gave herself freely to the Lord Who had bought her with His own Blood, and she had helped Miss Amy at the club, and in other ways, to tell her companions about Jesus.

The next great change in her life had come through Katie's death, for James Freeman, hearing that Katie had been heard of in the factory, had obtained a holiday and come over from the manufacturing town where he now lived, to try to follow up the clue. He had seen Ruth grown to like her, and discovering her love for the country, had arranged that she and her little sister, who was delicate, should spend a Saturday afternoon in the country.

That afternoon in the country resulted in plans for other free afternoons, until it became an established custom that, whenever it was fine, James Freeman should leave his duties in the hands of his under master, while he took Ruth off for an excursion.

At first, Katie had been the bond between them, but one day they discovered that they cared for each other, and on that afternoon, though they did not know it, they had fallen in love. But Ruth, in her need, did not see the mistake, when, looking from her little window, she had fancied that the figures she saw were both familiar. In possible as it seemed to her then, James Freeman and Ruth Murray had met, and it was on that very afternoon that they married in the church. But Katie was within sight of the spot where they stood.

When Mr. Walford had heard the news, he had begged Ruth to come down to the farm on a visit between the time that she gave up her work in the book factory where she had grown to like, and the day that she was to see her made into James Freeman's wife.

Ruth was thinking of all this as she drove along the flower-spangled lanes, and wondering how Katie could ever have left so beautiful a spot; and a prayer rose from
her heart that God would yet send back the lost one to gladden the suffering father's heart.

For the past two years, Ruth had been attending evening classes. At first she had only done so to please Miss Amy, but now she was beginning to love knowledge for its own sake, and she was glad, too, for James Freeman's sake. She did not wish to disgrace her future husband.

"That is the old house where James was born," said the farmer, suddenly breaking the silence, and pointing with his whip across to a long, low, many-gabled building.

Ruth looked long at the little homestead where her lover had spent so much of his life, and wondered a little anxiously whether his mother, who was still alive, would like her.

Her lover had arranged to run down for a few days, so that he might take her to see his mother, and Ruth rather dreaded the visit.

Directly the little trap drew up at the farm-house door, a woman bustled out to meet them.

"Here we are, Maria! Ruth is tired, I'm sure," the farmer said quietly, as he helped the girl out.

For a moment, Ruth was chilled by the brusque tones of Aunt Maria, but when the good woman showed her her room, she stopped a moment and asked eagerly:

"Have you any news of Katie? It's so dreadful to me, for, you know, she never seemed the same after I came here. It's just like a shadow over my life!"

Ruth turned and put her arms round her neck.

"Don't fret," she said, gently. "I'm sure our prayers for Katie will yet be heard. She spoke of you once, I remember, and called you Aunt Maria. Oh, yes, God will keep her, and perhaps our prayers are even now being answered in some strange way!"

"God bless you, lassie," was the response; and from that moment Ruth found a warm corner in the brusque, quick-tempered woman's heart, and many a useful lesson she learned from her during her brief holiday in the homely farmhouse, where Ruth grew strong and rosy.
ing” came to her with a sort of dull comfort. Katie had not prayed for years; but now a worthless prayer rose to the Mercy Throne, a prayer that God would watch over the loved baby, but no wish for guidance was expressed. She had yet to learn the lesson that the great God above will direct the steps of feeble men.

That night, too, she was drest, Katie went upstairs, leaving him on his little crib with a toy to amuse him, and when she returned she had changed her dress to a black one, over which she had put a large, circular cloak; then, wrapping a large shawl round the child so as completely hide his clothes, she carried him out of the house, and tied it to the wagon in the yard.

One of the huge ferry-boats was just about to start for the other side, and Katie joined the crowd who were boarding her.

No one knew or noticed the couple, and when the other side was reached they were lost in the crowd.

Katie had her plans already laid, and knew her way about the city well, so that she had no difficulty in finding her way to the railway-station. The boy was heavy, but she would not have given up her burden to anyone; too well she knew its value, and she felt again the weight of that precious load in her arms, when the arms were empty.

Even in the railway-carriage she still held the child, held him so closely that he struggled to free himself from her embrace.

Presently the station for which she had taken tickets was reached, and the train steamed slowly into the wilderness of bricks and mortar. Before she left the carriage, Katie removed her cloak and rolled it up in the shape that she had seen girls use, and, covered it around with a round with a strap she drew from her pocket, and with this in one hand and the child's hand in the other, she left the station.

Her eyes scanned the names of the streets most anxiously, and once or twice she paused to look at a little map she had purchased in the station.

Presently she went into a pastry cook's and bought some sponge cakes, then, with a quick, furtive glance at the people passing up and down the crowded thoroughfare, she turned on the master road. Her steps came thick and fast as she hurried along, once again carrying the boy.

"Queen Street! Yes, this is right," she murmured, turning to the boy, "this is the cottage, where a large building, with high, quiet, dull-looking walls all round, took up nearly the whole of one side.

In the centre was a heavy-looking doorway, with massive steps and pillars. She stooped, tied something round the child's neck, so as to keep him close to her, and as she was nearly hidden from view by the shelter of the pillars.

"Sit down, darling," she said, placing the bundle she had made in a sheltered spot, and ate these nice cakes, while mother goes down the road.

The child sat to one side, sat down contentedly enough, and began to nibble the cakes. Had he cried, her determination must have given way, but as it was, after one heartrending look at her child, she went fleetly down the street without again daring to look back.

Behind her own steps, can it do without this baby? My baby! God be merciful! God have pity! Anything to save him from a life like this! Oh God, be pitiful!

For hours the woman, with aching, empty arms, kept up a pitiful heart-say to God, while she hurried back under cover of the approaching night to the empty, childless home.

There were no tears now upon her face, only deep lines of agony. All the prayers, the tears, the agony, that had been stroked into the dainty garments of the forsaken baby, were now buried in Katie's disdained prayers, that relieved the agony of the mother-heart.

"Oh God, be pitiful! Let not my sacrifice be in vain! Let him grow up free from vice, free from the continued terror of the law.

Behind her fell with fiery tears these sweet memories of soft, cooling lips and dimpled hands, with her, a sense of desolation of empty arms and grief too deep for words, before her, life stretching away into a dreary, hopeless future. Perhaps the righteous anger of her husband to face, and nothing but an empty cry and little garments to remind her of what, waking or sleeping, she would not forget—her boy.

The quiet eyes of night looked down softly, as though they knew and pitied the sorrows of the world; and the Creator knew, understood, and pitied the mother's agony.

It was late when she reached her home, and Katie had scarcely courage to undo the door and enter the now desolate dwelling. It was home no longer.

She spent the night packing all her things with feverish haste, and when the dawn came, everything was ready for the move she had planned weeks before.

Over and over again, Katie took from her hiding-place a letter which had reached her some days before, and read and reread one paragraph many times.

"Only two months, and I shall be with you. It will be as well to start in a new place. Could you and the boy meet me in London? Write through George as usual. I do not want you to be mixed up with this affair. I suspect the burglar is getting quite a bit and knowing. Will he wonder I am? or have you taught him about his dada?"

It's a shame! Really, nothing in the world is too bad for such creatures," exclaimed a comically-looking woman, who was bending over a little child, who had just been found on the steps of the Institution.

"What's wrong?" asked a sweet voice, and another girl, not in uniform, stepped forward.

"Wrong? Only another case of heartless desertion, Miss Freeman. I'm sorry about my sex. Fancy a woman deserting a pretty little thing like that! I have no patience with such women. Women, indeed! they are not worthy of the name," she said, vehemently.

Perhaps it is only loss," said the master's wife.

"Have you examined the clothing? It looks so well cared for?"

One by one they removed the tiny garments. No name, no mark, but round its neck a slip of paper was hang, with the words:

"Four years. Aged two years. Mother married."

Date followed, but that was the only clue given; and on his neck was a small mark like the impress of a hand.

"Dear little fellow," said Ruth Freeman.

"Does this mean that the boy has been living in the busy city workhouse?"

The woman who had been standing in the busy city workhouse, listened to Ruth's conjectures with a smile. She had seen too many ill-used and deserted babies to feel quite as sure as Mrs. Freeman did; but then she had not a baby of her own as Ruth had, to teach her how strong and lovely is the mother-love that God has implanted in the human breast.

"I almost wish we were not leaving here so soon," James, Ruth said to her husband that evening. "I feel to strangely drawn towards that poor baby."

James Freeman smiled. It was his belief that his wife's heart-had been opened to all the babies gathered beneath the roof; and so it did. Her own sad childhood had not hardened her at all. She was the owner of that priceless gift, a warm, womanly heart.

To the three ones she had loved her, and deep regret was felt throughout the Institution when it was known that the master had sent in his resignation. But his mother's health had failed much of late, and his brother, who attended to the farm, was not married, so that his mother's health has failed. His brother had determined to try for an appointment of a similar nature nearer home, and in this attempt he had been successful.

It is more than possible that had Katie foreseen the possibility of James Freeman's resignation, she would not have left the baby after all.

For many months she had been trying to form some plan in her mind by which she could ensure her child growing up away from the pernicious influence of a home that owed its existence to crime.

James had been in prison for nearly two years, his visit to Dewsey having proved what he termed "an unlucky move." His schemes for gaining an entrance to the castle at Dewsey had failed. Indeed, he had scarcely
CHAPTER VI.

"Just one pebble at root ruined the straightness of stem."

—R. Browning.

THE rain was falling Cabs omnibuses, trams—
all were crowded. Umbrellas jostled one against another, as the endless stream of people poured down the busy thoroughfare of the great metropolis. A solitary gleam of sunshine would have cheered the gloomy prospect on which Katie Moore gazed, with eyes that revealed the unrest of her soul.

The moment had arrived when she must meet her husband, and account to him for the absence of his child.

What could she say? Dare she arouse his anger by confessing the truth? and increase it by refusing to say where the child was?

Forlorn, friendless, and almost hopeless, she stood beneath an archway waiting for her husband. She watched the passers-by, scanning each face eagerly, until at length she saw him.

She knew him in spite of the fact that he had grown broader and stouter since she had seen him last. Over and over again, she had tried to visit him in the goal, but he had forbidden her to do so whenever she wrote, fearing that at some future time she might be known, and recognised as a convict's wife.

Katie was dressed all in black, and for a moment her husband did not recognise her; but as she moved forward to greet him, he saw her.

"Katie!" was his quick exclamation. The idea of note details, took in the fact of her black garments, the deep lines of sorrow on her face, and the absence of the child, before he had time to speak.

"The boy is dead," he thought. "Poor Katie!"

"No little girl," he said, as he kissed her. "You needn't tell me. I see you've lost the little chap," and as he spoke, he laid his hand, roughened and stained, as it was, upon her black garments.

For a moment she was too dazzled to reply.

"She gave him the date of the day on which she had left the boy, and then collapsed into silence, only too thankful to allow him to rest in his mistaken idea.

It did not take her long to discover that prison life had not had a good effect upon her husband. He had emerged a harsher man; much of his old careless, winsome good humour had disappeared, and Katie found that with the loss of her girlish beauty, much of her power and influence had gone. He was not exactly unkind to her, but his old tender, careful manner towards her was replaced by something akin to indifference.

She felt more lonely than ever by the longing desire to feel the clinging arms and soft lips of her baby. Her whole life seemed one long cry of anguish for the little one she had given up to strangers.

One day when James Moore had announced his intention of being again to the station, for the last time, Katie resolved that she would go to the workhouse on some pretext, and try to gain a glimpse of her child. After much deliberation, she chose a humble dress that her husband had given her soon after their marriage, and which she had not recognised how he had obtained his money. This she put on, and then carefully arranged her hair in a strange way.

"He will not know me," she said, as she studied her reflection in the glass, and the thought that her precious one could look at her without a smile of recognition was a bitter one indeed.

"Only one glimpse!" she murmured to herself, as she entered the train. Just one look, to see that he is well and cared for, and I shall be satisfied.

How to gain an entrance was the one point that troubled her. It would never do, she knew, to claim kinship with the little one, for then they would compel her to take him away. But at last she thought of a plan, which her desire to the child's welfare and happiness was almost a relief to Katie when she heard that the matron was away, and that one of the assistants would see her.

"I have some thought of adopting a child, to fill the place of one I have lost," she stammered, when at length she was able to obtain an interview with the busy assistant.

Then her courage failed her, but the assistant, thinking her emotion was caused by the remembrance of a dear child, came to her aid, and said pleasantly, "If I support you in bringing children. Well, we haven't many. The older ones are in school now, but if you will wait a short time they will be out at play." "It's the babies I want to see," stammered Katie.

"The babies! Well, you couldn't have come at a better time. Will you follow me, please?" and the assistant bustled out, and led the way down several long stone corridors, until she reached a large, sunny room, where a number of little children were playing.

One glance was enough; there was not one there.

"Haven't you any more?" she faltered, trying to hide her disappointment.

"Only a baby-girl in the sick-ward," was the prompt reply. "I think you said it was a boy you wanted." "Yes, a boy," the assistant repeated, "but I'm afraid it's hard to hide her disappointment, and to show some interest in the children whom the assistant was showing her.

"This is a good little fellow," said the nurse, pointing out the white, sickly little boy, "His mother's dead, and his father wasn't any good. It would be a real kindness to take him away, he feels so—not noisy, but in a quiet way."

"Do they ever—ever—get ill with fretting? Die, I mean?" Katie asked, looking pitifully at the child.

"No; we have very little illness, and there hasn't been a death since I've been here, though we have had some delicate children brought in," answered one of the nurses, wondering at her interrogations. Katie made some excuse about deferring her choice until she had visited a few more places, and then took her leave.

Once outside, she began to think. What was she to do? How, without arousing suspicion, learn whether her child had been adopted?

If only James had not the master, I would risk a few inquiries, but I dare not face him," she thought. "He must never know my shame."

She did not know he had left the place.

The hot tears were falling down her face as she walked back to the station. Fear and disappointment seemed to have sapped her strength, so that she tottered as she walked. And when at length she reached the waiting-room, she had scarcely strength to reach the sofa. It was
empty, save for a quietly-dressed woman, who was seated by the fire, reading. As Katie came in she raised her head and gave her one searching glance, then bent her head again over the open page.

"I have not sought Thee, I have not found Thee; I have not thirsted for Thee; And now —

Those were the words she read, and as she read them a strange conviction that they were true of the pale, wan-looking woman sitting opposite was born in upon the reader's mind.

"I wonder what the 'now' is in her case, poor thing?" she thought, letting the book slip."I wish I could help her."

A sudden thought came to her.

"Would you care to look at this book while you are waiting?" she asked Katie, pleasantly. "I always find it so tedious to wait if I have nothing to read."

Katie stretched out her hand almost mechanically.

"If I have the book, she won't want to talk," was her thought.

It fell open at the place where the lady had been reading. Katie's eyes must have rested on the page for fully half-an-hour before she took in the meaning of the words, but all that time the corner of the book was praying fervently and silently.

"Lord, Thou lover of the souls of men, speak to this sad heart; give Thy own peace and rest to this sorrowing one.

"I have not sought Thee, I have not found Thee; I have not thirsted for Thee; And now cold billows of death surround me, Buffeting billows of death around me—Will Thou look upon, wilt Thou see Thy persecuting Me?"

"Yes, I have sought Thee, yes, I have found Thee, Yes, I have thirsted for Thee; Yea, long ago, with love's bands I bound Thee; Now the everlasting arms surround them—Through death's dark depths I look and see, And can I say, 'My Lord and Master'?"

She closed the book, and as she did so her eye caught a name written on the fly-leaf, "Isabelle Carruthers."

"I have not sought, I have not found, I have not thirsted. It is true, quite true; and now, now I am soothed, bitter sorrow; now I want—yes, I want the God of my mother. Is the rest true?"

Her tears overflowed again, blistering the cover of the book, which lay upon her lap.

"You are in trouble; can I help you?"

Katie had never spoken to the book who spoke, lightly laying her hand upon the bowed shoulder. As a rule Katie would have referred the question and disliked the sympathy. Now her need for comfort was too great, her pride was spent, she was soul-stuck and broken. The mind of years seemed to have culminated in the loss of little James, and her only answer was a deep sob.

It was a relief to feel the gentle, womanly touch of the stranger, to be able to let her grief and vent sympathy, after the long years of stern self-repression. Poor, poor Katie! She was proving how broad and rough the downward path can be; how terrible the swift descent, that at the first glance seems so alluringly easy; how lonely that broad path wherein the limitations of Divine love and wisdom are not found.

It all happened as Katie never quite knew, but before she lifted her head again all the main points of her history were in the possession of her friend—all save the fact of her child's birth and loss. That, too, would have been told, had not the warming-room rapidly filled with other travelers.

"A life spoilt through self-will and waywardness," was the sad reflection of the sweet-faced lady, as she listened to the bitter story of Katie's marriage.

"The downward path is narrow, but the turning back seemed to be the view of her own life that Katie Moore took, so that at first, when her new friend talked to her of forgiveness and repentance, she could only murmur—

"Not for me, not for me. It's too late!"

Perhaps the fact that knowing as much of Katie's history as she did, this stranger could still give her loving, tender sympathy, did more to make plain to Katie the love of Christ than aught else, for while sympathised, she did not hide the sweetness of sin. Sin was sin, and she would call it by no other name. Sin, and sin alone, had nailed her Saviour to the cross; therefore she would make no compromise with it.

At this moment all the prayers of Katie's father, and of Ruth Murray, the loving words of her old lovers, James Fergusson and Isabella Carruthers, the earnest words of Miss. Miss. Aimee Semple McPherson, the Saviour's words, "Thou shalt help and bear fruit. Long had the seed lain fruitless; now, at length, it was shooting up, watered by the tears of many, called into life by the love and power of God."

The Isabelle Carruthers and Katie Moore parted, a new life had awakened, a trembling, newborn soul was joining in the song of praise that arises to the Throne of the Lamb.

It was Saturday, and when Katie reached home she found her husband in the old parlor room of the quiet, she sat downs to think out her future course.

Sunday morning found her discouraged; the difficulties of life seemed heavier than she could bear. For the first time for years Katie entered a place of worship.

In the fifth Sunday since her father, and the place she entered happened to be a church.

"Unspotted from the world." Those were the first words she heard as she slipped quietly into a back-seat.

"Be of good cheer," I have overcome the world," were the first words that reached her. Grasping her hand, and sang softly, "Thanks be unto Thee, O Lord." Strengthened and cheered, Katie was able to join in the service, and when she left the building she was strong in the knowledge that her Saviour, Who had sought and found her, was able also to keep her "unspotted from the world."

"In the world ye shall have tribulation." Yes, she expected that; her friend of the day before had told her that it would be so, but He Who died and rose again had said, "I will be with thee, & I have overcome the world." Why should she fear?

Now and then a desire to hide her real feelings from her husband came over her, but she fought against it, feeling certain that in the end she would have much to give in at the 'living church.'

"I can no longer be a silent partner in his sin," she said to herself. "I will do all, all in my power to win him from his evil course.

"What troubled him? What ought she to do about little James?" Having allowed her husband to remain so long under the mistaken impression that the child was dead, must she now undeceive him? Ought she to risk the child's future? It seemed to her inevitable, if the boy were not married by her hand, and that he would be trained in evil courses. At length, she felt the time had come to speak of the difficulty of the case. Katie determined that she would answer truthfully if ever James Moore asked any questions about the boy, but that she would not confess what she had confided, and that she would be false to herself.

The swiftly-passing years were not improving James Moore. He was beginning to drink rather heavily, and his old good-tempered, light-hearted humour was giving place to a coarseness and brutality that made gentle Katie often tremble when she heard his step. He was still fond of his wife, but rarely showed her any affection, and she had quite given up hoping for any return of his old carefree ways. Since his absences from home, she grieved him timidly, never feeling sure in what mood he might be. If he did not say what he meant, and perfectly, her heart was so filled with yearning that James should share her joy and peace, that she sprang towards him as he entered, and greeted him with some of her old boldness and affection.

He did not repel her as he so often did, until she began to tell him of the change in her life.

"If you've turned religious, missy," he said, with a sneer, "you'd better put your religion in your pocket, unless you can make better use of it as a cloak, for I reckon you were a good wife and partner when you had marriage."

Katie sat and looked at him stupidly. She was too dazzled to find words in which to clothe her refusal, and he mistook her silence for consent, and congratulated himself on having two sullenly and persistently in the old castle end since laid bare to his heart. He was to go to the castle late at night, and ask to see the old housekeeper, who had always been friendly towards her. She was to keep in close conversation, professing great fear about
meeting her father, and, if possible, cease her to accompany her to the farmhouse.

Then, while her friend was dressing, Katie was seized with the opportunity to undo the fastening of the window in the housekeeper's room.

Katie listened with horror, and then, having regained her composure, steedly refused to act. Coaxing failed, and was succeeded by what James Moore inwardly termed the 'pathetic dodge.' This was followed by threats, and at length growing angry, he struck her again and again, until she fell senseless to the ground. When she recovered, Katie found that she was a prisoner. At first she felt too stupid and dazed to care, her head ached, and when she tried to sit up, giddiness forced her back to the couch. She rang her bell, hoping that her husband had felt the key outside the door; but when no one came in reply to her repeated summons, she remembered that her landlady had been obliged to go away to visit a sick sister, and had said that it was just possible she might be detained all night.

Tick! tick! tick! the clock ticked on monotonously, and was the only sound that broke the deep stillness of the house. Katie wished it would stop, for she felt sure that there was something she ought to be doing, and the tick! tick! of the clock seemed to prevent her from thinking. Presently she slept, and when she again awoke it was just four o'clock. She rose and tried the door again; it was still locked.

Why had her husband made her a prisoner? Suddenly the truth flashed upon her. He had gone to Dewels, and she was locked in to prevent her from giving the warning that she ought to give.

Weakness and pain were forgotten. She must get out. She must warn the people at the Castle. But how? A glance at a railway guide showed her how impossible it would be to reach Dewels that night, even if her strength held out long enough for her to make the attempt. She looked at her store of money, and saw that it would not suffice to pay for the journey. Then, with a sudden flash of delight, she recalled the new invention of the telegraph.

It took her a long time to break open the door, but at length she accomplished this feat, and tremblingly hurried away to the nearest telegraph office. She had never sent out of the strange, swift messengers before, and now she

know that by so doing she might be drawing down swift retribution on her husband's head.

"There will be an attempt to enter the Castle to-night. Jewels and plate watched," she wired.

The clerk looked at her curiously, but she needed not. Her mind was filled with but one thought—would her husband think that she had planned this in revenge for his cruelty? If he were caught, would he not regard her as a traitor? Would he not hate her new-found religion? She reached home, and flung herself upon the couch.

The pain in her head was terrible, and she longed for a cup of tea, but the little strength she had was exhausted, and so she lay alone with her sorrows.

Did I say she was alone? No, not alone, for He Who forsaketh not His own blood-bought ones was near, watching over His sorely-tried child.

Late at night the landlady returned, and was more than puzzled over her lodger's bruised face and the broken door; but Katie would give no explanation, and passed all the old woman's curious inquiries.

The next day brought no sign from James Moore, and the next was drawing to a close before Katie heard any confirmation of her tears; then a boy came down the street, trying to sell the evening papers.

"Gang of burglars. Clever captures at Dewels," the lad shouted, hoarsely, again and again.
Was it a trick of her fevered brain? Katie wondered, as she lifted her burning, throbbing head from her pillow. She wanted a paper, wanted it badly, yet felt too ill and weak to rise. It was a relief to her when, a moment later, her landlady entered.

"Get me a paper, please," she said, eagerly. "Mr. Moore is sure to like one if he comes back to-night."

Once left alone with the paper, Katie's calmness fled, and her hands shook so violently that she could not read the quivering sheet. Controlling herself at last, she saw the paragraph she wanted, but by the description given of the prisoners, she began to think that her husband must have escaped. She knew how cleverly he could plan a disguise, but even allowing for that, the height and build of the captured men did not tally with her husband's own.

There was no mention of her telegram in the account given, and she began to breathe more freely. Perhaps James would never know she had betrayed him.

The hope grew and strengthened as the hours passed, and as no tidings came to tell her that he had been caught, she felt more and more certain that he had escaped, and was working his way quietly back to the city by a devious route.

He came at last. She heard his voice; heard him pause at the door of their landlady's room and enquire for her.

"Mrs. Moore? Yes, she's in, sir. Has been ill in bed ever since you left," was her landlady's rather curt reply.

"I'll in bed? Haasn't she been out at all?, asked almost feebly.

"No; she's kept in her bed, and likely to," was the answer.

A minute or two later James Moore entered the room, flung his hat down on a chair, and without saying a word, drew a small parcel from his pocket.

"Read that!" he said, at length, savagely, putting a newspaper, which he unrolled from the parcel, into her hands.

It was an account of the attempted burglary at Dewley Castle, and the blood rushed into Katie's face as she noted that it had been scored with blue pencil lines under the words:

Warning having been given, the police were on the alert.

"What does that mean, I want to know? If you've been skulking about, sneaking on me, I'll teach you a lesson you won't easily forget, and you will see how much good your long-faced Psalm-singing will do you. I'm not going to run the risk of another term in goal for any woman living."

As he spoke his face grew red and angry, while the veins on his forehead stood out in knots. Katie trembled, but did not answer, and he continued roughly:

"It's no use lying there, pretending you're too sick to speak. I'm waiting to know whether you split on me. I'm going to. That's my idea."

"I tried to save you from crime, Jim," she said, gently, hoping to soften his wrath.

"Save me, indeed! Tried to get me into gaol, so that you might be free to go about with your new Psalm-singing companions," he answered mockingly. "But I'm not going to stand any such nonsense. A pretty thing when a man's own wife turns on him!"

As he spoke James Moore struck his wife. It seemed as though the blow aroused his long-suppressed wrath, for having struck he was half-victorious followed another.

It was not until she had fallen unconscious upon the pillow that the noise brought up the landlady. She found the door closely shut, and could only angrily threaten that if that sort of thing was going on in her house, the scene must be closed, and that if he would take a week's notice from that moment.

When his wrath had somewhat spent itself, James Moore went out and spent the remainder of the evening in drinking heavily, leaving his wife to think over her future course.

Her first idea on recovering consciousness was to escape, to leave for ever the atmosphere of sin and cruelty. Her next, to stay with her husband so long as it was possible.

"I have taken away his child; I dare not leave him to his evil courses, without making some effort to arouse him to better things. This is my punishment. If I stay I may be able to deter him from some crimes, to win him from his evil companions."

"What will the end be?" she wondered. "I am reaping a bitter harvest. O God, save my boy, my precious boy, from ever reaping the harvest of sin that I have sown."

"Watch over him, keep him," was the prayer that rose to her lips, as she lay upon the bed, still feeling sick and ill and faint, yet strong in the resolve that so far as she lay in her power she would do her duty to her husband. She could not see one step before her, but when she feared the path would be, a certain resigned peace filled her heart. She went to her work, and God was with her. Out of the past and present sorrow He could bring good. And so she was content to wait His time, and see how He would work for her, how He would watch over and care for the burglar's baby.

(To be continued).

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By ETHEL P. CROWTHER,

CHAPTER I.

"I homeward-bound, had considerately turned away, and stood collecting his instruments, with his back turned to the cot.

They were alone now—the doctor had withdrawn—and the mother clasped the little, lifeless hand of her child to her heart, and wept. There was no bitterness in her thoughts towards the great God Who had recalled the treasure He had lent—only the natural soreness of the mother-heart, the yearning to feel again the joys that accompany God's gift of motherhood."
Isabelle Carruthers had been married for several years, and this little one had been the only child to live, and now his life was cut short, and she had only memories of the past on which to feed. It was a sore testing time for the young couple, and in the weeks that followed baby's death, the father and mother, while they strove to cheer each other, had each their own way of grieving. Isaac, her husband, would weep beside the empty cot in silent agony, ere she understood the sufficiency of the Almighty, and could say:

"And if before these sepulchres unmoving
I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb)
Cries bleating up the moors in weathy dearth,
Crying, 'Where are ye, O my loved and loving?'
I know a voice would sound, 'Daughter, I am.'
Can I suffer for Heaven and not for earth?"

The house seemed strangely empty without the patterning footsteps of a little child, and the father and mother both dreaded the time of the day which had been called baby's hour, when their little one had been accustomed to feel that he was entirely to enjoy the love and companionship of both his parents.

One day, nearly three months after their loss, the doctor, who was watching his wife's face as she busily sewed, on a dress intended for one of his poor patients, said abruptly:

"Isa, shall we adopt a little one?"

Her first feeling was a curious mixture of jealousy and pain. It was but a passing, momentary spasm, crushed almost before it came into existence.

"What made you think of that, Hugh?" she asked, bending a little lower over her work, to hide the quiver of her lips.

"Only a little chap I saw to-day; such a bright, intelligent little fellow. And somehow, when I saw him being placed to the rows of clothes—"

"It was at the workhouse, I suppose?" Isabelle interposed.

"Yes; and I thought he looked as though he'd been used to nothing more than a bed and a chair. And as the patients and nurses are, he will miss all that," the doctor continued.

For her own part, Mrs. Carruthers would have preferred that no stranger should take the place of her own child; but she felt it was too late to have her husband be partially reconciled if another baby-boy came to fill the empty place, and so she answered gently:

"Poor wee man, I'd like to see him. Take me with you next time you go." The doctor said no more, trusting to the effect that the child itself would have upon the tender heart so recently bereaved.

To tell the truth, he was anxious about his wife, and longed to give her some new interest that should engross her mind and heart.

In reality, he rather dreaded the thought of seeing another child occupying the place of his boy; and yet he felt sure that it would be far better for Isabelle than the constant grief and loneliness of the house, which had once resounded with childish fun and merriment.

Accordingly, the next time his professional duties called him to the city, he reminded Isabelle of her wish to see the child, and she, mindful of her promise, prepared to accompany him.

He sat down on black garniture because my darling has gone to dwell with the Lover and Saviour of men, Hugh," Isabelle had said, soon after the little one had crossed to the better land. And so no scrawny piece, no sad signals of grief, appeared in her little face, as she followed her husband to the room allotted to the baby.

"There he is, Isa," Dr. Carruthers said, pointing to one corner, where a little boy sat nursing a broken horse.

He was a beautiful child, with thick, clustering curls, and as he caught sight of Mrs. Carruthers he dropped his little wooden horse, and ran towards her, burrying his face in the crispness of her soft grey gown. Something in the way he clung to her recalled the treasure she had lost, and she bent over him, gently smoothing the curls back from his face. The sight of the little fellow reminded the little chap of his own mother, for whose return he had been watching and waiting until his baby-heart, had grown sore with heart-deferred.

"Mister! dear mister!" he lisped, pouting up his tiny lips.

Had he been at all like her own child, Isabelle Carruthers might have hesitated. But he was so different. Nothing about him recalled the fair, delicate beauty of her lost blossom, that she felt no jealous pang lest this weed should usurp the spot reserved in her heart's band for her own child.

"Let us take him, Hugh," she said.

"Going home," the nurse said, "emptily nodding his little head.

"Jamie's going home to mummy." The little face was wreathed in smiles.

Dr. and Mrs. Carruthers smiled. It was pretty to see the boy's delight and his confidence in them, and readiness to go with them.

The doctor had dressed him in the clothes he had worn on his first arrival, a few weeks before. But before he went, we Jamie trotted all round the room, giving loving kisses to his favourite toys.

"We shall miss him," the nurse said. "he's such a lovely, grateful little fellow, and so confiding, too."

The sight of the clothes brought memories to the child's mind, and a puzzled look came into his face, and he seemed to be grappling with some perplexing thoughts and problems.

"Jamie's not a naughty boy," he said, enquiringly.

"He can't understand why his friends don't come for him," said the matron, gently. She had come in to the room to give Dr. and Mrs. Carruthers all the information she could about the little fellow. Seeing how the child's lips quivered, she patted him kindly on the head, and said brightly:

"No, Jamie is a good boy. Someday he shall go home perhaps, but now he must go with this lady."

"Do you think there will be any change of his parents' friends claiming him now?" the doctor asked.

The matron shook her head. "It's not often, I am sorry to say, that such a thing occurs. But he is such a dear little fellow, I persuaded that first someone would come and take him, if only for a good deal of petting; and of course we cannot give them the same amount of attention here that they get in a good home."

Once outside, the child chattered merrily in his pretty, lisped language, but nothing he said gave the slightest clue to his past life.

"He gives me the impression of having been most carefully brought up, Isa," said Dr. Carruthers, "and yet—"

"It's just a vagi, one thing that puzzles me. I cannot even guess at his parents' position," was her reply, "but doubtless we shall glean some knowledge when we have had him longer."

Isa undressed the child herself, and was surprised to find that the dressing was far less keen than she had expected. The baby chattered and amused her. But when it came to the time for baby to say his evening prayers, Isa realised that no mother had ever taught him to bless childish petitions at the throne of grace.

She looked in her face with a merry laugh when she would have folded his tiny hands, and evidently thought that this was some new game; and Mrs. Carruthers had to take him on her lap, and explain to him in simple, baby language about the great, loving God. Who would take care of him if he need him all the time. The word Father, however, had no meaning for wee Jamie, for he had never known a father's love. Her own wee boy had been brought up in an atmosphere of love, and had learned to lips the great name of God as soon as he had learned his parents' names. But now Isa felt that she did not need to deal with. The little one knew nothing; he was not familiar with any of the children's rhymes that she had sung to her baby; though he seemed to know all the dear old nursery rhymes, and to have no difficulty in repeating those she had taught him.

Perhaps the Lord took my little one, to leave me free to train this foundling," she thought, as she laid the little lad in the cozy white bed, and smiled to see his delight in the new surroundings; and she knelt down again beside the cot, and asked for strength and wisdom to guide the child's feet right; then softly, and without tears, she waved him thanks for the knowledge that her own, her
cherished one, was safe in the strong
hold of a loving Saviour’s care.

"What I do thou knowest not now,
but that shalt know hereafter," Were
those words Christ’s answer to her
sorrowing heart.

When she told her husband the
thought that had come into her mind
about the home-going of their own
child, he answered:

"Our lives we cut on a curious plan,
Shaping them, as it were, for man;
But God, with better art than we,
Shapes them for all eternity."

Certainly were Jamie had come to stay.
Before a week had passed away, he was
quite at home in the pleasant house, in the
quite square where Dr. Carruthers lived. It
was not a wealthy or costly abode. Ira was
wont to say that God had blessed them by giving them
neither poverty nor riches, and it was true. They
had enough of this world’s gifts to make anxiety unnecessary,
and yet not enough to take away the joy of self-sacrifice.
When it came to a question of giving to any of the
numerous societies formed for the furtherance of the
Lord’s cause.

As the days passed into weeks, and the weeks into
months, the child grew so dear that the doctor and his
wife both dreaded unspeakably the thought that they
might be called upon to give up their little charge. No
other children had come to bless the home with their
sunny smiles and fair, innocent faces, so that Jamie was
their sole pet. They had named him Noel, in addition
to his own name, and also given him their own surname of
Carruthers, so that he had grown to be looked upon as
their own child.

Little Noel Carruthers was quite a familiar figure in the
neighbourhood; his truant, confiding face and manly
bearing won all hearts, while his tender, affectionate little
heart drew out the love of many. Any story of distress or
sorrow would bring the quick flush to his cheek, the tears
to his bright eyes.

Once, he chanced to be in the dining-room while
Mrs. Carruthers was telling her husband of a poor woman
whom she had met in the railway-station, quite broken
down with grief and perplexity.

Neither of the talkers noticed the child, until he sud-
denly burst into tears.

"Why didn’t you ask God to make her happy, mother?"
he asked, sobbing convulsively.

"I did, darling," she answered, gently, "and I think
He has made her happy."

But for several weeks Noel added a petition at the end
of his prayers, that God would make the poor woman
good and happy.

He had long ago forgotten that he was not really
the child of his present parents, and called them father and
mother, without one doubt that they were his real relatives.
His nurse, the other servants, and all family
friends, had been asked to keep the secret.

Two officers of the law had ordered to arrest James Moore
on a charge of burglary.

CHAPTER II.

"Fool, all that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure."
—Byron.

It was a terribly hot night. Most of the inmates
of Crown Street were sitting outside on the
doorsteps, or leaning idly against the walls and
doorposts. The men were quarrelsome, for, owing to
the hot weather, most of them had been drinking
even more heavily than usual. The children were
tired, and the women peevish. Every now and then the
sound of angry voices rose, followed sometimes by
a blow or a shrill cry. Certainly Crown Street was not a
desirable locality in which to live. Water was scarce, dirt
and refuse piled, and disease rampant. The warm
summer, pleasant enough to dwellers by the sea, and
enjoyable to those who dwelt amongst airy hills and
commons; bearable in the large dwellings of the rich,
who everywhere was done to keep the rooms cool; was,
to the inhabitants of narrow courts and back-alleys, a
vegetable time of torture. Lack of water added to the
suffering; drink and dirt increased the power of disease.

In a wretched room below the level of the road a woman
sat watching beside a sick man, whose moans at times
were so terrible that even the people gathered outside
would pause now and then to spare a thought for the
man inside, who was dying in such agony. One or two had
offered to sit up with the sufferer at night, but his wife,
Kate Moore, had refused all such offers of help, much more
the needed rest and sleep.

Her husband was at times delirious, and then he would
inwardly struggle with some invisible foe, and use words
that made his listening wife shudder and turn faint. She
knew that his hands were stained with blood. She prayed
 hourly that a life, hanging as it were, by the narrow
thread, might be saved; so that the guilt of murder might
not rest upon the soul of the dying man.

For days he had lain ‘twixt life and death, watched upon
by Kate with a tenderness and care that surprised the sick
man himself, when, as sometimes happened, he was sufficiently free from pain and weakness to realise his surroundings. But the wonder only showed itself in a fiercer flame of grasping, or a muttered curse hurled at the 'foul' air. Of the room, the heat of the weather, or the coarseness of the food.

The woman kept patient and quiet, steadily swinging hour after hour, and only pausing to attend to her husband, and to ease him when there was any new pain. She had been to see the doctor, and was told he had scattered here and there 'among the realities of life.' 

"You have any more after this lot," said the man, paying her, and at the same time pushing a fresh bale of work across to her. 

"Katie's heart sank, but she said nothing beyond a civil "Thank you," as she turned away.

"He's never forsaken me yet," she murmured to herself, with an upward look.

The bundle was heavy, but Mrs. Moore did not once stop to rest her arms until she turned into a busy thoroughfare; then she put her bundle down on the pavement, held up her hand, locked up and down as though in search of someone. A policeman glanced at her once, but apparently her quiet, and face disarmed him, for he said nothing; and a moment later a boy came rushing round the corner with an awful "Excuse me!

"Thought you wasn't coming tonight, missis. You'll look best sharp!"

Katie Moore looked at her store of money, and then drew out a half-penny, which the boy promptly pocketed, and set off down the street with the crowd of newspapers, which she eagerly scanned and returned.

"You'll be here to-morrow, Bob?" she asked, eagerly.

"The lad nodded, and hurried away.

He still lives, thank God! he still lives!" was the burden of her thoughts, as she turned back to the gloomy room where she lived.

She had to pass a large tailor's establishment before she turned down the side-street which led to the quarter of the city where Crown Street lay; and before the glimmering pillars of the freight-train were hidden, and she could turn to the goods displayed, and wondered what the poor woman saw there to rivet her attention, but for the most part the crowd passed on unheeding, while Katie saw—not the daily routine of her life, nor the simple, yet natural, things upon the shooting stocks—but before her vision stretched long heather-clad slopes and fir-crowned hills; the din of the city changed to the music of wind and brook; the air, no longer thick and polluted to her fancy, was resonant with the breath of nature; the shop window shaped itself into a tiny white, gabled farm-house, surrounded by garden and orchard.

A passer-by jostled her roughly, and she awoke to the realities of life, to find that her bundle of work had been stolen. Half-wild with alarm, she hurried up and down, vainly searching, then timidly told a policeman of her loss.

He asked her name and address, and evidently wondered at her breathing thoughts, as she turned back to the gloomy little room where she lived.

"Mrs. Smith, 90, Crown Street."

The policeman entered the facts in his note-book, and promised to do all he could; and then, sick at heart, faint and trembling in every limb, Katie Moore hurried back to her little room, and suppers were made ready for her."

"A likely story, indeed, Mrs. Smith. I'm not so easily hoodwinked. Perhaps you'll give me the pawn-tickets, unless you have sold them for drink."

Poor Katie Moore! She was indeed in a dilemma through her carelessness; she had done what she most dreaded—drawn the attention of the police to her home.

With tears in her eyes she besought the foreman to let her work off the debt her carelessness had occasioned bit by bit, appealing to him for the sake of her sick husband. But he was only threatened to give her in charge if the bundle of goods, or its equivalent value in money, was not returned to him in the usual time.

H ad God forsaken her? she wondered, as she once more turned into Crown Street, and passed silently through the groups and knots of people, heedless of the fact that she was a gaol bird, and the love she generally bestowed a smile or a kind word, looked up into her face expectantly, and looked in vain.

She opened the door, and her eyes sought her husband's face expectantly, and not with the least enthusiasm. When she did not see him the tears were shed, not of love, but cruel gibes and threats. What would he do and say when she told him of her folly.

For years and years she had stuck to him through good and evil fortune, but for years past she had not touched him with the love she had carried for him as a thief and she knew it. But never had she failed him in the time of need. Over and over again she had left her, after illusing her most cruelly, yet she had screened him, worked for him—yes, even welcomed him back from good more than twice. She was now rewarded by blows and curses, mocking words, and cruel threats.

Perhaps the knowledge that, in a sense, she had wronged him, by hiding from his knowledge a secret which she had guarded carefully for many years, helped her to be gentle, and patient. Perhaps the memory of his bloodshed and first few happy months of married life, before she knew that he was a criminal, helped to keep her wife duty alive. But certainly the fact that she belonged to God was the one great aid, the one rock, which had saved her and to her future life.

She thought she had lived quite in vain, but in spite of failures on her part, her quiet patience, her steady determination to have no part or share in his unholy gains, had at length impressed her husband with a belief in the restorative power of religion. But the kindly influence had over again her life had shamed him; but all his life he had taken the easiest paths, had yielded to his own weakness, had dallied with matters of conscience, until his will, never very strong, had lost all power, and he lived to-day a false life and a lie, the product of Satan's tempter. His weakness had made him what he was—a ruined man, without hope, without peace. Self-indulgence had sapped his strength and manhood, had undermined the sinews of his soul, had brought him down to the gates of death, where he was fastened with chains of debt.

She had gained nothing, had lost all, and now the eternal verities were ready to dawn upon his soul.

He would have to prepare himself in some way for the change he had been forced into, the shock of putting away the past, thought, strength, memory, in his weakness, and held him as it were, in a vice. It is a mistake, and one he was proving, to imagine that the near approach of death can change a man. Evil has more power, not less, when we are weak in body. Our habits have a deep influence on our actions. A man who allows to push an advantage, does not let it slip at the last.

As Katie Moore opened the door she could hear him breathing painfully, and caught the look of fear upon his face. But the harder he broke the silence she had maintained, and said:

"He's not dead, Jim; and the doctor thinks that, with care, he may live."

"He's done for me, curse him!" was the response; but in spite of the words Kate saw a look of relief spread over the man's face. She hesitated whether or not to tell him of her loss, or to wait until he had taken some of the food she was about to prepare, when the sound of a heavy, measured tread outside, in the street, caused everyone to look at their room door.

"They've found me! Quick! lock the door! Curse you, be quick!" he bissed, as Kate tremblingly obeyed, and turned the key in the shaky door.

Then a noise caused her to turn round quickly, and she saw that the door was being forced inwards, as though the door was being forced inwards, as though the door was being forced. But he had already been set to scale the wall, and his limbs trembled so violently that she could not move. After a moment's silence a heavier knocking broke the silence, and the heavy door, unable to bear the weight, opened with a loud crack, and admitted two officers of the law, who entered to arrest James Moore on a charge of burglary and assault with intent to murder; but they drew back, awe-d the presence of death.

James Moore had gone before the Judge whose judgments never err. After long years of bondage, Kate was free, but she did not realise the fact; her whole soul was
filled with the darkness and horror of the thought that a soul had passed away in darkness, uncovered, with no plea of Christ's righteousness to lay before the Judge.

CHAPTER III.

"Thou art sore troubled for Israel's sake; lovest thou that people better than He that made them?"—Exod.

FOR over twelve months Mrs. Moore had been on short commons. Directly after her husband's death, the few pieces of furniture she still possessed were gone, and she had traded on her honesty; but now the business had changed hands, and Kate Moore was comparatively free to spend any money she might earn on good food and decent clothes. But she still pinched and starved, trying to lay by a little money.

When the half-months sometimes happened at the factory where she was employed, some of the hands were kept back to work overtime, Kate was always ready to volunteer her services. She had joined herself to a small club, and went daily to the room provided for the convenience of the members; but she had no choice of hitting up any batch of young people to practise for many years, clung to her now, and she was slow to make friends. She was a good deal older than most of her fellow-workers, and the merry, light-hearted girls who gathered round the door and laughed and sung and had a history of their own, were not friendly in her case, or even in the case of the hands who were in the habit of frequenting the room scarcely gave her more than a passing thought.

Now and then, during the long summer months, picnics were arranged by the members of the club, but as there were not enough right hands, and she had traded on her honesty never went, although her heart cried out for a sight of green fields and woods. But the little box in which she stowed her savings became gradually heavier and heavier, and at length there came a day when Kate Moore asked for a day's holiday at the factory, and was missed at the club for several days.

She left the great Metropolis, and took the train to a smoky manufacturing city in the north of England. For a moment or two she sat at the station. Time had so changed it that she felt confused. Then she turned to the right, and walked steadily on. All! how often had she seen this place in her dreams; how often in her fancy, had she gone over the road that led to the building she now sought. It was the same old scene before her, the tall walls and massive pillars greeted her eyes, and she could almost fancy that a baby-boy sat contentedly upon the topmost step of the flight she had to climb.

The great bell rang out a sonorous peal as she pulled the long swing-handling; and the man who answered it, thinking she had come for relief, sent her away to a side-door, and swung the great door close, almost in her face.

She felt rebuffed, but went meekly enough to the other door, only to find, when her business was told, that she would have once more to look elsewhere.

"Can I not see Mr. James Freeman?" she asked.

"Freeman? Freeman? Freeman? There is no official of that name here," was the puzzled reply.

"But wait. Did you say the child was sent here fifteen years ago? Yes, that was the master's name then; but he left his mark, and the child was admitted, I think."

The entire man was speaking, he was looking over the columns of a large ledger.

"James Cook. John Dipper. Ah! James Moore. Yes, that must be the child; but—" The man had a pale face, and left the sentence unfinished. "Yes, he had a mark—like a hand on his neck, and brought in by one of the nurses or doctors here. Is that the boy?" he asked, knitting his brows, and harshly regarding the sad-faced Kate Moore. "I suppose you have heard that we are offering free pardon to any who will claim their deserted children?"

"Yes, sir. Where is he, sir, please?" she faltered.

"I'm sure I don't feel inclined to give you any more information," he snapped. "You left the child here—didn't even wait to see him admitted—and now you want to come back and be a help to you, you come to claim him. You had better go before the magistrates and ask them about the case."

Something in Kate Moore's face gave a denial to this line of talk, but the answering stamp of the man's boot told her stern-looking man that she had left her baby boy because she feared to keep him at home. How could she tell her own shame, how own that her husband had been a burglar, a criminal, a convict? No such shame might enter the heart of the law. She would rather be thought a cruel, heartless mother.

"I think the best thing you can do is to leave the boy alone. He was taken away by a lady and gentlemen—adopted, in fact. I don't know where they are, or who they are, or even if it has been an accident to the book, and all the information about them, as you see, is blotted out."

Kate Moore looked, and saw that the page had been disfigured by a huge blot of ink, which covered half the column.

"It must have been upset long after the names were written on, or the page would have been copied out," he continued.

"Wont there be any other book?" Kate faltered.

"It's no use, my good woman. Depend upon it, the boy will be best left alone. I can't tell you any more. Of course you can apply to the guardians if you like; but if you take my advice you will let well alone."

Once outside, Kate realised how much she had climbed from the little girl who had lived a life of idleness. She only wanted to make sure that he was well, happy, and in good hands. If she could but assure herself of this, Kate felt that she could return to her own life quite contentedly, with the assurance that she had done her duty.

"I must find James Freeman. He might remember: he would help me."

With this thought in her mind, she returned to her tiny room, and took up once more her daily task in the factory. It was only the coming and going of the visitors, the guiding of the machine that cut the envelopes into shape so quickly, her thoughts were busy planning how to gain more money, enough to take her to her old home, where she felt certain she would hear news of her old lover, James Freeman.

She would have been able to save enough out of the ten shillings a week that she was able to earn, had it not been for what seemed to her that unfortunate occurrence of the stolen parcel. Working to pay for that bad undermined her health, and her mind.

Amongst the girls who worked in her room was one who interested her more than she could tell or explain. A pretty delicate child she was, wild as an untamed deer, and heedless of all advice. She was the despair of the lower domestics at the club, who could not understand her, and were often shocked and comforted by her careless words.

"Do you know why I can't come to-night?" she would ask, artlessly. "It's because I'm going down to the penny gaff. They have much better singing there than you get here; and the piano is better, and the players are better, too. You should see their fingers flying over the keys, like this."

And here the girl would seat herself on the piano-stool—a forbidden seat—and pretend to make her own fingers run up and down the keys.

Sometimes she would coax some of the younger members to join her in some mad prank, and though she was the youngest member, she had become a sort of ringleader. She managed to get hold of many bright-coloured articles of dress, and wore them in a picturesque way. Noisy and rough though she was, Kate always felt that the girl was capable of affection, and guessed that more than half her mad escapades were prompted by a love of notice and a craving for affection.

The girl was the man the girl coming down the street from the club-room, with her head very high in the air, and a look of angry disdain upon her face.

"What is the matter, Lily?" she asked, kindly enough.

"She said I was a disgrace to the club," said the girl, angrily, and marched on without vouchsafing any other explanation.

Kate went on, ordered her cup of tea, and sat down to eat her frugal meal. She felt that something was wrong,
but did not like to ask what had happened, lest Lily should hear she had been questioning the girl, and mean it.

Presently a girl near her began to whisper to another, and Kate gathered from her remarks that Lily had been having a long quarrel with her father, and was sitting apart during the time set apart for hymns, and behaving in a way that made the rest feel not a little ashamed.

For several days Kate saw no more of the girl; she was absent from her work, and did not come near the club. When she did return to her work she looked so pale, so drawn, that the elder, who had noticed her, could not bear to ask how fast she was going along the downward path.

One day she entered the factory with an unusual show of good spirits, but Katie noticed that her eyes were red, and that work was over she followed the girl.

When she got home her father said she was all gone harder, and refused to have anything more to do with the meetings and club, getting her meals at a cheap restaurant in the neighbourhood, or eating them in the factory yard. She went into bad company, and seemed doing as her old friends had known was last fast she was going.

"If I— I took that bundle. I wanted a cloak—a swell one. And now I suppose you'll take me. But I don't care.

For a few seconds Kate was too surprised to speak. She had suffered agonies through the loss of her work, and the thought that it had all been endured to gratify a girl's whim for pretty clothes, seemed hard indeed. But for years she had looked forward to the promise of guidance, and the habits she had stood in good stead now.

"It was brave of you to tell me, Lily. So far as I am concerned, child, you are forgiven. But, little one, the sin is still there. And then, once again the old, old story of God's provision for the washing away of sin was told in simple words, and then Kate bade and blessed the girl until she fell asleep.

"If I can but gain a hold on the child, it will be worth those months of toil," thought Kate Moore; and then she laid Lily, praying as earnestly for her as she ever did for one of her own children, her Christian friends had prayed for her.

The next morning Lily was quiet and shame-faced, but she got ready to accompany Kate to the factory.

She said, "Yes, I will go, Lily, it is a secret between us." she said,推崇.

"And will you stay with me? You shall pay for your board, but you are quite welcome to share my room and bed." 

Kate was surprised to feel a passionate kiss on her face, and then in silence the two went out in the cool morning air. The victory was won; Lily was saved.

CHAPTER IV.

Kate knows I know the faces I shall see. Each one a murdered soul! With low last breath, I am myself. What hast thou done to me?

The length of the little money-box held sufficient of the carefully-boxed cards to carry Kate Moore down to her birth-place. She had not seen it for years, and left it secretly, to be married to James Moore that she had been reposing in its covering. Her own Kate dared not think. The paths, leading little little she had sent him had received no reply, and now, as Kate recalled how earnestly she had pleaded in the tear-stained note for her parent's blessing and forgiveness, and vividly recalled the sickening sense of disappointment she had experienced when day day after day had passed and no reply ever came.

"Mother Moore," said Lily, who, although no word of explanation had passed, knew well where her friend was going, "with you we were this day; please me? It's not what I would have got for you. I would have chosen something brighter and tastier; but I think it's what you'd like." As she spoke, Lily placed a neatly-tied bonnet on the table.

"Ah, child, where did you get it?" said Mrs. Moore, in astonishment.

"Oh, it's nothing. I trimmed it myself. I was going to get that big hat for myself in Smith's, but when I heard you talking about going away, I says to myself, 'Mother Moore mustn't go like a regular dowd! So I thought, but oh, no, I didn't know how to explain it too smart, lest you say it wasn't your style!' The tears came welling slowly into Kate Moore's eyes.

She was touched deeply, for she knew that for Lily to make such a sacrifice meant much; the girl loved pretty things, and had set her heart on the show hat.

"Dear child!" she said, lovingly, allowing Lily to try the bonnet on her head.

"Why, Mother Moore, you're quite pretty!" Lily said, clapping her hands excitedly. "Go and look in the glass.
To please the girl, she went and stood for a moment gazing at her own reflection.

"What a change!" she murmured, as memory recalled to her the really beautiful face which had left Dewsley. And yet, though she did not know it, there was a calm strength in the face that she now saw reflected in her tiny mirror which was infinitely more lovely than all the grace of form and colouring of which Kate Watford had boasted.

Breakfast was a quiet meal that morning in Mrs. Moore's tiny room. Lily's high spirits were softened by her first joy in tasting the delight of unselfishness, while the elder woman was lost in thought.

"Lily," she said, suddenly, having resolutely banished past memories, "supposing it were possible, would you like to learn millinery?"

"Like it! Like to exchange those horrid, grinding wheels, and ugly old envelopes, for pretty things! Like it! Why, Mother Moore, I'd almost die of delight if I'd the chance."

The girl's flushed cheek said more than her extravagant speech.

"I wonder whether it would be possible to manage it, Lily?" said Mrs. Moore, rising from the table, and preparing for her journey.

She was scarcely prepared for the wild excitement which seized the girl, who danced up and down the tiny room so wildly that it seemed every moment as though she must bring down the crazy old rafters. Kate Moore was able to judge, from her mad delight, how intense the girl's dislike to her present work must be; but fearing to raise hopes she might be unable to fulfill, she wisely said no more, but after warning Lily to be very careful, and not to let her high spirits get her into any trouble during her absence, she went away, to find, and, if possible, to interview, her old lover, James Freeman.

It was a long, long journey, and the sun was getting quite low when Kate Moore stepped out at the railway-station which was nearest to Dewsley.

Instead of the long stretch of green lanes which had greeted her eyes in the old days, she now saw numberless...
houses and villas springing up everywhere. She hurried past these mushroom growths, longing for a sight of the everlasting hills, for the sweet melody of the birds, the glory of nature's face.

But she was weaker than she knew. Twenty years before she had often tried that road with light, gled feet that felt no weariness; but now she was faint to stop and rest.

At length she came to a narrow footpath winding up a steep hillside, between a sea of purple heather, broken here and there by patches of golden broom and gorse.

"It was here I met him first," she murmured, "the very day on which dear mother was laid to rest; and there is the seat on which he used to sit and tell me of the busy city life where he lived. Poor James!"

Every way she looked, some familiar token met her gaze, redolent of her early youth. She thought of the plump, middle-aged woman who had come to keep house when Mrs. Watford died.

"Scared to the memory of David Watford." Yes, he was dead, and only seven months had passed since the earth had closed over his mortal remains. A little further on she saw another headstone, which marked the resting place of his oldest sister, Ellen; but Ellen had never been permitted to come to keep house when Mrs. Watford died.

With weary, dragging footsteps she made her way to a cottage, and asked if she could get a night's lodging.

The girl who opened the door looked at her curiously, and then retired within, to ask her mother. After some hitches, she was at last given her wish, and so Kate Moore slept once more in her native place.

On the narrow she had to pass her old home, on the way to old Mrs. Freeman's house. She trembled in every limb lest someone should see and recognize her; and then she smiled at her own folly. Who would associate a faded, middle-aged woman with pretty Kate Watford?

"Besides, who is there left to care? My brother must look on as dead, and my old friends have long ceased to care for me.

At every turn she was confronted by visions of her old self, by memories of faces and voices now passed away into eternity. "I might be a poor ghost revisiting the scenes of my mortal life," she thought, as a counsellor, warning her of how unkindly familiar to her, passed her without a second glance.

She walked up the wide, flagged pathway that led to the farmhouse which had belonged to the Freeman family as long as the old church register had existed. It was up this path that her father had hoped she would one day walk as a bride.

"Is Mr. Freeman at home?" she asked the fresh-faced country lass who came to the door.

"No; he don't live here. But Mrs. James is here, and I daren't say anything to you." Kate hesitated. A rumour had reached her that her old lover had married Ruth Massey, an old friend of her own, and she did not wish to meet her. Why, she could scarcely have told. But then, desire to know about her was stronger than her caution. She had to learn.

"Thank you. I daren't say Mr. Freeman will do." The servant showed her into a cool, old-fashioned parlor, fragrant with the scent of lilac flowers. She was not to be seen. A door in the wall opened, and a man entered, with a pleasant smile on her face, which, however, changed to a look of puzzled wonder, followed by the explanation:

"It's Katie! Katie Watford! Surely you are my old friend?" she said, stretching out both her hands. "I've looked for you so long you won't deny you'd come and tell me why you did so long ago."

The room began to swim before her eyes. The joy of knowing that she had not been forgotten seemed more than she could bear. But Ruth's cheery voice rose her from her half-fainting state.

"You must stay," she urged, hospitably. "I've waited so long to see you, that I can't let you go.

Kate wondered how her friend could possibly have recognised her, for the acquaintance had been a short one.

Seeing that Kate Moore did not wish to stay, Mrs. Freeman said:

"I have a message for you—one I have kept for years. Wait just one moment, and I will bring it to you."

Wishing to give her old friend time in which to recover, Mrs. Freeman hurriedly retired, but instead, went into the kitchen, and asked that some food might be prepared for her visitor. Then she returned, and laid a scrap of paper down before her guest. It was worn, and the ink was faded, but Kate recognised her father's cramped writing, and looked intently at the words. "Come home, dear, after you had written your own name and address.

"He told me to tell you that you were not to be afraid, whatever you had done; that you were forgiven; and that there was home for you as long as he lived," said Mrs. Freeman, softly.

"Why, then, did he not answer my letters?" asked Kate, with a faint distrust of her dead husband's good faith, in the matter.

"He never had a word from you, Katie." She smiled, and as it had my address inside, I felt sure he had received it. Poor, poor old dad! How good of him!"

I suppose you have been home, and heard that he left you a little sum of money; not much—about a hundred pounds, I think"

Kate shook her head; she could not speak. And then her old friend told her how her father had come up to the factory where she used to work, to try to find some trace of her. She made one journey westward to her whereabouts, and then, not without a blush or two, she told how the search for Kate had led to her finding a husband in James Freeman.

Then it was Kate's turn to tell her story, and as she recited it, the color crept back into her cheeks. Her face seemed a little thinner, and her gray eyes shone brighter, and the old look came back to them.

"I'm sure I'm here, my dear, but I don't know what you want?" she cried, "Can't you think of anything?"

"Can't you think of anything?" Kate faltered. "Of them? I dare not go to the old home to see. I do not think I should have ventured here, had I thought it possible that you would know me after all these years."

"Love has keen eyes," said Ruth, answering the latter part of her old friend's remark first. "Your brothers—well, they are all scattered. The eldest has the farm; the others all separated. But I must leave that news for your own people to tell. Oh, Kate, what a glad day it will be for them."

"Tell them, Ruth," faltered Kate, "did my father really care? He—he always seemed so stern and cold."

"Indeed he did. He and your aunt never gave up watching and hoping for some sign of you. I have seen him waiting about the door until the postman had passed, watching the little hand in the little hand of his horse."

The tears streamed down Mrs. Moore's face as she realised the pain she had caused.

"At all events, he was spared the truth," she sobbed. "I think the disgrace would have killed him, he was always so respectable."

That afternoon Kate went over to see her brother, whose surprise at her reappearance could be better imagined than described. He could not be said to actually rejoice over her return, for the long years that had passed since he had seen her had wrought changes, and he called her sister. When she asked him to come and share his home, and would have been glad enough to welcome her beneath his roof had she accepted his offer. But she shrunk from being a burden on her relatives.
"Remember, Kate," her brother said, as he gave her the money her father had bequeathed to her, "this is not all you were to have, for he made us swear that if ever you needed a home we would all give you a place in ours. But when he died he was very little ready money, and he thought it wiser to give us all he could, than to leave a larger sum lying idle in the bank, on the chance of your return."

Kate quite understood. She was glad enough of the little legacy, for with it she could gratify her wish to see her child, and also help Lily to earn her own living in some more suitable manner than the present one. Seeing how anxious Kate was for news of her son, Ruth telegraphed to her husband for particulars about wee home.

Fortunately, he had a good memory, and was able to recall both name and address.

Dr. Carruthers, Berryton Square, Silverton, near Manchester, return telegram read:

With this in her hand his eyes turned once more returned to London, determined to at once apprentice Lily to a good tailor, and then to go northwards for a few days, to satisfy herself that her cherished little one had reached manhood, and was in safe and happy surroundings.

She felt a strange, quiet rest.

CHAPTER V.

"God must be glad one loves His world so much."

—Browning.

USIC, bright lights, the scent of flowers, the sound of glad, clear voices, all were mingling in the air, and waiting through the open windows of Professor Ingham’s house. Everyone now and then a cab would drive up to the door, containing some prettily-dressed visitor, or a couple of young men would run lightly up the steps, and be lost within the precincts of the hospitable door. Most of the guests were students, admiring youth, glad enough to throw off for a little time all thoughts of exams and lectures. One or two of the freest seemed surprised to find how charming the dread professors were when thus diverted of their professional routine, and by an unexpected gift after hours congratulated himself on having thus met the examiner he dreaded in a social way, little dreaming that when he was once more on that high stool, racking his tiring brain to supply information, the genial great man would once more be that dread and awful personage, an examiner, a being apparently sans mercy.

Professor Ingham’s receptions were always well attended, and this occasion proved no exception to the general rule. Everyone looked bright and animated. The voices did not ring so loud now, and the guests were leaning towards the windows, listening to the music and the cheers of Professor Ingham’s house. Only one of the many guests seemed uneasy, and he, belonging aloof from the many friends and acquaintances who greeted him, kept his eyes turned towards the door, where his hostess stood, cordially welcoming the guests as they arrived. Presently a look of delight flashed into his face, as a young girl, very simply dressed in white, came in at the door, accompanied by a handsome old lady, visibly aggrieved with youth. She was not the right person to be talking to each other, and much-lingered introductions were taking place.

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"Will she see me? Will she remember me?" was the burden of the young man’s thoughts, as he stood still, watching anxiously to see which way the new-comers were going, "It will be so easy to miss her here, she’s so lovely," and besides, she is sure to be sought after. She is so lovely.

Suddenly she seemed to become conscious of his fixed gaze, and her eyes turned towards him, met his, and the next moment she had greeted him with a smiling bow. I am so glad to see you again, Mr. Carruthers," she said, cordially, as he approached, and allowed him to lead her off into the beautiful conservatories.

Edna Cameron was an art student, and had attended some of the classes which Noel Carruthers had taken out, but he had been unable to attend the class he had met her at the house of a mutual friend the previous week. Since then his love and admiration had been growing by leaps and bounds. He had treasured every word she had uttered, and—must it be confessed?—had spent many long hours walking about within sight of the many-turreted house where she lived, when he ought to have been deeply immersed in medical studies.

He had even tried to visit her new-born love in dainty somnolence on her eyes, her hair, her rosy lips; but these had all shared the same fate, and now lay in fragments on the back of his fireplace, as unworthy of the beautiful object they would describe. To do him justice, it was not only Edna Cameron’s beauty that had attracted him; it was a subtle something which distinguished her from the other ladies still born with all the most of them bright, earnest, thoughtful girls; but there was a depth and earnestness about this one which was noticeable even in the lecture-room.

Fun and merriment, too, were ready enough to bubble over, and find an outlet in a gay air, and in Sunday prayers. No one was too exactly clever, but quite sufficiently painstaking and conscientious to pass muster amongst some of her cleverer fellow students.

Noel Carruthers, who had no sisters or cousins of his own to familiarise him with the sex, had always been inclined to shun the society of girls; but now he found himself plotting and planning to secure the good graces of Professor and Mrs. Cameron, simply that he might obtain an entry to their home.

Saturday evening, a spirit of delight to him, and at supper-time he had the joy of taking his beloved one in to the supper-room. Was it any wonder that his heart was light, or that his lips should unconsciously give utterance to his love in a song as he walked home at night, through the deserted streets?

"Love, love, love, dear love,
For sweetness unsurpassed,
I would shed thee from my soul,
Shelter thee in love’s own calm,
Fight for thee with fearless arm,
Till foes were overcast.

Love, love, love, dear love,
I would shield thee ever,
Clasp thee to my beating heart,
For thy sake I’d play my part;
Dare I tell thee all thou art?
Tell thee now or never?"

Then he smiled to himself as he remembered how mercilessly his friends would chaff him, could they but listen to his foolish ravings; and for a while he continued himself humming his love-song, then his voice broke out again:

"Love, love, love, dear love,
Let us walk together;
You and I, through storms and shine;
Let us gain all wrong combine,
Let our lives now intertwine,
Mingled gorse and heather.

Oh! Oh! Noel Cameron! Thought I couldn’t mistake the voice, old man!" said a cherubic voice, breaking in upon the rhyme-maker’s thoughts, and sending his little love-song into the land of unfinished attempts. "Say, old man," he continued, "is it serious? Your ‘gorse and heather twining’ sounded a sufficiently mixed-up metaphorical muddle to be taken as a symptom of love. Is your pulse leaping like a fevered child? Does all the world seem built on air? If so, depend upon it, you have an evil genius haunting you, and I fear you are not going through the phases—melancholy, dreaminess, fevered hopes, neglected books, rhyme-making, followed by a hatred of exams and lectures, culminating in your name appearing on the right lists, and you yourself experiencing the second birth, being shaved and ploughed, or perhaps winning the wooden spoon.

"Don’t do such an act, Duke!" said Noel, pettishly.

"Ah, this is serious! Noel Carruthers actually reviving his best friend, Archie Duke," continued the new-comer, good-temperedly. "Alas! where are the days when a young woman comes upon the field? Where, then, is found a place for the faithful chum who has stuck to a fellow through all his sad career, who sings poems or makes verses to our eyes? No one. We pass, forgotten and unseen, as bats fly by at night.

"What a fellow you are for chaff, Duke!" said Noel,
taking his cham’s arm, and beginning to talk of the evening’s entertainment, and to discuss the guests, purposely refraining from mentioning the Camerons’ name, although he was longng to pour out his rapturous admiration into some sympathetic ear. Yet his love was as yet a thing to be hurried in secret, to be allowed to grow, to blossom out upon his own breast, to be hidden away from all prying eyes.

As the two students passed down the quiet streets, a woman followed them, drinking in every word that one of them said. A strangely sweet smile crossed her face. She had been in these streets, and she traveled up and down them to the foolish little love-song, while every note of the frank, buoyant voice was sweeter to her straining ears than all the lovely chords that had resounded through Professor Ingham’s lovely rooms, and wafted out through open doors and windows, to charm the ears of fortunate passers-by.

The woman had been there, had followed the young student from his lodgings, had watched him leap up the steps, with mingled feelings of pride and pain; had waited hour after hour to see the girl who was to be his bride. She had been in the hope of catching sight of his tail coat form near one of the windows. Nor was she disappointed. Twice he passed; once with a tall, elderly man, with a keen, clever face; and once he was bending down to catch something that had fallen. It was a coat, worn by an ill-assorted fellow, with the towers of a huge house, not far off, between the windows.

It was worth all the pain, all the loneliness, all the tears, to see him thus. “My boy! my own, my wee Jamie!” she thought.

“Thank God, He, Who, in His love and mercy, has kept you and bath brought good out of evil,” she murmured, brokenly, as she watched with eyes that took in every detail of the scene.

Strange to say, Noel Carruthers was not the only one of the household guests who felt sleepless and excited that night. Edna, the family’s chief chamber, in her strange room, did not retire to rest. She walked up and down, looking at all the pretty, familiar things with which her apartment was crowded. There was a strange fever in her blood, and as she grew older, she could not banish from her mind the memory of Noel Carruthers’ glance. Her restless wanderings round the room did not calm her feelings, and at length she forced herself to sit down in a low chair.

“Missive,” said Edna Cameron, “she said to herself, severely, this will not do. You must not allow yourself to dwell upon an unnecessary thing. Get to work. Work, and work alone, will dispel these fancies from your idle brain.”

But in spite of a brave effort to concentrate her mind on less pleasant things, she muddled over the incident of the night, and she found herself constantly wondering whether, he would be at the classes. Then, as her excitement gradually cooled, other and nobler thoughts filled her mind; the restlessness vanished from her mind, and she remembered that her life, with all its joys and sorrows, had been preserved unto the keeping of her rightful owner, He, and He alone, had the power to plan her future path. She would now, dared not, choose her pleasures or her pain. It was enough for her that she might day by day look up in her loving Father’s face, and say, “The path Thou hast marked for me is a better one than to stand where He would have her, to know that His will of love was moulding her life.”

She smiled gently and tranquilly she fell asleep, content to wait for God to unfold the future to her: bit by bit. Happy, trustful Edna. The dark clouds might and would gather about her pathway, but the clear, shining light that is given to those who follow the Master would shine along her path. There would be green pastures, as well as some paths, to pass through the dark, she realized, in the Glory land. Happy and peaceful she would be, while trusting in such a God.

Some of her friends were wont to wonder a little at Edna, and often they made fun of her and her books and her plans in scenery and painting; and at times she had questioned her own judgment, not knowing that she was just right to be so joyous and light-hearted.

But the thought of the greatest Christian poet passed through her mind: “God must be glad one loves His world so much.” And she thought that if God had given her joy of heart, she would not stimulate a heaviness of spirit which she did not feel. “His may be giving me joy to fortify me for sorrow. It may be that He does not call all His children to tread the path of suffering. At any rate I will be real,” was her resolve.

“While I feel such joy in all God’s gifts, I will not, dare not mourn. My one false note might spoil the song that rises, of mingled praise and intercession, of joy and sorrow intertwined.”

Her was a veritable panacea in many a rich and poor home that she entered, and her fellow-students did not shun her when they found out that she was a Christian, although many of them were advanced thinkers, Atheists, or zealous and indifferent followers along life’s way. She thought, rather than talked, her religion, so that she commanded respect, where more eloquent advocates often provoked ridicule. “By their fruits ye shall know them,” is a truth the world does believe in, even in this age of unbelief.

It was not strange that she had many friends, of that she resposed love and sunshine from the scenes she scattered freely. But still she had an enemy—not an open detractor, but a so-called friend, who nourished the seed of envy in her breast. Edna was too frank and guileless herself to win these evils to anyone, and had anyone told her that Estella Houghton cherished any feeling but kindly goodwill towards herself, she would have at once dismissed the accusation with scorn.

Estelle was a life-long acquaintance. She was not as good a position as Edna, her father having died when she was almost a baby; her mother had had a struggle to bring up and educate Estelle and her two brothers on the small pittance saved after the expenses of her illness had been paid. Estelle had entered a hospital soon after leaving school, and was now in charge of a ward. She had met Noel Carruthers several times socially, and frequently came in contact with him as she accompanied the doctors round the ward. They were good friends, and Noel had made rather a confident of her from the first time he met her, so much so attracted by her shrewd common-sense and quick, ready wit.

CHAPTER VI.

"But now the shadows deepen, the hills of life recede, Eternal truths are dawning, O Saviour, intercede! In mortal pain and weakness I to death's storm draw near.

My vision is increasing, realities grow clear,
Life's burdens still are pressing, it's power wanes and falls;
The stars of Heaven brighter, while earth's light fades and dies.
I need Thee in my weakness, in mortal fear and pain, I cling to Thee, O Saviour, and shall I cling in vain?"

Z. E. C.

WHEN Kate Moore returned to London, one of the first things she did was to arrange that Lily should leave the factory, and accept her apprenticeship in the trade she liked so well. She also went to see Lily’s mother, intending to prevail on her to forgive the girl; but when she reached the place that Lily called home, and saw the poor, disused, besotted woman, heard her foul language and angry tone, Mrs. Moore decided that the girl might not have been very much to blame in the quarrel which had ended by the door being closed against her.

I would like to make some provision for the child in case of my death,” she said, as she turned back on the miserable room that was the home of home; and so she went to see a kind, motherly, Bide- woman whom she knew, and told her that, in the event of her death, she wanted her to look after Lily, and would leave her a small sum of money to be used for her, and she was able to support herself.

Then she had gone to Manchester, to find out about her son, and heard that he had been sent to college. She had easily obtained the name of the university, and had taken a room in a college near, partly opposite to the massive, venerable building where her boy had spent so much of his time, preparing for his future life-work.

She had eagerly—oh, so eagerly—scanned the numbers lines of groups of students, seeking for her boy, and when at
lenth she saw him, no doubt crossed her mind as to his identity.

How well she knew that massive brow, with its wavy brown curls; how little those eyes, that had so often looked into hers with baby-love and admiration, had changed. The frank, still boyish face filled her with joy; and, though she was tired, and, ready, ringing laugh, compensated her for every bit of suffering she had endured.

"Had I my time over again, I would act differently, I think; and yet God has overruled even my womanly weakness."

He had, his prayers, and answered according to his glorious promise, darkening his future prospects no; better far that I should be childless, and never know the joy of having my son about me. It is part of the pain that I have sown, and now must reap."

She followed him to and fro from his rooms to the lecture-hall, never getting peace of mind. The traces of a broken heart, which her memory had stamped indelibly upon her memory. It was the happiest hour she had spent for many years; and she followed the crowd of worshippers out of church, when the service ended, like one in a dream.

She had been called by a couple of friends, and heard him return to them in a walk, as he had an engagement; and then she followed him until he went into a large house, where, as she rightly guessed, the lady of his love dwelt.

She turned homeward, breathing a prayer for her boy's welfare, and had nearly reached her own door; there was but the width of the crossing between, but as she stepped off the pavement, a brake, driven by some pleasure-seekers, all of whom had drunk to excess, came skidding into the street. The horses had taken fright at something, and were dashing from side to side, while the driver, instead of holding the reins firmly, let them slip from his frightened grasp. Kate Moore heard the frightened, half-tirfed cries of the man, could not get out of glad if the breave but carried to her stra crews of men for other ears.

On Sunday she went to the same church, and managed to sit close behind him. Every note of the hymns he sang, every word he said, filled her heart, which was stamped indelibly upon her memory. It was the happiest hour she had spent for many years; and she followed the crowd of worshippers out of church, when the service ended, like one in a dream.

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"Poor old soul! How strange that she should have known mother. Did she, could she have meant that she knew my real mother? But no, that is too improbable."

He felt glad as he left the ward that he had stooped to kiss the wrinkled cheek, and put his strong arm about the feeble form. He left the hospital, intending to fulfill his engagement at the Camerons'. But as he walked home, many thoughts came into his mind. He had only recently heard the fact that he was an adopted child. The truth, so carefully hidden from him for many years, had been accidentally revealed by a friend; but until the present time Noel had not troubled much about it. Now he wondered whether it would weigh against him with the Camerons. The dying woman's words perplexed him, and he felt quite unfit for the social scenes to which he had been invited.

"I will write to mother," he thought. And acting on the impulse, he went to his rooms and wrote a long letter home.

"Mother dearest—I wish you were here. I'm just in the sort of muddle when mothers are, if possible, even dearer than usual. I told you how I cared for Edna, and your dear letter about her was as like your precious self as it could be; I read it and read it, for, like you, I could not bear any reading. Now that's not flattery, but just the honest truth, as I suppose father's often told you. I've been spending the evening in the wards, with a poor, dying woman. She seemed to take such a violent fancy to me, that I had to stay, although I was due at the Camerons, and my dear little girl must have been disappointed. However, I had to stay, or else for ever regard myself as a regular brute. Besides, something about the woman's face attracted me, gave me that kind of dual feeling which is so perplexing. However, that's neither here nor there. She was a good old body, I'm sure, and she knew you. I found it out quite accidentally. I began to repeat that thing of C. Rossetti's to her, that you are so fond of, and she knew it, and then she said very softly, 'God bless Isabelle Carruthers!' You can guess how I jumped. And then I asked her, 'Did you know my mother?' and it's her answer that I grew better on reading—

"Of course it may have been a mistake, for she was very weak, and her mind inclined to wander, but there she said quite clearly, 'Yes, and I knew Isabelle Carruthers, too. She led me to Christ.'

"I would have given anything for an explanation, but the poor thing fell back into a stupor, and I had to go. The brandy had warmed her lips and she is described as a widow. Do you know anything about her?"

"Poor old soul! She has a son, and liked me to call her 'mother,' and made me promise to pray for him, and she asked me to kiss her when she was dead. I was sorry for her that I nearly made an ass of myself; but I kissed the poor body, and she was so pleased.

"Yes, she was pleased.

"The letter then drifted on to other topics, and ended by saying—

"'How I wish you and father were here. If that poor woman does live, she might like to see you.'"

CHAPTER VII.

"She hesitated a moment, the woman was dying.

"Should she let the—about?"

"Then I will have to make my way to her home, too.

"Mother dearest—I wish you were here. I'm just in the sort of muddle when mothers are, if possible, even dearer than usual. I told you how I cared for Edna, and your dear letter about her was as like your precious self as it could be; I read it and read it, for, like you, I could not bear any reading. Now that's not flattery, but just the honest truth, as I suppose father's often told you. I've been spending the evening in the wards, with a poor, dying woman. She seemed to take such a violent fancy to me, that I had to stay, although I was due at the Camerons, and my dear little girl must have been disappointed. However, I had to stay, or else for ever regard myself as a regular brute. Besides, something about the woman's face attracted me, gave me that kind of dual feeling which is so perplexing. However, that's neither here nor there. She was a good old body, I'm sure, and she knew you. I found it out quite accidentally. I began to repeat that thing of C. Rossetti's to her, that you are so fond of, and she knew it, and then she said very softly, 'God bless Isabelle Carruthers!' You can guess how I jumped. And then I asked her, 'Did you know my mother?' and it's her answer that I grew better on reading—

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"Yes, she was pleased.

"The letter then drifted on to other topics, and ended by saying—

"'How I wish you and father were here. If that poor woman does live, she might like to see you.'"

WHEN Noel Carruthers left the hospital, Estelle Haughton (who had been employed at a table near, copying out some notes on the history of a case, during the latter part of his talk with the dying woman) sent for the night nurse, who was just coming in to supper with those who had been on day duty.

"Nurse, you can have a holiday to-night. I will take your duty, and will be the quiet order she gave.

"Then shall I take day duty to-morrow, sister? was the somewhat surprised remainder.

"No, you had better look on it as an extra holiday, nurse. Good-night.

"She checked the protest thanks with a little action of daintiness, and the nurse went away, loud in the praises of sister.

"She may be a bit difficult to please sometimes," she confided to a friend, "but then, she has such a nice way of doing a favour."

And it was true, Estelle Haughton never did a tactless thing. She owed her rapid promotion in her chosen career partly to her ready tact and skillful way of handling and managing other people. She had a way of placing them under obligations to herself, and yet of making them feel that to be under an obligation to her was in itself a pleasant and estimable thing, instead of an irksome duty which must be discharged. Very few people were proof against Estelle Haughton's flattery; it was a flattery of deeds, not words. She made people pleased with them selves, by a subtle, delicate insinuation, often by lock or action, than by word. As a really good woman, she would have been a power for good, but she only used her influence to advance herself in the favour of those with
ing that the dying woman's strength would fail, gave her a cordial, and then once more returned to her position by the bedside.

* * *

I was born in Dewesly, and lived there happily enough in our little, quiet farm until my mother's death; then father brought home an aunt I disliked to fill my mother's place. I was angry, and just then my future husband, James Moore, came down to stay in our village. I used to see him secretly. I knew my father wished me to marry a neighbour of ours, but I had approved of my new lover. I ran away from home, was married, only to find are long that my husband was a criminal, a burglar. I could not let my child—my only one—grew up in the wrong atmosphere, and so I must go on the steps of a workhouse. It was taken in, and eventually adopted by a Dr. and Mrs. Carruthers. God is good.

The weak voice grew fainter and fainter.

"Is his father? Does he still live?" Esteile asked.

"No, he is dead. My boy is free. No shadow of the past need ever cross his path."

"Does anyone else know this?"

But no answer came to that question. Kate Moore's truth and all her life was drawing to a speedy end.

"It is cold. I cannot see. But Jack? Who is that calling? I—come. Hold—me—Jesus. Saviour—receive—me—hold me. Thy rod and Thy staff—comfort me."

I lips grew rigid; earth faded; Heaven's glory dawned. She saw the King in His beauty.

Esteile reeled back, and for a moment thought that no power on earth would tempt her to use the knowledge she had just obtained. But she made that resolution in her heart, and would it stand when the hour of temptation came upon her?

It was with a very real sense of relief that sister welcomed the arrival of the nurse who came to relieve her of her duties. The first thing she did was to retire to her own room, and there enjoy the rest she so much needed. She was in a state of great excitement. Many thoughts whirled through her brain. The night had brought confirmation of a fear that had lately filled her heart and mind. Noel Carruthers, the man whom she loved with all the passion of a strong nature, did not return her love; he had been attracted by her so-called friend, Edna. I have still one advantage, without using this secret. He always confides in me," she thought. "But then, she who does not use it shall suffer the consequences."

Thinking thus, Esteile Haughton locked her door, opened her writing desk, and committed to paper the story that the dying woman had confided to her. This she carefully dated, and sealed it with a little seal that always hung from a ring on a chain.

"I will not use it, he shall never know, unless—unless."

I fall in fair play, and I do not think I shall. Esteile Haughton has never yet failed, when once her mind is fully made up.

"If Noel Carruthers marries me, he shall never, never know the truth. I will swallow my own pride, and gladly marry even a criminal's son; and no power on earth shall wrest the secret from me. But if Edna Cameron thinks to take my place and wed the man I love, then she shall know the truth, the world shall know the truth. Though he has to suffer, I will not stay my hand; I will have no pity until, when all the world looks coldly upon the burglar's son, he will come to me for comfort."

CHAPTER VIII.

"We cannot pass through life, or pass out into that fuller, larger life, without leaving some trace of our passage, some influences at work behind us."

*I THINK," said Isabelle Carruthers, slowly, as she finished reading Noel's letter, and handed it to her husband, "I think we ought to go. This woman may know something about the dear boy's parents, though I can recall nothing in her story that touched on the child."

"You remember her, then, Isa?" her husband said.

"Yes; partly because she interested me so much, and partly because Noel, who was almost a baby, cried so
about her, and used to pray for her every night for quite a long time.

"Yes, I do," she replied. "Didn't you meet her in a train, or something of the kind?"

"Yes, at a railway-station, poor thing! She was in fearful trouble, and I really did not know how to help or advise her for the best."

The next day it occurred to Mrs. Carruthers very lightly. It is true her hair had changed to silver-white, but she still wore the same sweet, calm, bright smile that had distinguished her in early days. Noel had proved a real blessing; and from her own precious boy in the house she was not forgotten, the adopted lad had grown intensely dear, and filled the emptiness of her life and heart.

"Yes, we must go. "Could we manage to go to-day?"

Mr. Carruthers said, looking down the letter, and crossing the room to turn the picture on "Braslaw."

"Finish your breakfast first, Hugh," was the smiling response. "If I know if you once get lost in the intricacies of that book there will be no chance of a meal!"

He laughed, and, to satisfy her, started. It was looking out the time of trains, and succeeded in finding one that would take them to the city pretty early. But they were too late. Noel, who came to the station to catch them, was not there, and the carriage was too late. He thought that the poor woman had passed away the previous night.

"Well, I suppose her secret dies with her, poor thing!" said Mrs. Carruthers. "I presume she left no messages?"

"I have not heard who was with her at the last," he answered. "But I have heard from the police that the oaths were one charge, and she will tell me all," he continued, little dreaming that his words might veil a truth that he himself was quite unconscious of at the time.

In spite of the shadow that the news of the poor woman's death cast over the lad's parting, he yet saw his boy very happy in being thus re-united, and Mrs. Carruthers felt almost thankful that there was one chance less of losing her boy. It was some days before the news of Kate Moore's death reached the lad, and he, not knowing that the Bible-woman, should Kate not recover, and true to her promise, she had written all about her accident, and forwarded the loving messages she had left for Lily. Poor Lily! Her grief was terrible. When at length she understood that the good Bible-woman was endeavouring to break to her, she burst into the most uncontrollable weeping, and it was several hours before she was sufficiently calm to understand the thoughtful arrangements that Kate Moore had made for her welfare, and as she tendered the pencilled note that the nurse had enclosed, which was for her great weakness, and was addressed to "My dear child, Lily."

"Mr. dearest Lily,—I am very ill, dying, and I know you will be surprised to hear how very lately I have loved and trusted your Mother Moore. Now, dearest, to please me, go and live with Mrs. Smith. She is a good woman, and I will, I know, be kind to you. I have left her a little money, so that you need not fear being a burden to her. I wish you were here and happy. I wish I could see your face again. Will you meet me in Heaven? You did not like me to talk of these things when I was with you; perhaps they seemed very far away. But now that Mother Moore has gone to live with Jesus, perhaps it would be agreeable. Well, I am to begin tomorrow to seek my Saviour until you find Him? Be a good girl, and never do anything that you won't like to tell me when you meet me by-and-by. Good-bye, dear, loving child.

—Your loving,
MOTHER MOORE."

Lily wept over the letter, and as she pressed it against her lips, vowed to seek and find the Shepherd of sheep, not knowing that the Great Shepherd had been seeking her for many, many months, and was even then stretching out his hand to her, that she should shun the future. Well for her that she could not foresee the many dawning days that would begin and end with sorrow. Well for her that she had one true and faithful friend, one unaltering Counselor, the One in whose hands are the issues of life, to Whom she might look when human help or comfort failed her. She would have been puzzled indeed had she known that the dying words of a woman, whose cold form was lying in the hospital mortuary, were to affect her life.

She looked at the great building in the far distance, and parted with the woman who was dead, and who, with the dead woman's trustful face between her and the paper, she dashed the letter aside.

"I shall be a fool if I let any nervous fancies upset my plans. Besides, I am doing no harm. He would never dream he was put with unrighteousness. Let a future date I may need to use the information. Yet, I do not wish to tell him the truth for my own sake, if there is the least chance that I can win him and his love without letting that ugly fact upon his name fall across his life."

The warning voice was promptly stifled. No thought of how truly he put with unrighteousness could prove deterring her; she had yet to learn that

"Tis a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive."

"I will de all!" she said, firmly. "I played a bold game to win the knowledge, and I will play a bold game to win the love I coveted."

For a while she sat deep in thought, then crossing to her glass, she began to practise the art of expression before her mirror.

"It will not do," she said. "I must feel the emotion I would pourtray. I cannot act it thus."

Then a strange feeling of remorse took possession of her and her child. She felt as if she should shrink from the sight, although she knew it would be for her benefit. But she did not say God. Destiny was the highest power she really owned; and so she patted her strength against it, and determined to conquer or lose all in the attempt.

"Myself against Circumstances," she said, with a faint attempt at a smile, as, with hand on the window and against Noel Carruthers, who was winding up the hour and accorded Noel Carruthers.

"Can you spare me half-an-hour sometime, Mr. Carruthers, either to-day or to-morrow?" she said, with a smile that always dazzled him, it was so brilliant.

Will to-morrow do? Miss Armstrong," said, with an air of importance, "I have to meet my wife back of a certain restaurant at a future hour."

I was sorry to hear that poor woman in the Brownlow Ward was dead. She knew her mother. It partly to see her that she has come up to town, I think."
Estelle was quite collected, and felt equal to the fray. He had always fancied that his parents were of what is often termed "gentle blood."

"Yes, to-morrow will do," she said, but her heart sank. Had he wanted her, no power on earth would have detained her from his side.

"My turn is coming," she thought. "When his trouble comes he will turn to me, I know. I can work carefully but boldly, and I shall yet be Mrs. Noel Carruthers. That little bit of paper I have locked away in my magic talisman. I will bring me love and revenge. And when I have gained my ends, I will make amends for any wrong I have done him by my love and loyalty, and I will be his slave, his willing, devoted slave. I will yield to his slightest wish. And he will love me, he will know that I can do nothing for his tarnished name, his more than doubtful ancestors. His dead mother shall never have reason to regret that she told me her secret, if there is regret behind the grave."

The next day Noel Carruthers strode carelessly into the room reserved for the sister. A nurse told him that Miss Haughton was expected every minute, and so he settled himself comfortably in a wicker chair. It was a pretty room. Flowers abounded, a bird sang merrily in a bright green cage. Pictures and photos were grouped together, and evidences of busy fingers appeared in the draperies and hangings.

"I should have guessed this was her room," remarked Noel; "it's like herself. Why, there's a photo of Elina, a stunning one, too."

I wonder who the fellow is?" he mused, as he saw the photos, "I wondered who the fellow is?"

Estelle was quite colleted, and felt quite equal to the fray. Indeed, there was a faint sense of enjoyment in thus playing a dangerous game; the sense of risk aroused her senses and powers to their fullest strength, and made her conscious of her own abilities.

"You wanted to see me, Miss Haughton," said Noel, suddenly awakening to a consciousness that there was a shade of trouble lurking in the dark eyes that met his. "I hope you are not in any trouble?"

"Not exactly, though anything that affects my friends affects me. I suppose the kindest thing is to tell you at once that the trouble—if it should be called by that name—affects you, Mr. Carruthers."

"Me?" he exclaimed, in surprise, fearing for a moment that he had made up a prescription wrongly. "Me? Why, what have I done?"

"You have done nothing; but that poor woman, who died here the other night, told me her history. It was a sad one touchingly sad."

"But what has that to do with me? Did she really know my mother?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes; if her story is true, the next day your mother, and I see no reason to doubt the truth."

For a moment he was too bewildered to speak. Strange to say, such a possibility as that had never once crossed his mind. He had always fancied that his parents were of what is often termed "gentle blood," and Mr. and Mrs. Carruthers had strengthened this impression.
SLOWLY the blood crept up into his face, and strangely enough, it was the thought of Edna that sent the warm flush into his face. How would she receive the news?

"And my father?" he asked, in a constrained voice.

She hesitated, and he noticed that her firm, shapely hand trembled.

"I almost think," she said, gently, "that I had better let you read the particulars that your mother gave me."

And as she spoke, Estelle crossed the room and opened her desk. In a moment she returned, and placed the sheaf of paper in his hand, having stripped the envelope from it.

He took it, and read it twice over without saying a word, while she turned away her head. Her emotions were real; she did not like to see him suffer, even though that suffering was intended to soothe or later drive him to her for comfort.

"Need anyone else know it?" she said, in a sympathetic voice.

"Suppose I need not proclaim my shame from the housetops," he said, bitterly, and then relapsed into silence.

For a while she watched him sadly, then, as though acting on a kind, womanly impulse, she went nearer and put her hand on his arm.

"I feel as though I had done you a cruel wrong. Won't you let me help and advise you in this matter, Mr. Carruthers? You know that women's wits are quicker than men's in some things," she said, in a gentle, winning way.

"It is not only the general shame. I could trust you to keep the secret," he said, slowly. "No, that is not where the shoe pinches. Suppose that you knew a man loved you, and you—well, rather liked him—and then you heard that he was the son of a criminal, and of lowly birth. What would you say and do?"

She hesitated. "I would say as Mrs. Browning's heroine said," was her soft response, "and so would any true woman."

"You, at any rate, are a true woman; and why should I doubt others?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

NOTE!—On Friday next, July 11th, we shall publish the sequel to this present story; it is entitled—

"HER DYING CONFESSION."

No. 367, and is well written by ETHEL P. CROWTHER. Don't fail to secure a copy.

We issue a new (ORIGINAL) "THRILLING LIFE STORY," also "SELECT STORY" every week; both of which, as well as any of our back numbers (with some exceptions), can be obtained at, or through any Newsagent or Bookseller in Great Britain, Ireland, or the Colonies. If you find any difficulty whatever in securing our stories each week, write immediately.

"I hate her. If only she had not crossed my path again, I could have won him without all this duplicity and scheming; and now, if I succeed, there will always be the sting of memory."

There! the dig is out, I must begin the work of separating..."

Instead of being a commercial traveller, she found out that he was a daring and successful..."

It woke, she lifted it from the crib and arrayed it in its garments. Hot tears fell upon her darling's hair-matted locks—tears that burned the eyes from which they fell—yet she did not falter in her purpose."

She dressed herself in a long, dark cloak, and closely-fitting... then, taking the child in her arms she went down to the..."

See Next Week's Story, "HER DYING CONFESSION."

THRILLING STORIES' COMMITTEE.
TESTIMONIAL.

MALTA,
May 15th, 1902.

Thrilling Stories' Committee,

Gents,—I wish to tell you that I am very pleased with both the Thrilling and Select Stories, as they pass many a lonely hour away in the barrack room. I lent a set of Select Stories ("Two Little Waifs") to a comrade in the Hospital, and he said they were the best books he had ever read in his life, and nearly everyone in the hospital read them, and said the same about them. They are always asking me for more, so I send mine in when I have read them.

I can say that Select Stories have banished the "penny dreadfuls" from my room if not from the Company.

Yours faithfully,

E. PETTIFER,
(Lance-Corporal).

See this week's SELECT STORIES, No. 183, "DRIVEN FORTH,"
By that popular Writer, FLORENCE G. NIXON.

Next Week's Story, "THE COST OF HER VOW;"
By KATHLEEN CARR.
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Her Dying Confession

By Ethel A. Crowther

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HER DYING CONFESSION.
By Ethel P. Crowther,
Authoress of "The Burglar's Wife," "The Burglar's Bairn," "Her Mother's Will," etc. etc.

CHAPTER I.
"Links in a life, so small, so weak they seem, men heed them not; But One above, Who shapes our lives, holds each link unforget, And in His hand a wondrous chain is daily, hourly wrought, Of Holy deeds and helpful words, for which His strength was sought."

With a WEARY sigh, the stately lady pushed the letter aside, and leaned her head upon her arms.

To the cheery sound of a well-played horn, the coach left the small Welsh watering-place, Llyrgwyr. The passengers, who were going to penetrate into the heart of Cambria, looked bright, and seemed pleased to find themselves behind the well-grounded team of horses, all of which were fresh and in good condition. On the box-seat, Dr. Carruthers, his wife, and adopted son sat, and the latter was soon plying the driver with questions. The castles they passed, the great cloud-capped mountains, wondrous falls of dashing water, and quiet lakes, all served for topics of conversation; while the horses, one of whom had been an old hunter, proved to be a theme dear to the driver's heart.

"You'll be going round over sixty miles through the heart of the mountains, Sir, but you'll see nothing strange, to my mind, than that house," said the coachman, pointing with his long whip towards a low, grey building, which looked as though it might be a part of the crag on which it was built, so skillfully had it been perched upon the mountain-side.

"Why, what is there so strange about it?" asked Noel Carruthers, as he watched the long whip go curling through the cold, mountain air until it fell gently upon one of the leaders, which was growing lazy.
"There's a curse on it, they say. The eldest son of the house never lives; and now there is no direct heir, and the place will pass out of the present owner's hands into those of his brother. I've seen the matter, young sir. Well, I've handled the reins thick on thirty years. In the winter I've driven in London. Ay, many's the time I've gone up and down the Strand; but I never saw anything to equal the sadness and gloom of that place."

Noel turned to take another look, and saw a grey building, long and low, with many turrets and gables, surrounded on the three sides by trees, and approached by a long, steep drive. Behind it rose a great mountain, jagged, outlined proclaiming it to be of slate, and behind it again rose peak after peak of stern, frowning mountain land.

"How lonely it looks," said Mrs. Carruthers, who was seated beside her son, and who had been leaning forward to see what lay around. "Ay, it's under a curse, sure enough!" said the driver then, changing his tone, as he called out cheerily: "Now, ladies and gentlemen, all look out for Snowden. There is an opening coming between the mountains, and it's an opening that you must lay a good view." In a moment the little party on the box-seat had completely forgotten the old, grey mansion, and were gazing at the outline of Snowden.

"I am Mrs. Carruthers, with a little sigh, "I have penetrated into the heart of Cambria."

Her husband laughed, but Noel suddenly grew quiet. A memory came to him—someone he loved, a pretty, fair girl, far away in an old Scotch town, had once said how she always thought of him when he was alone. Noel had forgotten the girl long ago. Not long it counted by weeks, but long when recalled by the many heart-pangs he had endured, the many disappointments he had suffered. It was scarcely three months since he had made a discovery which now seemed to color all his future hopes and plans with a sombre hue. His father, whom he had never, to his knowledge, seen, had been a burglar!

"Mother," he said, suddenly turning towards the gentle, silver-haired lady beside him, "I feel as though I could not see you as anything but a burglar's daughter. And yet I must be to see those Freemasons of whom—my mother spoke."

There was a slight hesitation, visible by the deepening colour on his brow. He had not yet schooled himself to think of the poor woman who had died recently in the house, to which he belonged, as one to be pitied, he felt.

"See them by all means, dear; but don't build too many hopes on the possibility of an error," was the reply.

"The story bears an air of truth, and his in which with all the world to be of interest.

Noel sighed, and said no more, wisely thinking that the box-seat of a coach was not the best place for confidential conversation.

The road on which the coach was running circled round the mountain, and had been cut out of the solid rock. Below them the arm of the sea lay spread softly against the huge time-worn crags, or broke with angry dashes against the loosened boulders, which time had weakened of their hold, and sent crashing down to the hungry sea below.

"There is a carriage coming. However will you pose?" Dr. Carruthers asked, viewing the roadway critically.

"There isn't a better driver on this road, sir, no, nor in all Wales," said the coachman, carefully moving one hand to the wheel. This was indeed the case. Noel had been on the carpet more than once, and that was only for fighting a man who wouldn't respect the rights of the road, but tried to get ahead of me, just at this point, sir."

"Oh, never mind that carriage, sir! It's from the mansion I showed you just now."

The three on the box-seat turned to look after it with some interest.

"Barth isn't everything, Noel," said Mrs. Carruthers. "The lady looked as though she were heavily upon her brow.

"Iksere the crop-fall bird; frets doubt the maw-cramped beast," answered Noel, in a tone of doubt, as the carriage passed out of sight."

In some respects, a lady and gentleman, both looked out on the box-seat without a gleam of interest. Some writer has said that to appreciate a man one must be in tune with her, to love her he must love time with himself; but I am inclined to think that before he can really do either, a man must be in liaison with nature, and her moods.

The frowning mountain peaks wearied and fretted Lady Denyer. She chafed against the feeling of utter nothingness that came upon her as she gazed at the silent, unchanging peaks, which pointed upward with unanswered calls.

In her youth she had been beautiful; and even now, could that fretful, disappointed expression of her face have been banished, she might still have laid claim to some of her youthful charm. Nay, age might but have sharpened it for his sake and her.

Her companion, Lord Denyer, was a good deal older than his wife. He was on upright, goldener man, with a stern face.

"Make nothing but quadrilateral figures, and you'll get nothing but quadrilateral figures," had been his advice, as he sat down to say to a younger brother, and there was truth in the remark. It was a square face, with square features that told of dogged determination and an indomitable will.

For over twenty years the two who now sat facing each other, had been bound by the closest of all ties, and yet they did not know one another. They had to separate them, and new barriers rose as time passed on.

"Life is a failure," Lady Denyer told herself over and over again, as she saw her youth and beauty wanting. What failure, and marriage is a failure," and she added bitterly at times, "Mistresshood is the greatest failure of all."

She was thinking it as she drove along through the wondrous scenery, that had no power to touch her heart, concerning the future.

That morning she had received a letter from her son. He had been a tiny, helpless baby when she married Lord Denyer, and it was for his sake that she had drowned the voice of conscience, and become the wife of a man she had never loved. But that she had scorned and lied, had risked her husband's name, and, in short, had done, indeed, all that a foolish, unprincipled, loving woman could do to ruin her own and her son's character.

The letters were always a sorrow to her, and the one she had just received was no exception to the general rule. It contained, as usual, a demand, couched in almost threatening terms, for money. It spoke in easy, contemptuous language of Lord Denyer as a long-lived old caruncle, and touched soightly on marrying, women, and wins, that Lady Denyer, who was herself never inclined to be hard on a young man for sowing his wild oats, shuddered as she read, and crushed the letter into her bosom, saying as she did so.

"He might have your knowledge of his business. I have sinned and suffered for him and this is my reward."

She had seen seeds of evil, with the thought in her mind that the harvest-time might somehow be evaded. It seemed far enough away while her child had been a happy baby, watched over by careful nurses, and tended by a baby-sitter, who felt that already she was reaping the seed she had sown; and she knew that it was only the beginning of her harvest.

As he stepped out of the carriage into the old-fashioned hall, a postman tallied up the bills upon the mail-drop. Lady Denyer stood still and waited until a servant handed the bag to her husband. He opened it and sorted the letters rapidly, then stepped across the hall to his study. It was an exceedingly bare room, ex-palmented, and lit by three long, diamond-mullioned windows, which reached from the ceiling to the floor. The letters were mostly uninteresting, and were laid aside to be answered by his secretary; but over one he paused, and looked at it curiously, for his eyes were drawn to a letter that seemed new to him. He read it, and put the missive under a paper-weight, determining to give it to his wife, without mentioning the fact that he had inadvertently opened it.

"A stupid blunder of mine," he said, with a sort of grace, "then, seeing that the flap of the envelope was unmarked and sealed, he replaced the letter, and put the missive under a paper-weight, determining to give it to his wife, without mentioning the fact that he had inadvertently opened it.

"I'll watch her face while she reads it. I
would ask her, but she would evade the truth," he thought, bitterly. "She lives for that son of hers, the puppy! To death! I must not let that boy get near her. I must teach my child to know that think about everything! What a poor, blind fool I was not to see before she came into my life. I had thought of course he was that she wanted everything! What a poor, blind fool I was not to see the fear and dread in her eyes, thinking of the future, the future she had no reason to be afraid of."

His eye rested, as he spoke, on the photograph of a little muleteer, which hung over the writing-table.

Twenty years before our story opens, Lord Denyer had married the beautiful young widow of an officer. He had promised her that if no child of his lived to inherit the property, all that was not entailed should go to her son, Lord Losh, and that she might continue to live in her old house and enjoy the income that it had brought her, as long as she lived. For her, Major Lansdowne had died soon after her marriage, and before her ideal of him had been shattered by reality, before she had seen him in his true colours.

Ella Lansdowne, then a young, beautiful, and singularly attractive widow, had heard the strange old legend which told her that if the man who married her and her husband after the death of her first husband was to inherit the property, she must refuse to consent to the marriage of her son with her husband, and her inheritance in her true birthday. In her decision to accept his offer of marriage, "It will be good for Cecil." That was her one thought. She lived for the puppy, baby, and cursed not that she was spilling的女人's whole life by thus marrying him to gain wealth for her son.

She knew how anxious Lord Denyer was for an heir, and knew how he hated and dreaded the strange old Welsh rhyme that had been rudely translated into English by a village bard:

"By lofty crag and mountain, though Denyer's tower may rise,
No firstborn son shall glean a Denyer father's eyes:
But his mountain torrent that devours a mother's ashes,
Each heir born thence in splendour before his sire he dies.

She knew the old legend, too, and had traced out the fulfilment of the prophecy in the family history. A follower of Gruffydd ap Cynan, in the year 1066, had lost his only son through some treachery on the part of an ancestor of the Denyers, and with his dying breath he had pronounced a curse and willed that his son should be the first in a line of five children, a daughter and four sons. The legend said that the children must be born before the birth and before the death of the firstborn of the Denyers; the mountain torrent devoured, and amidst the roar of the great tide near the ancient house of Denyer you could hear the sound of a strange music.

As the time drew near which was to see the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the curse, Lady Denyer talked often of the strange old story, and would spend hours in gloomy silence, broken only by a question or two of the fate of some by-gone Denyer, which made her husband feel sure she was dwelling on the gloomy subject of the curse.

One day as she sat thus, a sudden gleam of hope came into her face. He noticed it, and wondered. Presently she spoke eagerly.

"I see! I see what to do. I will write a letter! Each heir born thus in splendour—before his sire he dies. It seems to me that that has had a double fulfilment. In every case the child has died in its father's sight. You must go away, right away."

To say that Lord Denyer was surprised was to use a mild term. It had not occurred to him as any thought to save her life, and so spoil Cecil's chances of being sole heir, and he was so pleased with her evident anxiety about the matter, that he was easily won over to give his consent to the strange plan she broached—a plan by means of which she had hoped, if she saw herself able to unfasten the curse that had hung for centuries over the family. But in reality she had not the slightest fear about the matter, thinking it more than probable that in the past year and dread had had much to do with the strange fulfilment of the old prophecy.

CHAPTER II.

"All for a purpose of hate." —Browning.

EstellHaughton turned the key in the lock of her door, and sat down with her back to the window. As she did so her hands trembled violently, for although she was now doing a mean and dishonourable action, nature had made her for such work. The woman had a good old family, and had all the instincts of an honourable soul. But year after year she had trodden down these finer feelings in her struggle to get on, until now, when her great temptation came, she fell with scarcely a struggle. A look almost of anguish shone in her eyes as she read the letter meant only for other eyes to see.

"Poor, poor Noel!" she murmured, softly. "How terribly he feels his position. What would I not give if one more were written to me. But no. It is to Edna—Edna. How can I do the thing? I really believe that girl will always cross and mar my path. She is my evil genius. I hate her. If only she had not crossed my path again."

Even at this moment, she had resolved to do right, the letter might have been re-read. But with an angry gesture, she tore the envelope open, and exclaimed.

"There! the die is cast," she murmured. "I can't send it now. I must begin the work of separating those two."

She sat still for a moment, and then drew out some paper and sealed herself at her writing-desk, and wrote the following letter:

"Dearest Edna—I wonder whether you could come out for a cycle ride to-morrow afternoon? I feel very done up, and just about as deeply in the blues as it's possible for me to tell the truth, I think that this world is a very crooked place indeed. You, being a regular optimist, will smile at this idea; but I am pretty sick of it all. The meanness; the squallor, the squalor of life has taken full possession of me."

This was all, and Estelle murmured to herself, as she paused, pen in hand, before again continuing her letter.

"People are so disappointing. When they have a chance to do a noble deed, they sink down, down, down, till they grovel ugly, foul grovel on the earth, like the earthworms they are."

Now here is a case that has just occurred before my own eyes, a drama from life. I will call it 'The Burglar's Baby.' 

Drama number two, with a student and a woman both we know well. But I will write the story down, and will call it 'The World's Verdict,' or, better still, 'The Burglar's Baby and the Burglar's Wife.' Read on, and as you read remember, Edna, it is true. I honestly hope you may never play this part. But without I doubt believe I can paint the real thing. It was so dreadful.

The young student knew, and wouldn't own it, but let her die without acknowledgment!

THE BURGLAR'S WIFE.

SCENE I.

"Put it close beside me, nurse, please," said a faint voice from the bed, while two sweet grey eyes shone upon a wealth of mother-love upon the little baby that had come to glean the home."

The wintry sun was setting, and the Veil had changed into a mass of molten liquid, glistening on its unclouded head. The glory of the sky. A ray from the setting sun found its way into the room where the proud young mother lay, and turned her brown hair into gold, and made an aureole about her head.

My precious, precious one!—she murmured, as she felt the tiny form beside her. "My Christmas gift!"

"It's a lovely child, isn't it, nurse?" she asked, in a tone that showed she had no real doubts upon the subject, and only asked for the pleasure of again hearing the nurse's raptures over what she termed 'the Bonnie baby.'"

"Bonnie! Losh, keep your things in order, for this will be the end of it. I am going to take you to Clappt to see about this." answered the nurse, who
HER DYING CONFESSION.

A dreary, dreary day. The busy manufacturing city looked sadly grimy and soiled, and the water that lapped along its shores, cold and grey.

Beside a tiny crib a woman sat. Despair was plainly written on her face. Beside her lay a pile of shabby garments, every one quite new.

Ah! the prayers the longings, the agony that had been stretched into the distant things!

The child stirred in its sleep, and flung a rounded, dimpled arm upon the satin coverlet of its crib. The woman stooped and kissed it passionately. It awoke, a smile dimpling its chubby face; and then it stretched out both its little hands, and caught the woman's soft brown hands, thrumming gladly. It hurt, but she loved the pain, and looked into the happy baby face with hungry eyes, seemingly devouring every curve and dimple.

"Oh—God above," she groaned, "be merciful to me!" Then, with patient, loving hands, she lifted the child from its crib, sandwiched it over, and arrayed it in the garments that had beside her on the floor. The tears fell once or twice upon the finely-moulded limbs—tears that burned the eyes from which they fell, yet the mother did not falter in her purpose.

Presently she put the little one down upon the rug to play, and dressed herself in long, dark cool and closely-fitting bonnet. Then, taking upon her arm her small baby, she went down to the railway-station, and took a ticket for a distant city.

Her arms ached, but she would not let them rest. Perhaps she knew how soon they would have to bear another pain—the agony of emptiness.

A troubled look came over her face.

"I was so frightened, Jack—frightened for you. I always am when you're away. Turn it up for baby's sake."

"Nonsense, little woman. We must live, and you will be wanting fancy for this little stranger. I have no fear, especially now that I can look forward to a time when this young man will help us. Then I'll stay at home with you, and he shall carry on my business."

"Oh, no, no! please no! Anything but that!" she said, passionately.

"Why, are we not very happy, eh?" he asked.

Just then the nurse returned with some arrowroot, and seeing how flushed the invalid looked, she ordered perfect quiet; and Mr. Wilson, with a loving kiss on his wife's forehead that reminded her of their courting days, stole softly from the room.

When he had married his wife, she generously forgave a great deception he had practised upon her, because she loved him. But the knowledge that, instead of being (as she had thought) a commercial traveller, her husband proved to be a daring and successful burglar, seemed far more terrible now that her baby had come.

She put her arm protectingly about the little one; and, forgetful of her tears, rejoiced in the sense of possession that she enjoyed as she felt the little, living thing beside her.

SCENE II.

Yet, how much her English patient loved to hear the sound of the Scotch words.

The room was comfortably but not richly furnished, for the Wilsons were poor, though they had not felt the pinch of poverty.

For about an hour the mother slept tranquilly, and then she awoke to see her husband walking softly towards her.

"Oh, Jack—Jack!" she cried, with rapture, "Look at our baby. Isn't it lovely? And a boy!"

He stooped over and kissed her tenderly, thinking how pretty she looked in the first flush of motherhood.

"Yes, darling, it's lovely," he replied, gently uncovering the sleeping infant's face. "But I can't tell you, wife, how hard it seemed to be away from you at such a time. Now that all is well, I do not mind. The little chap's brought me luck, I do believe. For I never had a finer haul—twas just the neatest, cleanest little sweep."

A troubled look came over her face.

"I was so frightened, Jack—frightened for you. I always am when you're away. Turn it up for baby's sake."

"Nonsense, little woman. We must live, and you will be wanting fancy for this little stranger. I have no fear, especially now that I can look forward to a time when this young man will help us. Then I'll stay at home with you, and he shall carry on my business."

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HER DYING CONFESSION.

Chapter III.

JOEL CARRUTHERS had waited in vain for an answer to his letter, the letter in which he had poured his heart's content, and sought for sympathy. Edna made no sign, and when they met at the classes, her manner was so cold and distant that he imagined she was angry with him for daring to write to her, once the secret of its parentage was made known.

"She could never have cared for me for myself," he thought; and went for the sympathy he craved to Estelle Haughton. She knew all, and yet her welcome was cold: the same, he thought, indeed, if it had changed at all, it had but grown wiser and more cordial.

Poor little Edna! Her love was not easily killed, although she told herself that she could never, never marry a man who was too small-souled to acknowledge a kindness, a help, a shared grief. She had deserted her beloved and, wrung in secrecy over the fall of the man she loved. It did not even occur to her that he was avoiding her because the knowledge of his lowly birth had become known to him. Estelle had given her the idea that he was changeable and weak, easily swayed and easily changed; and she imagined that he had tired of her, and had already found someone else to take her place in his affections. But she still prayed for him. It was all the more distressing, all the more pitiable in the same bitter scorn and anger towards him that she had felt when first she heard Estelle's story. But she dreaded meeting him, and was glad enough when a friend asked her to take a tour with her through the Kyles of Bute.

In one of the tiny islets huts at which they stayed in Kintyre, Edna came across an old woman who had lived much in England. She seemed a good deal better off than most of the people in the district, but how she lived no one seemed to know.

"Poor thing! I pity her!" said Ella Smith, the girl with whom Edna was spending the summer recess. "She has not long to live, I am sure!"

As Edna was a fully-qualified doctor, her opinion seemed likely to be right, and Edna felt a great wave of pity sweep over her soul. The old woman was fit to die, and she was subject to fits of depression, when she would sit over the fire and cry for hours, declaring that she was a lost soul.

One evening she asked if she might read to her, but soon found that the old woman was well acquainted with the Bible. However, during her stay in the village, she went in nearly every day, striving vainly to comfort and help the poor soul.

One evening she simply repeated the words:

"I must bring his name in quite accidentally, so that Edna will feel in honour bound never to repeat my confidences," she said.

Accordingly, when Edna Cameron arrived, full of scorn and indignation over the conduct of the unknown student, Estelle contrived to let Noel Carruthers name slip from her lips as though by the merest accident, and so cleverly did she manage to cause Edna to forget that Edna did not think she knew the name she had assumed.

"Mind, dear," said Estelle, as they parted, "I have told you the story in confidence, and even to you I do not feel justified in revealing which of our promising students is the culprit.

Alone in her own room again, Estelle Haughton could have bitten out her tongue with remorse, when she thought of part of the she had played; but the great enemy of men whispered that it was "too late for cost-counting, too steep for still meaning."

Chapter III.

A hospital ward. One bed, round which a screen is placed, and on which lies a dying woman. Near her stands a young, frank-faced doctor.

"Come along," says another young fellow, impatiently. "You'll be late.

"Hang it all, old fellow, I can't. Go yourself, there's a good chap, and I'll follow later," comes the answer, in a low tone, the speaker being the adopted son of the head physician of the hospital, just through his course. He felt in a hurry to go, for he had promised to dine with the mayor, and well he knew that someone whom he thought of as the "dearest and best girl in all the world" would be watching impatiently for him. Yet he could not leave. The woman was dying, and lonely. "And if," as he told himself, she found any pleasure in having me near her, why, I could at least do something for her.

"Wouldn't you like to see a minister—mother?" He added the last word as an after-thought, because the poor woman looked so very fleshy, and he was not prepared for the flush in her cheeks.

"Don't you pray for my boy? Pray that God will keep him from wickedness. Will you? And after—you know—I'd like you to come and kiss me just once in my coffin for his sake. It's a good time to visit—my baby!"

A smile of joy, one touch of her withered hand on the firm, young face: and he paused. Now a pretty ending would be like this:

"Poor old soul! she was somebody's mother. And then the young doctor was glad to think that he had stopped and kissed the wrinkled cheek, and put his arm round her, whoreson before the dead. "Because," as he said to his sweetheart that night, "if it had been my mother, I'd have liked someone to do it for her." And he never guessed the truth, though he prayed nightly for the dead woman's son, once unconsciously—

The end.

"There, dear, that is how the story should end, but last line is harder than fancy. The young doctor guessed the truth, and kept it hidden in his breast.

"What is there, after all, a little of my imagination; but the gist of that romantic tale is true, and the hero of it is a—a! Do you wonder that I am feeling out-of-sorts, cross, and irritable? Why, when a man has a chance to do a noble deed, can't he do it?"

Do come and cheer me up. I'm sure you ought to, after such long, long letter.—Yours affectionately,

ESTELLE HAUGHTON.

"Now, if she is half as indignant as I expect to see her, I shall succeed, for Noel will mistake her indignation for pride. His letter just serves my purpose there. Let me see what he says again." And Estelle picked the torn letter together, and read:

"If you feel this barrier to be an unsurmountable one, I will spare you the trouble of writing it before you, but you will be constantly able to read your dear face so easily."

"I rather think one look will be enough," Estelle said to herself, thinking of the fine scorn Edna Cameron would feel for Noel, when she had supplied a few more details on the expected cycle ride.
Her Dying Confession.

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

"Yes, from," said the old woman. "That's just it, miss. It's from our sins; and I've one that I can't be saved from. I live on it: without it I should be in the poor-house. I who have worked hard all my life, and always kept up a respectable appearance, here that old body began to sway to and fro, but try as she might, Edna could get no more out of her, and had at last to go away, leaving the woman still clinging to the bed.

"Let us try to stay in this village again as we return," she said to Ella Smith. "It's very pretty, and I do want to do something to help that poor old lady. I wonder if she knows how near she stands to the brink of eternity?"

It was fully a fortnight before the two little girls again met the old woman, and Ella's first visit was paid to the unhappy old body. The chair where she usually sat was empty, and for a moment the girl thought that Mrs. MacDavie had been tempted by the bright sunshine into taking a short walk, but a tattered shawl on the bed in the corner told her that someone was within the room.

It took some moments for her eyes to get sufficiently accustomed to the darkness that reigned in the cottage, after the light and brightness of the outside world. When at last she had the courage to enter, her old friend's face, she was shocked to see how white and drawn it looked, and how shrunken it seemed.

"Why, Mrs. MacDavie, you have been ill," she said, sympathetically, taking one of the restless hands that lay caressing the bed-cover.

"Ay, soul sick and body sick, miss; but it's the worry. I must get away before he comes. I must. And here I am tied as a dog; but I must go before he comes."

Edna, who knew little of illness, tried to soothe her, telling her that the doctor was coming, but Mrs. MacDavie in earnest, she wanted to get away.

"Why don't you say you are too ill to see anyone?" said Edna, at length, pitying the woman's agitation, and wondering whether it was a visit from some friend or creditor that was driving her to distraction.

A look of intense relief broke over the wrinkled face.

"Won't you stay and tell him? He might go if you spoke to him. Oh, da; for the love of Heaven, do stay! They will send me to prison. I know they will. Oh, the disgrace of it! A MacDavie in gaol!"

And then the old woman broke off in a passion of dry sobbing, and when she spoke it was in such broad Scotch that Edna did not understand more than a word here and there.

"Poor old body! she must be in debt, and is afraid that she will be unable to pay. I'll stay, and then, if it's not very much, I will settle with the man. And if it's more than I can spare, I will get him to wait while I write to father's in the high Priest."

Accordingly she seated herself in a straight-backed old settle, from which she could obtain a good view of the road, and watched for the arrival of the dreaded visitor.

"I wonder what the others will think has become of me?" she said to herself, as she recalled the fact that she was one of a party of four. Her especial friend was Ella Smith, but two other girls made up the little band of tourists. "They won't be likely to look for me here," she thought, "unless Ella remembers my anxiety about Mrs. MacDavie."

It was not unnatural, that, sitting in silence thus—for she had persuaded the old woman to try to sleep—her thoughts should fly to Noel Carruthers.

"How could I have been so thoughtless in his character? I wonder, now, how should I have acted had I had time to tell me the story of his strange history? Father and mother would not have liked it perhaps, and yet I'm sure they would not have allowed it to act as a barrier. But I should have found it difficult to prove the reality of my love. To think that he could live and hear the story of his mother's sacrifice for him, and not have brightened her dying hours by acknowledging her! Cruel! cruel; cruel!"

While she was thus thinking, Noel Carruthers was walking towards a small farmhouse in the little village of Dewesly. He had heard that James Freeman, who had been the master of the workhouse (where he had been left as a little child), was staying there with his wife.

I will see them, and bear all they can tell me," he thought. "But even if they could give me any hope, what good would it be, if Edna did not love me well enough to give me one word of sympathy in my sorrow? Would her love be worth gaining if I were freed from this shame? No. And how was it that my dear Miss Haughton would make a better wife. How sympathetically she has been, how much more kind?"

In his secret heart Noel Carruthers hoped great things from this visit, so that when, after a long, long talk with Mr. and Mrs. Freeman, whom he found to be kind, homey Christian people, they only confirmed the strange story he had heard from Estelle Haughton about his parentage, it was with a keen sense of disappointment that he left the place.

"A strange feeling of awe fell upon him as he realised the strength of the love that had led his mother to give him up, rather than keep him near to herself in an atmosphere of crime; and the thought of her prayers for him made the tears come into his eyes as he gazed at the little farm landscape through the golden balm and grace, which mingled with the purple heather, without making himself known to any but the Freemans, whom he felt he could trust with his secret.

The quiet beauty of the little did him good. It made him feel how small were the sorrows of his life, in comparison with the blessings that God had given him. "I will not let this spoil my life," he thought. "God is just, and does not hold us responsible for the sins of our parents; but at any rate, we must live in higher places. The memory of my father and his ill-deeds shall be forgotten. I will think only of my mother's prayers and effort to save me from being disfigured in life's race. I might have been reared in the tamest atmosphere, become like the rest of the world's misfits, but I could not have known the tender love and care of my foster-parents. A workhouse wall might have limited my views of life. How thankful I ought to be! And though the pain of finding Edna did not care, is hard to bear, yet it is true—"

"Love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power."

"Why did she not send me one word to soften her decision? Why did she give that cool look of disdain, as though, because a shadow rested on my name, my very nature had changed?"

He hung himself down, amidst the heather, and prayed not in words, but with an inarticulate longing comprehensible to the heart of God.

When he rose he was calmed and strengthened; he had tasted sorrow's cup, but he had penetrated a little way into the depths of the mind that God teaches man so much. He did not understand God's ways, but he could say:

"If I stoop
Into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud.
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast—its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom; I shall emerge one day."

Chapter IV.

"Forgive, as you were once forgiven,
Restore, with humble grace,
The excusing and the un做的事, Unto their former place.
Remember not the guilty past;
But, with a Christ-like love,
Seek, by your tender charity,
To reflect God's grace."
WHEN Lord Denyer handed the letter to his wife, which he had accidentally opened an hour or two before, he remarked carelessly: 

"I overlooked this when the postman was here. You'd better open it, and if it wants an immediate answer, James can ride into town with it. I hope it's not important."

Lady Denyer took it, glanced at the post-mark, and then put it into her pocket, saying:

"It is not of any consequence, thank you."

"What do you mean by that, my dear? Hasn't you better make sure?"

"I was too busy, or did she colour slightly beneath his apparently careless gaze. At all events, he did not think it wise to continue the subject, lest he should arouse her suspicions and make her angry.

But that evening he gave orders that the mail-bag was never to leave the house until it had been taken to his room.

"For the future, please," he said, "no one is to send the letter, not even Lord Denyer."

Lord Denyer said this to Lady Denyer: I do not want her troubled. But I have a particular reason for wishing to see it that is locked before it leaves, and when others have access to it, I cannot be sure that the matter is attended to properly.

"Very well, my lord," was the quiet reply of his personal attendant, too well trained to show any surprise at the order, and too faithful to make any comment on it, or even to repeat it in the servants' hall.

The letter remained unopened until she was alone in her own apartments, and then she tore it open, and read hastily the enclosed message.

"My Lady,—I am ill, and the money you usually send has not reached me for some months. I am growing old, and cannot work, and I find the burden of a secret hard to bear, now that I am near my grave. I ask myself, Am I right to keep my promise? If you break your promise, am I not free to break mine? Yours truly."

ANNIE MAUDAYLE.

With a weary sigh the stately lady pushed the letter aside, and leaned her head upon her arms.

"The letter does not," she thought. After all these years of silence, to think that she should choose this time, of all others, to grow restive! If only Cecile were less extravagant, he might help me now, instead of being a constant drain upon me. What can I do?"

She turned to Lord Denyer. She had written to him. She was worried. She was in debt to her tradespeople; her son had written an urgent letter, demanding money to keep his creditors quiet, and assuring his mother that if it were not quickly to hand, he could no longer keep Lord Denyer in the dark, as already Denyer of the position he had been thrust in were unless their accounts were settled.

"I can't let him know, for you know how down he is on a fellow for amusing himself. He would cut me off without even the proverbial shilling if ever he got wind of the state I am in," Cecile had written. And her mother knew it was true. Whatever his faults were, Lord Denyer was not one to countenance such flagrant wrongdoing as his step-son indulged in.

"I suppose," Lady Denyer said to herself, "I shall be driven to either selling or putting away my jewels. It is risky, but I might have an invitation sent made, and then trust to luck."

"Luck" was, in her case, the ruling providence. She had yet to learn that over all her scheming, plotting, and planning, the strong hand of God ruled. She had yet to prove that—

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small."

She rang the bell, and asked the maid to get out her jewel-case; and then wrote a letter, arranging with a well-known jeweller to have an imitation set made immediately, so that she could raise money on the jewels. Lord Denyer opened the packet before it went, and that the letter and cheque she sent to Annie MacDavie was passed through his hands, with another letter enclosed.

Lord Denyer would have found it hard to explain the feelings that prompted him to try to discover the meaning of the letter he had received, and he had taken little or no interest in his wife's affairs. She had disappointed him bitterly. Her extravagance had made it impossible for him to keep up the public he which he liked, and for which he was most admirably fitted, and had forced him to use his own resources, and he spent all the year in the seclusion of his Welsh castle. There was in him the nature the making of a good man; but his wife had failed to call out his better qualities, and continual contact with her inferior nature had bred in him contempt for women which curtailed the whole of his life.

Had Cecile Lansdowne developed into a son of whom he could have been proud, Lord Denyer might have found an interest in life; but his step-son was a failure. His college course had been a failure; he had been rascalled, and indeed it was then that he had taken little mind to anything for women which curtailed the whole of his life.

The coveted gift that Estelle Haughton was working and plotting to obtain seemed almost ready to drop into her eager hands. Noel Carruthers, hurt and sore from Edna's treatment, seemed to have been thrust aside, and it did not look likely that his heart would be caught in the rebound.

Estelle was in a state of feverish happiness. She could not sleep, and dreaded, above all other things, a moment's leisure. Her thoughts were not pleasant, and she would have been happy to have been left alone, but her spare time was spent in visiting friends, attending concerts and lectures, or in some other way filling in her available spare moment. But in the long hours when she should have been asleep, she thought more, and dreamed more, and could not be lightly set aside. She saw herself in her true colours, and courted the light.

One evening, when she could think of no place where she could go to spend the hours that must intervene before she would be needed in the wards, or the nurses, who was taking out a six months' course in the hospital, as part of her training in a Deaconess Home, looked in at her room, and asked whether she would fill an old promise to attend a week-night service.

It was the last thing she wished to do, and yet she feared a refusal might give the earnest-faced nurse a chance to say something to her about her soul, and Estelle Haughton felt that, in her present state of mind, she would not be able to turn the conversation with her usual casual skill. Her consciousness of guilt made her dread to do anything that would bring the thought of it home to her, or the sound of her name. How far she was from God, and, so, from any higher motive than that, she agreed to go. In her heart of hearts she hoped that she would be able to make fun of anything the speaker, and so harden herself against anything..."
that might be said to arouse her uneasy conscience into greater activity.

She was a little surprised to see how many people were already in the Hall when she and her companion entered. Most of the back-seats were filled, so that she was forced to take a seat quite near to the platform. For a time she sat in silence, criticising all that took place.

Then she whispered most to her friend: "I didn't know you were a Methodist."

"I'm not, but I often come here, all the same," was the response, "for there is good work being done."

The singing ended, a rather elderly lady, with a face that spoke of past suffering and present peace, read out the words:

"Give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and make confession unto Him, and tell me now what thou hast done. Hide it not from me."

Solemnly, earnestly she spoke of the awfulness of sin; and Estelle, listening intently, forgot that any other soul was in the room save herself and the speaker. It seemed to her as though her soul was written large upon her face, and she knew, as she had never known before, the terror of unconfessed and unforgiven sin.

"Of a truth I have sinned." The words rose to her lips time after time. Her face grew ashen grey with the strength of emotions against which she was contending. If ever Satan fights for a soul it is at such a crisis as this. She saw in a flash that to yield to the pressure of the strong spiritual force before which she was swaying, meant confession, meant repentance, meant losing the coveted prize for which she had strained.

"Hid in the earth. Ah, how worthless was the possession of these God-forbidden treasures," said the earnest voice of the speaker, and for a moment Estelle's eyes were caught and held by the glance of God's messenger.

"And they laid them down before the Lord. Yes, there, and there alone, is the remedy, when we have laid our secret sins down there," the voice continued, solemnly. "Then it will also be said, 'The Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger.' There is atonement for sin. Christ is our sin-bearer, our guilt was laid on Him, but we must not, we dare not hide and cover up our sin; but it must be spread out before the Lord."

Estelle heard no more. She felt that it was true, and also felt that she dared not face the fierce anger of the Lord.

The struggle was a fierce one, rendered more severe by the control she put upon herself, and it lasted for many weary hours, and left her utterly exhausted. But Christ had conquered. Estelle Haughton, her pride gone, her schemes and plots for ever put aside, rose from her knees a new woman.

She had a bitter task before her. First to tell Edna of the wrong she had done, and then to tell Noel Carruthers, whom she loved, all her pride and shame, without even the excuse that she had cared for him, to lessen the baseness of her action.

Without one moment's delay she wrote a long and full confession to Edna and would have done the same to Noel Carruthers, but failed to obtain his address.

"Perhaps I had better wait and tell him," she thought, "He will understand better than if I write. Oh, that will be the hardest of all. He believes in me, and trusts me so fully. It will be bad enough to have Edna's secret."

She waited in a sort of stupor, wondering what Edna would say and do, and yet conscious of an under-current of peace. She did her work as usual, but it was mechanically done, and her nurses all noticed how pale and tired she looked. To her surprise, before she could get a letter she received a long telegram from Edna, which read thus:

"At last, starting for Canter. Will write. Please don't tell Mr. Carruthers. I will tell him that, by an accident, the letter did not reach me. He need not know. Your letter buried. Forgiven and forgotten."

Your friend, Edna.

The relief was great. She had expected reproaches—knew that she had earned and well deserved scorn and rebuke. Instead of which, the worst part of her ordeal was mercifully spared to her.

"How cruelly I have misjudged her—how wickedly I have plotted against her," sobbed the repentant girl.

The letter had reached Edna as she sat in Annie MacDavie's cottage. The poetess had it in her hand,
and, catching sight of her at the window, he had recognised her, and the next moment he should take it to her heart to leave it with her.

There, in the quietness of the little room, she had read Noel Carruthers' torn letter, and Estelle's confession. She sent two telegrams—one to Noel Carruthers, and one to Estelle. The former ran thus:

"Your letter, tender—just received. Of course it makes no difference to our friendship."

"I must keep Estelle's confession a secret. I am sure she loves him—the poor little girl. What agencies of remorse she must have suffered; and Noel—how cruel he must have thought me! Oh, it was a base deception. He must have thought that I had changed because I knew the fact. I will cross that river ever come right? It is hard to forgive the wrong, and yet—oh, it was splendid of her to tell! No one would ever have discovered it."

Musling these, she looked down the road to find some one to take her telegrams to the office, and saw a small boy whom she thought would do.

As she called him to her, she saw a gentleman approaching, and by the time she had paid and started her little messenger, he was standing outside Mrs. MacDavie's house.

White as a death and a gentleman, was the thought that flashed through Edna's brain, as she gave a rapid survey of the visitor with whom she had to do.

"If he is hard on a poor old woman for the sake of a few shillings or pounds, I am sure I shall be tempted to tell him plain what he is."

The stranger paused, as if in doubt whether, after all, he might not have been misinformed, or have mistake the directions given to him by the group of fishermen he had asked to tell him the way to Mrs. MacDavie's. The fair girl in the little cottage doorway was unmistakably a lady. Then a light seemed to dawn upon him—a distant visitor, of course; doubtless he was right after all.

Raising his hat, he enquired whether any of Mrs. MacDavie lived there.

"Yes, but she is ill—too ill to see anyone," said Edna, standing in the doorway, and so rendering it impossible for the stranger to pass.

That, he said, "is unfortunate, for I have business which must be attended to."

"Mrs. MacDavie is ill," Then, lowering her voice, she added, "Dying, I fear."

He turned as though to go, and Edna had just begun to congratulate herself on having so easily settled the matter, when she suddenly discovered that he was again facing her.

To tell the truth, he was half ashamed of his own pertinacity, and yet something within him urged him to return and try again with Annie MacDavie. The fair girl in the little cottage doorway was unmistakably a lady. Then a light seemed to dawn upon him—a distant visitor, of course; doubtless he was right after all.

"If it is—is it anything I could settle?" she asked, colouring a little, for, in spite of the old woman's words to the messenger, she could scarcely believe that this wealthy looking stranger could be the troublesome creditor she had been expecting to meet.

Thank you, it is a purely private matter on which I have come, and I have travelled up from Wakes on purpose to see this good woman."

Edna hesitated. Perhaps she was keeping away some one whom the poor, sick woman would really like to see—some old benefactor.

"He speaks English so well," the girl reflected, "that, for about I know, she may have been a nurse in some grand family, and this one of her charges, grown up. But so, he is too old. He might have been her employer, though, and have come down to see if he could do her any good."

He saw her hesitation and took advantage of it.

"I am sorry to seem to press the matter, but it is of real importance. It may save endless worry and misuderstandings. Would you kindly—do you see the favour of telling Mrs. MacDavie that I am here. You can tell her I shall not do or say anything to hurt her, but I must see her, and that at once."

When Edna turned into the house, she saw by the woman's frightened look that she had heard much of the conversation. Don't leave me, missie. Don't leave me alone with him," she wailed, catching hold of Edna's hand in a grip which spoke of agonising fear and dread.

Edna felt her and told her what she had to do. The matter was a private one. She could not stay, and yet how was she to shake off the frightened, clinging grasp? But the stranger had entered, and saw her dilemma at a glance.

He bent his searching eyes full upon her face, frank, earnest young face.

"Will you stay? I like your face. I need some steady witness."

His words were brief and spasmatic, but Edna felt that he really wished her to stay. So, wondering much what strange scene she was to witness, she decided to be a witness.

He had placed his letter in her hand, and gently patted the wretched hands that held hers in that painful grip.

"I am Lord Denyer," the stranger commenced, as he seated himself beside the low bed. "I am sorry to find you so ill, and you must understand that I will not allow anyone to hurt you if you will tell me the whole truth, but I am not going to be a coward. You have placed yourself in my power—in the power of the law—by writing blackmailing letters to my wife, Lady Denyer."

As he uttered the name, Lord Denyer turned to Edna, and said, courteously:

"I am trusting you fully—even with names."

"You may," she answered, briefly, and he continued.

Your only course, Mrs. MacDavie, is to tell me frankly how you met Lady Denyer, and why that secret you are keeping for her. The truth I mean to know. Tell me the simple truth, and I give you my word that no harm shall come to you, and you shall not lack money in return for your past services. But, keep back the truth or part of the truth, and I will send you to the bar."

The poor old woman was crying with fright, and could only sob:

"I didn't mean no harm, sir; indeed I didn't; and I never knew who she was until lately. Don't be hard on me, sir; my life I mean, don't. There isn't a day in my life that I ain't been sorry I done it. But I'm a poor old woman, and you won't be hard on me?"

Edna, who had just finished reading Estelle's confession, wondered much what she was going to hear, and how the mouth of the poor old woman would be closed. In the barely furnished two-rooms fisherman's cot, she turned her face towards the window, and with her one free hand, gently patted the wretched hands that held hers in that painful grip.

"It never rains but it pours. Two confessions in one day!

CHAPTER V.

"The spectre of a guilty past.
Is with me night and day.
I scarcely dare to rest or sleep.
I have no strength to pray.
The heavens above are brass to me—
The earth reflects my sin.
Daring and fear are round about,
Iniquity within.
The burden of the unconfessed
Lies heavy on my soul.
I long for peace, I long for rest,
I yearn to be made whole."

- E. P. C.

The old woman's story was told partly in English and partly in broad Scotch, for whenever she grew very excited, she relapsed into her native tongue; but, for the sake of our readers who do not understand the latter language, her story will be told in English.

"It was this way, my lord. When my husband died, I thought I'd go out nursing to get a little money. But there isn't much to do about here, so I sold my furniture and went to England, where I worked as a nurse at Liverpool. I was very good to me, and let me stay with her until I had a good connection, and then I took a bit of a room over the water, and used to cross backwards and forwards for my work,
HER DYING CONFESSION.

"Well, one day I was sitting in my room, when a beautiful, grand lady came along the garden path, and I heard her a-asking for me. She gave her name as Mrs. Smythe, and she told me as she had taken a fancy to the place, and would like to come into my house to have my care. She didn't want no doctor to do it, only my own. I had told her that I was a child, and didn't want no doctor in the room. She looked terribly disappointed, and began to ask over so many questions about the people in the house, and what she heard seemed to suit her, for she asked me to get a room for her near my own.

"I wasted money, for I'd been rather slack of work, and I'd only one case likely to need me, so I agreed, though I had a sort of notion I'd better refuse the lady. Well, while she was with me, she had a son—a fine boy, I thought. He was the prettiest little boy I ever saw, and she was taking a deep interest in him. In fact, he'd never been so pleased, she seemed all upset like. Well, I had to leave her, just to run in to another case, and that case was a queer one, too. The woman was all alone, and her baby died. Well, I needn't tell you how I did it, but she had a sort of a passion, and I'm sure it was I hadn't told my poor patient yet her child was dead, she persuaded me to change the infants, and I did it.

"How I got the poor creature safely through the night, I don't know, and then nothing would do but that the child must have that boy's cot. And there was the lady left alone with the poor dead babe, while her own living one was being caressed and fondled by one who was not really her mother.

"I just trembled lest she should suspect the truth, but never could tell her. I've sometimes seen a sheep take to a strange lamb.

"Intrigues! Scandalous! You deserve to be punished, with the utmost rigour of the law," said Lord Denyer, rising in a passion of wrath.

"You needn't say so, we forgive," said Edna softly, and the true man sat down again, saying, as he did so:

"Go on, my good woman. You are not much to talk to.

Edna agreed with the remark. Indeed, she thought that in all probability the poor, living baby had fallen into better hands."

"Well sir, I've told the next day, I really would—I feel so grateful to you for having been so kind and good, and that proud of her boy, I hadn't the heart to confess what I'd done; and then Mrs. Smythe was so pleased, and she treated me so well, and promised me a small pension so long as I kept her secret; and that's all. Poor boy, I found the truth only accidentally, to make it worse, it wasn't her real name she called herself by—she was Lady Denyer. And now I've told you, sir."

"Too late! You've cost me my son. How can I trace him? What will he be? A Rogue—a country yokel, with the bitter reality,

"He'd a patchery mark on his neck, sir. It was like a hand; very small, but if he's alive, you might know him by it. He had curly hair, too, I remember that."

"In the excitement of telling the story Mrs. MacDavie had let Edna's hand go, and the girl, thinking it might be useful, had written the main points of the story in her pocket book.

"Get her to sign it," she said, briefly. "It might be useful to you."

He did so, and below, Edna signed her own name and the date, and then she turned towards the old woman and began to talk softly to her.

"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Christ received sinful men. Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in HIm should not perish but have everlasting life."

It seemed to Edna that the words made no impression on the woman, and in an agony of pity, she knelt beside the bed, and silently prayed that God would speak to the poor, guilty soul.

"I must give the poor creature time to recover, and then she must tell me names and addresses so that I can trace that child. How could she so deceive me? What a blind fool I have been! And now all her wretched plans and schemes have failed. With such a mother, what sort of boy will he be? And if he is, my own only daughter, and his mother, who has no legal rights, must be content to take care of the child and what comes of it."

"Such were the thoughts that passed through her mind. That first-born son, the only son of her life, the only one of her children, the child of her heart; and what did his father do? He deserted his wife and not a fact to be wondered at; but underneath his anger was a pain, which he himself could scarcely understand, a pain which springs probably from the old love and trust he had once felt for Lady Denyer. Often, when his patience lapsed, he had felt his heart and anxiety to avert the fate that was said to meet all the first-born children of his race, and his anger had been cooled.

"Deception and treachery, kept up for years. What sort of a world would each one of them have to inherit?"

He re-entered the cottage, and found that Edna had succeeded in soothing the old woman, who was now answerable to give him all the information she could.

A description of the woman to whom the baby was given and who had reared it, a description of the woman in which she lived, and also the name of the lairdship with whom she and Lady Denyer had lodged, were easily obtained, and with this somewhat meagre knowledge of facts, Lord Denyer left to commence an immediate search for the boy, a search in which there was no clue, none, no more than what the girl had given to her directly to the advisability of taking a land reared in a cottage home, for such a position.

When Edna at length reached the cottage where she and her companions were staying, it was found that the others had all turned out to seek her.

"Where have you been?"

"What have you been doing all these hours?"

"You look as though something wonderful had been happening. Come right in and give us a true and particular account of all that has happened to detain you.

Edna could not tell her important friends very much. Her tongue was tied by honour. She could not speak of Lord Denyer's visit, and as the latter part of the time in the cottage had been spent in trying to point Anne MacDavie to the Saviour of men, she had to be silent, and a silence which had not been broken.

Indeed, she was longing to be alone. Noel Carruthers' letter was in her pocket, and she was longing to open one more piece together and read the brave, noble words, with their steady undercurrent of manly love. Then, too, she had not yet written her letter to Edna, and in which she wanted a little quiet breathing time after the strange events that had taken place before her eyes.

"Pity for the lad who had been brought up in a position so different to the sphere he would now be called upon to fill. Our boy, the son of our heart, all SORTS of our heart, her own son, and who, she supposed, would have to learn that she was in reality childless. Pity for the man who had been so defrauded of a father's rights, and a sort of a nameless horror over the callousness of a woman who could cast off child as she had cast off her brother. She did not know that Lady Denyer had another son, for whom she had thus sinned and stilled her natural feelings. It seemed to her but a cruel and motiveless crime.

When at length she was able to get by herself, Edna sat down to her letter to Estelle.

It would be true to say that she was able to forgive her treachery easily. She had to ponder longer over Calvary's object lesson on forgiveness are the flood tides of love and pity entered her own heart; and she wrote not lightly and incisively:

"My DEAR ESTELLE—I couldn't write immediately, as I was not at home when your letter came—hence the telegram. The good news in your letter that you have found Jesus Christ as your Saviour is very sweet to me. We were not able to come just now, as Lord Denyer's son has been put all our sins behind his back, so let us put the past away.

Above all things, do not tell Mr. Carruthers—I can see no good purpose to be served by so doing. Let us keep this secret between ourselves; and Estelle, please don't let this in any way come between us. I think in the future I must be real friends with Lord Denyer's son, one of our greatest servants in one of our greatest masters. Remember, Christ says, 'Crowns, but not conquered,' when He says 'Forgiven.' Your letter to me will be a heap of little ashes when you receive this. Yours lovingly, Edna Cameron."
LADY DENYER sat alone in her boudoir. From the windows she could see the road winding down from the top of the mountain, she could see some of the high jagged peaks which surrounded her stately home.

A storm hung over the valley, and heavy clouds hid many of the highest points.

"The storm must burst soon," she thought, glancing upward, and just at that moment, the carriage which had gone to meet her husband, who had been absent several days, came into sight, a mere speck along the distant road. Ten minutes later he stood before her. The first glance at his face told her that something had happened—but what?

Her worst fear was that some of Cecil's delinquencies had reached his ears, her second, that he had discovered her trick with the jewels.

He never once looked at her as though he would read her very soul through and through. Her eyes fell beneath his searching glance, and she said, pensively:

"What do you want here? You have not even changed your things. Has anything happened?"

"Where is my son?" she asked, sternly, not moving his penetrating gaze from her face.

She paled visibly, and his hands clutched nervously at a chair, but only grasped the slippery air.

"Your son? I do not understand," she faltered. Then, suddenly pulling herself together, she said, more calmly:

"Are you asking about Cecil? He is staying with friends."

"Is there is my son—the child you deserted? The child whom you exchanged for a dead one? Tell me; where is my—?"

She tried to deny all knowledge, but she dared not: and he continued, relentlessly.

"Silk! I tell you! You gave him to a burglar's wife. DoubtlessLady Denyer's son is now serving his time in one of His Majesty's gaols. Are you satisfied?"

"It is not true!" she cried, with a horrible contortion of her features which told of fear and horror. "It's not true!"

"It's too true, you miserable destroyer of your own! Why couldn't you have strangled him with your own hands, rather than let him live to so disgrace our name!"

But he said no more. A wild, unearthly laugh rang out, a laugh so fearless in its insensibility that he involuntarily stepped back.

"My wages! My wages!" And then that fearful laugh again.

Lord Denyer felt the horror of it, so keenly that he fled from the room.

"A dream, it once! Your mistress is ill. Ride without delay!" he gasped, as he nearly ran up against a couple of men-servants who had heard that terrible laugh and been attracted to the spot. "Go, one of you, quickly," the urgent order was given.

His worst fears were soon fully realised. Lady Denyer was mad—hopelessly, incurably mad. The sudden shock of finding her son discovered, coming as it did after a long and terrible strain, completely unhinged her mind.

Cecil was sent for immediately, and he came, fresh from scenes of pleasure, to see that terrible sight, and to hear the awful story. His face, his voice, remained blank.

Perhaps nothing else would have had such an effect upon the careless, indifferent lad. His mother, who had sinned and suffered for his sake. His mother, that freckled, shrieking mad-woman!

From a pleasure-loving youth he became a man, almost in a moment. He hated his past courses as he realised that they had added to the burden of guilt his mother had been bearing.

Lord Denyer, on whom trouble seemed to be pressing sorely, picked his stepson, and, finding that he knew absolutely nothing of the fraud that had been practised by his mother, forgave him all his past follies and evil courses, paid his debts, and arranged that he should travel with a tutor for a year or two, before he settled down to his invalid father's house.

"If you keep your word to me, Cecil, and absolutely give up your present course of life, I will treat you as a younger son of my own," said Lord Denyer, kindly. "You see the end of evil in your mother's case. Take warning by a man who has been a victim himself, and who is now beginning a new life in the face of his mother's condition. And so Lord Denyer was soon alone in his grand, solitary mansion.

He had employed the most skilful detectives to trace his son, but up to the present time, all trace of the babe was lost.

Morning after morning, he eagerly tore open the letters, hoping for some news, but in vain. The anxiety and strain, added to frequent disappointments, were telling much on his strength; and he looked quite ten years older than he had been. Only twice, when Sir Percival Cameron had seen him at Mrs. MacDavie's cottage.

That page in Edna's life, unknown to her friends, was not forgotten. Although she was passing through a time of great woe, she had remembered to pray for the man who had been so cruelly robbed of his child, and for his child, if it still lived.

Noel Carruthers' delight can be better imagined than described when he received Edna's telegram, but his happiness was not long continued. Both Mr. and Mrs. Cameron refused to consent to any engagement, but the two young lovers were strong in trust.

"If I may not marry you, Noel, I may love you," said Edna, simply, "and I will wait until you can win consent. I will stand as she stood, while you asked for a plain interview with her parents. "We can both trust in the God Who giveth that which is good."

"God bless you, dear one," was Noel's reply. "I go to hope, and wait and work for you. It would not be right to ask you to write to me, but I shall hear news of you from Miss Haughton."

And so Estelle, who had once plotted to separate the two, now did all in her power to make the wasting-hour longed for. She wrote the most sentimentally to Edna, and took special note of Noel's words and doings that she might feed Noel's insatiable appetite for news of her.

In thus helping them, the pain in her own heart grew less keen. Noel saw a chance in her, and wondered in what it lay. She was so changed, so humbled, so gentle, yet as tactful as of old.

He felt that she had suffered, had fought and conquered—had perhaps fallen and been rescued: but he never guessed the truth. His respect for her never wavered, his trust was never shaken.

But it was a dream of hers that, as she had once wronged him, so she might in some way really help him, and her chance came, so chances to do good to our fellow creatures, usually do come as we watch carefully enough for their appearance.

An advertisement in the "Times" caught her eye. She read it once or twice without taking any special note of it, and then she hastened to her desk, and read over and over the letter, which she tore out and wrote a somewhat lengthy letter, which she carefully sealed when it was finished, and addressed to Messrs. Sealey and Co., Solicitors, 49 Blank Street, London.

"Now I must wait and possess my soul in patience..."
HER DYING CONFESSION.

until a reply comes,” she said to herself, but this was easier to say than to do. She was in a state of suppressed excitement. As it wore off, it was followed by a re-action, and she asked herself:

“Whatever he is, it won’t be his fault. I must try to remember that—I must try to remember that.”

But he could not summon up courage to immediately fulfil the request that he should go up to town, so he sent a letter begging the solicitors to continue their investigations, and promising to be up in a week’s time.

The journey from Wales to London seemed almost interminable, and yet, when he at length stood outside the office of Messrs. Sealey and Co., Lord Denyer turned deliberately away, feeling quite unequal to the task that lay before him. Up and down he paced until, ashamed of his weakness, he at length turned, and, summoning up his resolution, entered.

“Lord Denyer, sir,” said the boy inside. “Will you step this way, please. Mr. Healey will be with you shortly.”

He flung open the door of the senior partner’s private room, and then closed it quietly and withdrew. Someone was in the room. A frank-faced, gentlemanly young fellow, with a free, upright carriage and fearless, honest eyes.

As he looked up, an inkling of the truth dawned on Lord Denyer, but it seemed too good to be true. Someone else waiting for an interview, he told himself; and yet, those features! They were the true Denyer type.

The young man waited a moment, and then he said, with a dawning smile:

“Are you the gentleman I was to meet here? There seems to me to be a good deal of mystery, but ——”

He got no farther—Lord Denyer knew the truth.

“You are my son!” he exclaimed, putting a tremulous hand on the firm, broad shoulder of the lad.

“Would to God it were true!” Noel thought, as he answered slowly:

“WHERE IS MY SON?” he asked, sternly, not moving his penetrating gaze from her face.
"I felt sure there was some mistake. I am the son of James and Kate Moore, and the adopted son of Dr. and Mrs. Carruthers. I have been waiting for you to come here at once, to hear of something to my advantage," he explained.

But Lord Denyer did not seem to heed his words.

"You are a very extraordinary visitor! I believe in a God—a God who overrules wicked devices, he exclaimed, as tears of joy rolled down his face.

Was there any method in this seeming madness? Was there any reality in this strange scene? Was he dreaming—the victim of some absurd mistake, or what did it all mean? Carruthers, an extraordinary drawing was observed speechless by surprise. One thing he felt—a strange drawing towards the old man who thus claimed him as his son, and who now laboured carelessly, as he mentioned the name of Carruthers.

"Poor old fellow! I must not deceive him. Perhaps if I tell him that I am the son of a burglar, he will hear and understand," thought Noel; and, acting in accordance with this idea, he blurted out the fact.

To his surprise, though he quitted the old man, it seemed to please him hugely.

"Loosen your collar, will you?" he said, in a tone of command, "and let me see the mark of the hand."

"Why, it is there!" said Noel, wondering how the smack drew the mark, and too surprised to do anything but obey.

By that mark, I claim you! By your likeness to myself, I claim you as my son and heir," said Lord Denyer.

But I don't understand. I have only lately been claimed by Mr. Carruthers, and he said himself how you say I am your son. Who am I, really, I wonder? How many more parents am I going to find?" said Noel.

His evident bewilderment did more to calm Lord Denyer than anything else could have done. He saw how people might mistake the young man looked, and his natural courtesy prompted him to explain the mystery.

"I can only give you your history up to a certain point, but that I will do with pleasure. Doubtless, you, or your good friends the lawyers, will be able to supply all the rest," said Lady Denyer, who is now out of her mind, changed you when you were a baby."

Some feeling of pity made him soften this part of the story, and he hoped that Noel would take it that his mother was of unsound mind when the deed was done.

"You became the child of Kate Moore, who never knew anything of the exchange that had been effected, while her baby, poor little thing, died, and was buried as my child."

"That's right," said Noel, thoughtfully. "Then I was left outside a workhouse, and finally adopted by my dear foster-parents, Dr. and Mrs. Carruthers."

These explanations were scarcely made, when the door opened, and the lawyer himself entered.

"I must congratulate you, Lord Denyer," he said, smilingly. "I think that the proofs I am now going to lay before you will fully establish this gentleman's position."

"Proofs? I want no more proofs!" was the hearty reply.

But the lawyer smiled, and put several papers down in front of the happy father.

"I do not think we could have anything more complete. This is a copy of Mrs. Kate Moore's statement, made to a Miss Haughton, when there was no thought of anything by such a statement. This," he continued, "is the story Dr. and Mrs. Carruthers give of how they obtained possession of their adopted son; and then I have the details of the child being found given by a Mr. and Mrs. Carruthers, and filled in the positions of Master and Mistress of the workhouse where the child, then known as James, was kept until taken away by his present guardian. In addition, we have Mrs. MacDavie's story, which, as you see, will coincide in every particular with the other, and shows that he is this gentleman's extraordinary likeness to yourself."

"And the mark too," said Lord Denyer, eagerly.

"Yes, the mark too," said the lawyer, once more smiling and bowing. "I am unaccustomed to his guardianship; the mark is undoubtedly visible."

Lord Denyer glanced critically at each of the papers submitted to him, and then passed them in silence to

Noel Carruthers, who soon saw that for several days, Dr. and Mrs. Carruthers had known the truth, and also that it was to Estelle Haughton he owed the discovery of his parents.

The signature at the bottom of Mrs. MacDavie's paper had been omitted in the copy, so that he did not know anything about Edna Cameron's little share in this strange transaction.

Was he glad or sorry to find that he was no longer under a cloud—no longer so handicapped in life's struggle by a heritage of shame?

He was glad, and yet; he felt a pang of sorrow that he could not claim Kate Moore as his mother. Then came the glad thought that he was free to woo Edna. His pedigree would no longer be an insurmountable barrier between them.

"You will come with me, Noel," his father said, breaking suddenly in upon his thoughts.

"I think I must go to father and mother and tell them what has happened," he said, gently. "They have been so good to me."

For a moment, a look of jealous pain flitted across the old man's face. He realized fully how completely his son's life had lain apart from his own; and yet he liked the lad better for not forgetting his old friends, even in the excitement of the new life.

"It is the only thing. We'll go round, you, my son? I owe those good friends of yours something for saving my boy from the workhouse."

"Do come, father," was Noel's hearty response. "I am sure you will agree with me that the color and matter are the best and jolliest kind, and I thought parents that over a poor, nameless waif was wasted with."

As they went along the streets, Lord Denyer walked with an upright step, and carried his head with the air of one who has something of which to be glad and proud; and Noel, who was quite simple and natural, carried his new-found dignities as he had borne his unearned shame—well. He was a King's son, and perhaps that fact helped to make other and lesser matters take their rightful value in his eyes.

Carruthers had shown them coming up the street from the railway-station—a handsome couple, and, as she went to the door to welcome them, she recalled the death of her own wee baby years before, and the message God had given her then. "What do I do, then, knowest thou now, but thou shalt know hereafter?"

Had we not lost our own child, Noel would most likely have been totally unfitted for his real position in life. God set my hands free to train this child for Him, while He Himself took away lamb to the safety of the ever-lasting Home," she thought. "God's ways are wonderful and past finding out. I have trusted in Him and am not ashamed."

CHAPTER VII.

"In ways we know not, God has wrought—
His skill and love have planned—
The blessing that we vainly sought,
Lies ready in His hand.
Then trust, and praise, and wait His time,
He gives no second best,
But gives His best to those who wait,
And on His promise rest."

—E.P.C.

SUMMER was in the air. You heard it in the hum of the bees, in the pleasant rustle of the wind as it swept across the grassy meadow-land, toward the west, the season of the heavy foliage. You saw it in the luxuriant wealth of flowers that decked the earth, in the azure sky, in the contented, drowsy attitudes of the sheep and oxen; you caught echoes of it in the song of the birds, which rose from every bush and tree, making the whole land into a humble cathedral of praise.

Edna Cameron was sitting in the garden, with a book of poems open upon her knee, but her thoughts were straying far enough away from the pages. Indeed, so engrossed was she in thought, that she did not hear the gardener coming toward her with a letter, until the girl spoke.

"There's a letter for you, miss. I thought you'd like it at once, perhaps."
Edna raised her head, and as she did so, the maid noticed how thin and pale she looked; and, having a lover of her own, she came to her own conclusions, which she expressed to herself thus:

"It's my belief she's fretting over that nice young doctor who used to come here to doctor poor, queer little child, who must have sent her off, or why is it he don't never come now. Anyway, it's a shame, whoever's the fault may be."

The letter came from the old woman with whom Mrs. MacDavie had lately shared her cottage, and it told, in simple language, the story of the old woman.

"Her last words, miss, were, 'Tell the young lady I know that I am not but a miserable old sinner, but Jesus—my precious Jesus, has forgiven me.' He died for me." So that was the end.

"I wonder now," mused Edna, "whether that poor Lord Denyer ever found his son, and what he said to his wife when he returned home? And there she was when she demanded his sin was discovered. Poor, miserable woman!"

Edna was right: she was a miserable woman. At that very moment, utterly oblivious of all that was going on around her, she was sitting, muttering in her fractured mother tongue.

"Why? Nay, he is not my son. I have but one Cecil—Cecil, the darling of my heart. Who shall stamp away his rights? No one will ever dare—" I defy God and man. No one shall spoil my darling. I'll—"

Ah, take it away, it is clinging to me. Take it away, its hands are bathed in blood. Take it away, it is dragging me down. Down! and the miserable woman's voice rose again into a frightened wail, which changed as suddenly to laughter.

But the old Cameron was hopelessly sparred all knowledge of such misery, and continued her thoughts in complete ignorance of Lady Denyer's fate.

Quite suddenly, a familiar voice broke the silence.

"My dearest, my darling! I am free to woo and win."

With a cry of surprise, she started to her feet, and was clasped in Noel's strong arms.

Something had happened. What, she neither knew nor cared, but was content for awhile to enjoy his presence.

But at length wonder conquered joy; and she asked him what it all meant.

"It means, my darling, that I am not a burglar's baby, after all; that is to say, I was, but I wasn't, and I'm not."

"Ent Noel, do talk sense," she pleaded. Were you not the baby Kate Moore gave up, after all?"

"I was that baby," he said, smiling at her evident bewilderment.

"Then wasn't James Moore a burglar, after all?"

"He was, and a precious bad one, too, most noble lady," he said, playfully.

"Well, then, what does it all mean? Who are you?"

The old Edna said, "Your most devoted servant." He answered, quite enjoying her puzzled looks, and quite willing to prolong her state of perplexity.

"You are a fine fraud. First tell me you are Noel, then, when I get used to that fact, you spring upon me the romantic statement that you are a burglar's baby—James Moore; and when I have accepted that statement, you come and say you are well, you won't tell me that, until you make me believe you are the being you are going to be. I shall call you a fraud."

"Edna," he said, speaking seriously again, "do you remember a scene in Scotland with a dying woman?"

"How do you know of that?" she said. "You cannot, no one can, tell me, can they?"

"They tell me I am," he said, with an odd smile.

"To tell the truth, I have my doubts, at times, whether I shall not be claimed by someone else, with convincing proofs of my identity."

"Edna," he said, "she was all such a delightfully mixed-up, tangled skein of life."

"To think," she cried, "that I have been wasting pity on you as some poor, rough labourer brought up without education to fit you for your real position in life. Then I suppose the woman whose baby died was Mrs. Moore. Strange that I did not hear Mrs. MacDavie mention the name of Moore; but, now I come to think of it, she gave Lord Denyer the names and addresses afterwards."

"The strangest part of all is how the truth was discovered," he said. "Miss MacDougall saw an advertising notice in the newspapers asking James Moore to communicate with Lord Denyer's solicitors. Had she not seen it, I do not think I could have traced, for she held my mother's statement. No one else could have connected me with the foundling left outside the workhouse, have connected that foundling with the Moore's; at any rate, it is most unlikely that anyone else could have done so."

"So you owe it to Estelle," said Edna, softly. "I am glad."

"Yes, she's awfully nice," he said, heartily. "You wouldn't believe how kind she's been to me. A real friend, I call her."

And Edna, she was now a true friend. The statement was made, and the foundling left in the Moore's garden was found out, after the foundling's stay in the foundling home. She took the paper he held out to her, and read:

"By lofty crag and mountain, though Denyer's towers may rise,

No first-born son shall gladden a Denyer father's eyes;

But like a mountain torrent that dyes health's summer skies.

Each heir born thus in splendour, before his sire he dies."

"What a queer old rhyme! It's not true, though, for you have gladdened your father's eyes. But tell me, Noel, how do you get on with Lord Denyer? He seemed like a very stern man."

She hesitated, at a loss for a word.

"Cold, were you going to say, Edna? He is not. Do you know that, in his private room, a picture of my supposed tomb has hung for many a long year, and I am sure that the floor is bare there, and that he has been such a lonely life. Poor father! But I must tell you one thing, Edna. I told him that, somewhere in the world, a little dear girl was living, waiting patiently for difficulties to be swept away, before she consented to make the happiest fellow alive. Well, he wrinkled up his face and looked quite vexed, until I began to think he was going to act the part of a stern parent, and command me to choose between my faithful love and my newly-found father and fortune. Then I showed him your pocket-book, which was conveniently near, being, as you know, in my coat pocket. Oh, you should have seen his face change! But he didn't say anything, only drew from his pocket a dear little book, which he showed me—your pocket-book; and so I learned that you, too, had a shelf in discovering my identity."

A new country. No smoke, crowded cities, but mists and miles of free, open land.

Seated behind a team of horses, was a sunburned man. Beside him, a tall, richly-dressed Indian was seated, the Cecil Lansdowne of old. Five years in a fresh country, five years of honest, healthful toil, five years of temperate living, had wonderfully improved and changed the once delicate lad. He was now a bronzed and bearded man.

"Hallo, Lansdowne! Going down to meet the ship," asked a passer-by.

"Yes. Am expecting visitors," he answered, with an air of pride, for he knew well how welcome guests were in his part of the world.
"Lucky dog, mind you introduce me," was the response.

"If you'd told us before, we would have turned out to welcome them— the boys want something to amuse them, this weather. You'll be in high favour, old man," Cecil laughed, and drove leisurely on. He was going to meet Noel and Edna, who, with their friend, Estelle Denyer, had just come to the city.

They had not seen very much of them whilst in England, but their letters had done much to keep them straight in the new life which he had chosen, and the best of good feelings existed between himself and the half-brother he had unwittingly deserted of his rights for years.

"It's so long since I have been much in society, that I am afraid they will find me but a poor host," he thought. "I am afraid the ladies will find ranch life less to their taste. Think of me, thinking to myself that, in spite of its many advantages, the present mode of living lacked the picturesque home touches that a woman's hands alone can give."

Everything about the ranch had been made to look as attractive as possible: Cecil gathered beautiful blossoms and placed them about the room until he felt more satisfied with its appearance than he had yet done, and had started off on his long journey to the port with more complacency than he had ever before felt.

What a bright, merry party he found! His father, Lord Denyer, Noel and Edna, and a woman whose calm, gracious ways attracted him at once.

She made him forget to feel awkward; she seemed to guess the half of what had elapsed since last he had moved in gentle society, and he was soon talking to her as easily and naturally as to an old friend.

But it was in the ranch that he felt her influence most. She walked duldy and slow and had, in a few days, changed the very atmosphere of the rooms. A touch here and there, a change of furniture, and lo! a house became a home.

Then in the evenings, she and Edna sang, and he brought out his long-dusted guitar, and sweet indeed was the melody that rang out through the open windows.

Many a hymn, many a beautiful song, the little company would sing together, and then what glad times they had when, unable to attend the distant church services, they gathered round their Bibles, and talked of all God's wonderful dealings.

But the visit was drawing to a close, and Cecil, though he tried hard to disguise the truth from his guests, felt that he would feel the loneliness of their departure; then he had done before their arrival.

He would miss the glad prattle of Noel's little boy, the pleasant rides and walks with his father and brother; but above all, he knew that he would miss Estelle, whose gentle, kindly manner made his heart warm, and permeated her character through and through, leaving all that was attractive, changing all that had once so marred and spoiled her life. She liked the simple, natural life of the colonies, the sense of unrestrained sunshine and space that her surroundings gave her, and she felt sorry to think that she must leave it and return to the more restricted ways of town life.

Only a week remained. Already preparations were being made, when something happened to change the whole scene.

Cecil Leandroue was taken ill with rheumatic fever. Estelle, being a nurse, was soon in charge of the sick-room.

For long, weary weeks she fought against the disease, often fearing that her patient would slip through her fingers, but, by dint of good nursing, she slowly, very slowly, came back to the gates of life from the very entrance to death.

"How good you have been to me," he said, one day, letting none of his bitter, unuttered thoughts on her. "It has been worth all the pain and the suffering to know the delights of being so tender and cared for. I dread getting well. That sound makes altogetherkeh, for I know you must sorely need a rest, my dear little nurse." Indeed! I do," she answered. "You forget I am used to nursing."

"Of course," he said, rather crossly. "I am only just a patient to you."

She did not answer, but he looked up in time to see a little quiver of her voice on her usually calm, bright face.

"Forgive me, I am a brute," he cried, in repentance.

"But I love you, Estelle. I have loved you from the moment I saw you on the ship. You can't think what mingled bliss and torture it has been to be nursed by you. I wish I knew how not to tell you this, but I am nearly well, now." She shook her head at this statement, and went on, heedless of his action.

"I owe my life to you. I never knew much about good women until I met you and Edna."

"I am not good, don't say that," she said, softly. "If you knew what I was before, I knew Christ you would not love me."

"Tell me what you are," he said, "and that is enough for me. Tell me, is there hope for me, Estelle? Could you ever learn to care for me?"

Her face was turned away, but he felt that she was crying, and the impression that his love was painful to her silenced his words.

"Forgive me, there may be someone else," she turned upon him a face in which love was plainly visible, and he asked for no other answer.

"There is a wedding in the air, Noel, I feel it," said Edna. "Mark my words, I am about to lose Estelle's company. I am sure of it as I can be."

Edna and her husband were sitting on the verandah, enjoying the cool of the evening. How glad she was, he could not know, that she had kept him from the secret of Estelle's deception.

He laughed and said that he believed she meant to develop into a match-maker, and then said, more gravely:

"I have been thinking how many, many lives were touched by that Kate Moore, and what a blessed thing it was that my mother—God bless her—spoke to her at that time in the station.

Edna knew that he referred to Isabel Carruthers when he spoke of his mother's lady's-maid.

"Look now, how far reaching the influence may be. Kate Moore prayed for me. Kate Moore has influenced that young girl Lily, and now she is married and influences her children. My recovery by my father was due to Kate Moore, and her father's conversion was largely brought about by seeing the wonderful way that God had worked in answer to Kate Moore's prayers for me. Then Cecil's changed life is undoubtedly due to father's influence, and so I can see an endless chain of connecting links, dating back to the time when Mrs. Moore and mother met."

It was Lord Denyer's voice that broke up this conversation suddenly.

"What are you talking about here?" he asked, seating himself beside Edna, whom he had learned to love dearly.

"Kate Moore's life and history, father dear," was the reply, as she smoothed back his hair, and thought that, in spite of the sorrow he had had, no one would now think his was a sad face.

Indeed, the gloom that had once dwelt in Denyer's Towers had gone. The old house echoed to the sound of merry voices, and Lord Denyer himself now rejoiced in the company which was his.

The old rhymes had no power to darken his life, and time was softly wrapping a mantle round the sad, sad end of his wife. She had died in the inanimate asylum, a victim to her own unprincipled plots.

Strange to say, Noel had been the only one being in the world who seemed able to penetrate beyond the dark cloud of her madness.

She had liked his visits, had seemed to care for him, had been soothed by his voice. Lord Denyer never un-
Loosen your collar, will you?" he said, "and let me see the mark of the hand."

He deceived him about her conduct; he was happy in the belief that she had cast him off in the sickness of a diseased mind. That evening, Estella stole softly into Edna's room, and seating herself on a low stool beside her friend, told her the story of her engagement.

It has seemed to me like a seal of forgiveness from God," she said, softly.

And Edna, knowing to what she referred, sealed her lips with a sisterly kiss, and said, softly:

"Crowned with loving kindness and tender mercies."

[FINIS.]

Be sure to secure our next week's (No. 303) story, viz:

"A MAD MARRIAGE."

As implied by the title, it is a story of deeply absorbing interest and pathetic plot and is written in a very helpful style by "JESSAMINE."

"A MAD MARRIAGE." Ready Friday, July 18th.
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"A MAD MARRIAGE." Ready Friday, July 18th.

Before he could utter another syllable, Millicent leaped upon — "To saddle yourself with a wife who will be a curse to you, I utterly, wholly disinherit you!"

Darting behind the curtain that screened the alcove on the left, she silently slid back a tiny shutter which covered a fancy iron — in the wall. Barely five minutes elapsed before he saw her white hand appear, and in a flash she had swept aside the hanging from her hiding place and darted...
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as surely as a serpent’s bite. It lessens brain power, lowers vitality, produces languor, sleeplessness, nervous depression and is the source of aching heads and weary limbs.

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good digestion, and Mother Seigel’s Curative Syrup gives that assuredly: “After suffering from acute indigestion and constipation for over two years,” says Mr. Barber, Woodrow Dairy, Stourton Caundle, Dorset, “Mother Seigel’s Curative Syrup completely cured me, and this when everything else had failed.”

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—Lancet.
A MAD MARRIAGE.

By "JESSAMINE."

CHAPTER I.

AN INFATUATION.

I. Jack Armstrong's life was wrapped up in that coquettish little brunette, Millicent Bullford, and—but suppose we begin at the beginning.

Jack was twenty—a tall, strong, athletic young fellow, the very type of a young, aristocratic Englishman. A lover of all outdoor sports, he yet possessed brains and taste enough to love good literature, and to have developed an uncommon gift of music. He had a keen sense of humour, was ready and witty with his tongue, and was a capital drawing-room entertain of the Conroy type, Arthur Roberts, or George Grosmith type.

Until a month previous to the opening of our story, he had never been smitten by any particular girl, in spite of the fact that he was a favorite with women, and they were favorites with him. But a month ago, having occasion to visit a well-known horse-breeder, and finding that gentleman out, and not likely to return for an hour, he had accepted the invitation of the breeder's daughter to rest in the cool, shady parlor until her father should return.

Millicent Bullford was four years older than Jack, though by toiletting cleverly, she contrived to look even two years younger than he could boast of being. She was a pretty girl, with a certain Spanish type of beauty, having a clear, olive skin, large, black eyes, magnificent eye-brows and eye-lashes, a rich colour in her plum, dimpled cheeks, a wondrous form, with a singular grace of movement.

The one thing she lacked was soul and refinement. Her beauty was essentially only skin-deep, and her real inward tastes were scroful and vulgar, and her disposition mean and petty.

She had had scores of lovers, but each in turn had found out her character early enough to break away from the snare of her merely physical charms. Among these tepid admirers there had been quite a dozen young fellows belonging to good county families—impressionable young fellows ready to be taken in by a pretty face, but not quite gullible enough to marry a girl who was so easily betrayed into vulgarities of speech and deportment, such as would have disgraced a barmaid of a riverside beerhouse.

Perhaps it was that she had learned by experience, but certain it was that she had tried to hide her real character from Jack Armstrong, who, from that first afternoon meeting, became hopelessly enamoured of her.

Jack was reading up for an examination under the guidance of a private coach, an ex-boss of Cambridge.

The coach was an easy-going fellow, who took no real interest in his pupil except in the matter of the cheque regularly paid by Jack's uncle, Jonathan Armstrong.

Allowed almost any amount of liberty, and having private chambers of his own out of the tutor's house, Jack found it very easy matter to arrange and carry out meetings with his Spanish-looking Immortal.

On the day when this story opens—a cold, dismal, drizzly day in June, a day that was cold enough for March, he had arranged to meet her in a wood half-mile from her father's stables.

He arrived at the tryingspot—a quarter-of-an-hour before the arranged time, but she was there waiting, and sprang into his arms with an impulsive eagerness.

"Here before me, Milly, my little love!" he cried, kissing her warm, full, red lips.

"Yes," she cried, wreathing her arms about his neck in the most confiding way, "I've been here nearly half-an-hour, for I was so watchful, so miserable at home. I could only hasten here and hunger for your coming, dear Jack."

"Miserable, darling?" he cried. "What should make you miserable?"

She burst into a little, well-acted passion of tears, as she sobbed out softly:
A MAD MARRIAGE.

"I have everything to make me miserable when I am away from you, Jack. I have never bothered you before with any talk of my home life, but I am that wretched that, if it were not for you, and for the bliss of seeing you again as soon as possible, I should have run away from home and—drowned myself, I believe. But you, Jack, you, my darling—"

She buried her face upon his shoulder and sobbed softly.

Crouching over, and levelling his caresses upon her, he succeeded in comforting her, then whispered:

"Tell me all about it, Milly, my darling!

She told him an artful, lying story about a step-mother, a second wife whom her father had married six months before, who made his life wretched.

She is no older than me, Jack, but is a perfect demon in temper towards me, though she is all honey to my father. I could hold my own with her if she would stick to the truth, but she lies about me to father, who believes her, and I will not believe it any more.

She let another little sob escape her, as she concluded with:

"I don't know what to do, Jack!"

"I do, my darling," he cried, impulsively, "and if you will promise to do all, Milly without question, in three days all your life shall be changed. Can you—will you promise, Milly?"

"I would promise you anything, my own dear, darling Jack," she cried, laying her lips to his in the clinging kiss of a child.

Now beautiful she looked! How innocent! An older man might have been excused if he had lost his head, and Jack certainly lost his; and as he took toll of her rich red lips, he poured out his mad proposal that he should run up to the Court, get a special license as early as possible next morning, then run back and go out and see the doddering old curate-in-chief of a tiny, outer-way church four miles across country, and arrange with him to marry them next morning.

Milly hung her head on, "to-morrow evening, any time and any place you like to fix, after six, and we will make all our final arrangements, and —"

He gave her a sudden tight hug as he cried, glibly as a school-boy who opens a hamper of glories: "pro —"

"If all goes well——"

"In less than forty-eight hours we shall be man and wife."

She clung confidentially, trusting to him, and he went on in rapturous tones:

"Was ever any fellow on this queer old earth of ours half as happy or lucky as I am. You little——" you —"

He went on in this style, after the manner of young and infatuated lovers; but we need not detail the scene further.

Time was precious now, so, after an unnecessarily short interview, the pair parted, and she went her artful way, chuckling to herself:

"I've landed a good fish at last! Jack's his uncle's heir. The property is worth thirty thousand a year, and I shall be a lady. If it is true that money is the butter for the bread of life, then why am I like hot toast? Because I'm the girl to make the butter fly!"

There was not very much in her self-adapted counsels but pleased her vanity, and she laughed at the notion of it.

Meanwhile Jack had hurried off to his chambers, changed his clothes, and started to be on the station for, besides desiring to be on hand in town early in the morning, he wanted to be in time to hunt a money-lender to advance him a couple of hundred pounds or so, on the strength of his prospects as his uncle's heir.

By two o'clock next day he was back from London, with the license in his pocket. Two hours later he was down at the house of his uncle; and there, having arranged to the dreamy, mystical little clergyman, whom he had stigmatised as "doddering" and "old," to marry Millicent and him at nine next morning.

Arrived at the house of his coach, he said he had just received news of the serious illness of a dear friend in the north of Scotland, and that he was going off in the morning for a few days.

"I've been cramming pretty stiffly for the last month," he remarked, "and a week or ten days won't hurt me."

"Go, by all means, Jack," was the willing rejoinder of the coach, not sure to lose his pupil for the time, since he himself had some special fish to fry during the next few days.

Jack met his family, as arranged, that afternoon. They talked over their final arrangements, and were duly married at nine the next morning.

Driving from the church seven miles across country to a junction station, they caught the London express, and by noon they were lunching in the great city.

The afternoon was spent by the pair shopping— that is, to say, Millicent purchased and Jack paid, both being perfectly satisfied with the "division of labour."

The evening was passed at the theatre, Jack indulging in a box to themselves, for so notable an occasion.

After the theatre, there followed a specially-prepared supper, and next morning they started for Paris.

CHAPTER II.

JONATHAN ARMSTRONG AS NEMESIS.

Jack Armstrong had been left an orphan when he was five years old, and had been adopted by his uncle, Jonathan Armstrong, a retired Anglo-Indian.

A man of sixty years of age, of great wealth, choleric in temper (which was put down to the effect of a life of travel and a forced, retentive disposition). He had never suffered himself to show the slightest affection for the boy whom he had adopted; he was an ideal provider for Jack's wants, but never a friend, or guide, or counsellor.

There had been one memorable occasion, when, in spite of all rebuffs, Jack, a little lad then of twelve, had tried to win his uncle to help him in a religious matter.

There were two places of worship in the village where the Armstrong house and estate were situated—a church and a chapel.

The church, with its dreary, monotonous services (they need not have been dreary and monotonous—this was the fault of the clergy), which Jack learned to loathe and hate, and the square, ugly, Nonconformist chapel, which the boy had been taught was a worse evil to the community than the two vile beer-houses that cursed the village.

But, with a boy's curiosity, he longed to be present at a service in the chapel, and to see what was done there, and determined to go on the first possible occasion.

It was a day of sunshine and mildness, and a line of streamers flags spanned the village street from the chapel to the house of the chapel steward—"Charles Hunt, Baker, Grocer, and Mealman," as the board over the shop described him.

The armory's flags waved "what was up," as he mentally put it, as he went into the church.

The armory was the scene of the service to which the young preacher was coming to preach that afternoon, that a public tea was to follow the afternoon service, and a "great public meeting at night."

Jack read the bill of announcement, wondered who the "Charles Hunt, Baker, Grocer, and Mealman," was, and arranged to sit near the front, and have a seat at the public tea to follow the afternoon service, and a "great public meeting at night."

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"Would Jesus have the dinner die?
Why hangs He then on yonder tree?"

But the sermon was the greatest wonder to his childish mind. The text was, "He delighted in mercy," and small boy as he was, his heart was stirred mightily.

"We know," cried the preacher, in whose eyes there gleamed the glow of the sunset, "how God delighted in mercifulness, because He is always talking about us. Men with hobbies are for ever talking about them, but God has no hobbies. Hobbies may come and go—and changed a dozen times in as many months by men, but in God there is no variability or shadow of turning. His love of mercy is no hobby, it is part of his nature—But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His love wherewith He loved us. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in
Jonathan Armstrong's heavy, black brows knit together angrily for an instant.

Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

A white-haired old woman sitting in the same seat as Jack, had lent him a Bible, and he had followed the preacher in these references, the old woman finding the place for him every time.

Full of new thoughts about God, about worship, about the immortality of the soul, the boy went back to his uncle's house, and going straight to the old man, told him where he had been, what he had heard, and began to ask further about this wonderful mercy of God's.

Harsh, cruel, blasphemous almost, the old man, in his reply to the questioning boy, did more to make an infidel of the little fellow than all the evil influences that ever came to bear on his young life in after-years.

Three days after the marriage of Jack and Millicent, Jonathan Armstrong was visited by an old Indian chum, whom he had not seen for many years, and, for once, he seemed glad to have a visitor.

After dinner on the first evening of the visit, this friend remarked:

"By-the-bye, Jonas, old fellow, I saw a quiet little early morning wedding three days ago that reminded me of you, for the young fellow—he could not have been more than twenty-one, if he was that—bore a striking likeness to you, and, singularly enough, he bore the same surname—he was a Jack Armstrong."

Old Jonathan Armstrong's heavy black brows knitted angrily for an instant, then, feeling the necessity for guardedness, he nodded assentingly, and mumbled out something about there being heaps of Armstrongs in the world, and doubtless myriads of Jacks among them.

"Just so, Jonas," replied the friend. "I only mentioned it because, as a coincidence, it reminded me so forcibly of you, that I think it helped to decide me to come and see you."

"Where was the wedding, and what kind of girl was the bride?" the old man asked, trying to speak carelessly, though inwardly intensely eager and excited.

"The affair came off about a quarter to nine on Wednesday morning," went on the visitor, "in a little church about a mile from my place. I had gone for one of my early morning walks, and seeing a carriage at the church
door, which was open. I entered a ceremony, and walked quietly into the building just in time to see the two young idiots married. I call them idiots, for it was evidently a runaway match of some kind, and from the look of the bride's face, I should say it was more a case of her running away with him, than otherwise. She was a handsome sort of goods, Spanish-looking, and I should say several years older than him. If ever I judged a woman to be an artful jade then it was that girl, and if she does not curse his life, then I'm no preacher.

The talk of the pair drifted into a reminiscent vein after this, and they recalled and talked of the circumstances of many a couple whom they knew in the long-ago Indian days, who had made shipwreck of their lives, more or less, either by too early or imprudent marriages. In fact, by very questionable elopements.

"I wonder, Jonas," cried the visiting Anglo-Indian, "if you remember Colville, a big swell who was once in the Blue Guards, but flung up soldiering when he married. His wife was—"

Jonathan Armstrong nodded assent, and his friend went on:

"Did you ever meet Colville's daughter? A tall, dark, handsome girl, who—"

Again the old man nodded.

"Well, talking of elopements," the visitor continued, "Laura Colville's was one of the most wretched affairs I ever heard of. Jonathan Armstrong leaned slightly forward in his eagerness, for his remembrance of Laura Colville constituted the one tender episode of his life.

"Ah, I remember now," his visitor went on, "she disappeared the very night that you, Jonas, took it into your head to give everyone the tip, and start for England."

"Rate fuss, scenes, farewells, and all that rot," grunted the old man.

"For a few hours, I remember," his friend went on, discounting the grunted remark, "it was rumoured that the fair Laura had gone off with you."

Jonathan Armstrong smiled pityingly—the pity was for himself.

"Because you see, Jonas," his friend continued, "everyone knew that you kept a warm corner in your heart for Laura Colville, and you were both missing about the same time. But before tiffin, a new excitement in the affair came about, and it became a certified fact that the girl had eloped with one of the niggers."

"Great Scott!" gasped the listening Jonathan. "Laura Colville, the sweetest, most cultured, most beautiful English girl in all India, eloped with one of those native black beauties!"

A kind of sickening horror filled all his face as he spoke.

"Tell me all about it," he cried.

"The fellow was a student at the college," continued the narrator, "and it was at one of the public lectures that the fair Laura met him.

"I knew the fellow quite well by sight, and I'm bound to say that, for a Hindoo, he was a very decent-looking fellow. He was awfully smart and clever, and a cultured English scholar, and had a kind of fetching, fascinating way with him which had been heard. It was said that several English girls were quite gone on the fellow. And as is the case always, in these affairs, after the mischief was done there were scores of people who could tell of where and when they had seen Laura and her black beau together."

"As soon as it was definitely known that she had gone with the nigger, Colville started in pursuit, and the look in his face told ill for the man, should he succeed in coming up with the pair."

Of the particulars of the chase became known afterwards, though Colville went alone, not taking one of his servants, even.

"Like some panther of the country he tracked down the runaways, until he finally located them in the place where the car had been pleased to hang up for their stolen honeymoon.

"It was part of a ruined palace. The gardens were a wilderness, but still a beautiful wilderness, and there were but two really habitable rooms in the ruin, but the pair seemed to have been contented enough with their temporary home.

"It was evening when Colville, stalking his game, came upon them. They, were standing together on a wide, tesselated-paved verandah overgrown with climbing roses, and surrounded by fronds of coral begonias. The nigger's arm was about the girl, and the pair were singing softly together, 'Meet me by moonlight alone.'"

"They heard no sound of Colville's approach, and whatever course he had planned to pursue, it must have all been vain. The girl had forgotten the face just of his mad rage as he saw the arm of that black beggar encircling the waist of his only child, for he drew his revolver and fired at the fellow.

"The shot proved fatal to the wretched nigger."

"There was an awful scene with the girl I believe. She turned the head of her black lover on her lap during the remainder of the moments that he lived—many—then, when she knew that the last breath had fled from the body, she rose up like some tigeress robbed of her whelps, and cursed her father with a curse that was more bitter than anything possible to conceive, as coming to him with the lips of so naturally sweet a girl."

"Colville, in spite of this, wanted to take her back with him, but she would not listen to a word of it, declaring that she would never voluntarily look upon his face again, and even repudiated the relationship between them."

"There was an old Hindoo and his wife who had waited upon the runaways, but they had gone to a village festival a couple of miles away. The consequence was, no one either saw the murder—for of course it was that—or heard the shot. The affair was hushed up, as many matters generally are, and Colville disappeared from his old haunts, and it was reported that he had gone to Japan."

"And Laura, poor, infatuated girl?" cried Jonathan Armstrong. "What became of her?"

"For a long time no one knew. Then Tomlinson, of the Express, went to India and heard from him when he came back: he told us that he had met Laura in the garb of a Salvationist—Salvation Army officer."

"More beautiful than ever!" was Tomlinson's verdict upon poor Laura, and there was some talk of a whole crowd of us going up together to where she was, to try to win her back to civilization—that is the way we spoke of it."

"Tomlinson smiled pityingly upon us, then, wondering at our ignorance, he said:

"You fellows can't know much of the kind of stuff that the Indian-trained Salvationist is made of, or you would know that disaster was about to happen, connected with the bare mention of descent from the Blood and Fire flag—the blue, red, and yellow."

"Then, in a most unexpected fashion, Colville and his girl met again. It was in a year of the cholera; an Englishman was stricken with the disease in the train; the carriage in which he was, was unoccupied, and shunted into a siding. A doctor was sent for, but they could get no one to nurse the man. Then a woman officer of the Salvation Army, who was going off by the train a little later, met her, and took the carriage, and volunteered to nurse the sickened fellow."

"She had her reward, for it was her own father with whom she came face to face, and when, next night, a wide, deep grave was opened to bury poor Colville, they laid Laura with him, for she had taken the disease and died within three hours of her father. Death, Jonas, is a great reconciler."

A welcome interruption came at this moment, and Jonathan Armstrong was only too glad to escape for a few minutes; the talk, on his return, drifting into an entirely different sheet.

His visitor was only able to stay one night. He left at eleven next morning, and within half-an-hour of his departure, Jonathan himself left the house, travelling by the swiftest route to the place of his nephew's coach.

"I think the best plan will be," he said, "to first interview the coach, to seek the clergyman who married the pair—for he was convinced of the identity of his nephew with the Jack Armstrong of the wedding reported to him—or whether, as a third alternative, he
A MAD MARRIAGE.

Chapter III.

TRAITORS.

Jack and Millicent had been barely twenty-four hours in Paris, and had been strolling along the Rue de Rivoli, when suddenly, as they reached the bottom of the Rue Royale, they paused, for the wonder of the scene arrested them.

It was about half-past five in the afternoon, and the spectacle held them spell-bound. Before them was the vast Place de la Concorde, with the striking Obelisk of Luxor in the centre, with the fountains and statues all around. Just across the same rose the graceful spires of the church of St. Cloud; to the right of the church were the Faubus Bourbon and the Palace of the Chamber of Deputies; beyond that, still to the right, was the Palace of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the dome of the Invalides, flashing like some globe of gold against the darker space behind it. Bearing its marvellous head a thousand feet skywards, with the light of the slowly-sinking sun behind it, making its lacy form look filmy and fairy-like, was the Eiffel Tower. Immediately on the right of the spell-bound, delighted pair, was that bit of fairyland, the Tuileries.

A score of other wonderful items in this marvellous spectacle filled their eyes, and each was on the point of breaking out into delighted exclamations, when a tall, dashing, military-looking man approached them, raising his hat and inclining his head.

"Well, by all that is wondrous, how on earth do you two people come to be in Paris—and altogether?"

His keen, eagle eyes flashed from one face to the other, resting longest, however, on Millicent.

"Jack greeted him almost politely, then, as the trio stood thus together, the newcomer holding a hand of each of the young couple in his double clasp, Jack looked enquiringly at his wife and then at his friend as he said:

"Fancy your knowing Dancers, Milly? How and where did you meet?"

"Oh, ages and ages ago," she replied, the colour heightening in her cheeks as she spoke. "I am not sure that it was not in my prime days. Captain Danvers came several times to see father on business about horses, and—"

"It makes me feel old to think how long ago that was, Milly," the captain said, laughing. Then, pausing on her name, he added:

"But I beg pardon, Jack, perhaps I ought to have said Miss Balfour—"

He smiled wickedly at Jack as he went on:

"Unless she is no longer Miss Balfour, but—"

"She is," replied Jack, solemnly. "We were married a few days ago, and Milly is now Mrs. Jack Armstrong. And here, you cannot catch up here like this, looking like the—like this—"

"The Three Graces," laughed Captain Danvers. "So let's adjourn to a jolly little café I know—just close by.

Taking up his position at Millicent's left, Jack walking on her right, Danvers led the way to the café, the trio talking and laughing all the time.

In a dozen subtle ways, Danvers contrived to hold a silent interchange of speech with the young wife. Under excuse of leaning towards Jack to speak to him, he would press his elbows against her, and one quietly he felt her return pressures. Emboldened by this, he managed to secure her left hand once, as it hung at her side, and just for one fleeting moment, they exchanged a clanging clasp.

In the café to which he conducted them, the trio occupied a very private, secluded corner, where they discussed a quiet bottle of champagne, paid for by Jack in honour of the occasion.

Their tongues went "nineteen to the dozen," to use an expressive British phrase. A half-hour passed very quickly, when Jack suddenly started:

"If you'll excuse me just a moment or two, Milly, I'll send a wire to the hotel to order dinner half-an-hour earlier, for Danvers, here, must join us, and we'll go on to the Odéon afterwards,"

"I understand," she replied, and Jack moved away on his mission.
The moment he was clear of the corner, Danvers stretched his hand across the marble-topped table to take the young wife's. She gave it to him; their eyes met, and for one instant, they gazed at each other in silence.

"You have not forgotten me, Millie?" he presently said.

"How could I?" she murmured, "when I once thought that you would have asked me to be your wife?"

Her voice shook a little as she continued:

"How could you go away and never let me hear from you? I was only seventeen—not much more than a child, I know, but I love—but I was a woman in heart, and—"

She paused abruptly.

"Do you love Jack Armstrong?" he asked, and his voice was hoarse with some kind of emotion.

"No!" she answered, bluntly. "I like him—be is kind and generous and all that, but I never loved but one man, and I shall never love another."

"Who is that man, Millie, my little love?" he asked, and his glittering black eyes, full of a power that was almost hypnotic, searched her.

The table top was round. He began to draw her by the hand of hers he held. She followed the drawing, slipped from the seat, and the next moment was in his arms, and was receiving and returning his passionate, transient kisses.

"Why did you leave me as you did?" she asked, and there was a ring of pain in her voice as she asked her question.

"I was summoned away by the War Office at a moment's notice," he replied. "Had to go to Malta. But I wrote to you, Millie—"

She opened her eyes in wide, astonished, horrified amaze.

"Tell me all about it," he went on, "and asking you if you would come out to me, and we would be married at once. I waited for a reply—none came; then I heard that you had married Gus Brathwaite, and I put it down as another bit of woman's fickleness."

"And I never had that letter, Charley," she moaned, "but waited, waiting my heart out, I did engage myself at last. It is true, to Gussy, but it never came off, for I could not forget you; and now, to think that I have lost you!"

She lifted her warm, moist lips to his, and for a moment they were lost in a silent, strained embrace, then, fear of Jack's return prompted her to return to her seat.

"Don't lose heart, darling," he whispered.

"I knew he was in the War, speaking to a garçon, put the tradiorous, intriguing pair upon their guard, and Danvers began to tell a funny story; and a moment or two later, when Jack came up, the pair were laughing almost uproariously.

"Tell it over again: it was re-told, and, stopping the raconteur on the back, he cried:

"What a fellow you are for stories, Charley!"

Then, looking at his wife, Jack continued:

"Seeing Charley only once or twice when he came on the market, Millie, and you only a little, pined after child at the time, you would never dream what an entertaining fellow he can be."

The eye of Danvers' patent-leather boot sought the kid-covered foot of Millicent under the table, and at the same time, there played across his face a smile if mannerless pleasure.

Poor, innocent, unthinking Jack turned to speak to the garçon whom he had summoned, and saw nothing of what was passing between the pair.

The trio spent the evening as arranged by Jack, and during the next three days they were all much together. Danvers and Millicent contriving to have many a private little tête-à-tête unknown to the simple, faithful, unsuspecting Jack.

Millicent lived in a fool's paradise during these days, believing the lie which Danvers had told her as to his sudden disappearance three years before.

CHAPTER IV.

A COUNTRYWOMAN.

JACK ARMSTRONG had gone out, bent upon making a surprise purchase for his wife, and was making his way to the Bon Marche at the top of the Rue du Boc.

Suddenly his attention was arrested by the familiar blue, red-striped uniform dresses of some of his fellow-countrymen. Amidst the trimming of their great, coal-scuttle bonnets was mistaken the scarlet, gold-lettered ribbon with its French equivalent for "Salvation Army"—"Armée du Salut."

The two girls were coming towards him, a bundle of "Cry." page their arm, selling a paper here and there. One of them addressed him in French, asking him if he would buy a "War Cry.

She had such a perfectly English face that he fully believed she was a countrywoman of his own, and addressing her in English, said:

"I fear my French is not sufficient to enable me to read your paper in that language."

"Ah, you are English, sir," she cried, her eyes lighting up with evident pleasure. "I have an English 'Cry,' sir," she continued, "you will not accept it. I dare not sell it, because it was given to me."

Amused by her earnestness, and with a kindly desire to give a fellow-countrywoman pleasure, he accepted the paper she offered him, and handing her a Napoleon, said:

"Take this miss, and use it as you please, for I have heard that you Salvationists have a wonderfully wise fashion of spending money."

She took the gold piece and thanked him heartily, then, with anxious care and evident seriousness, her eyes filling with a sudden pleading, she said, softly: "Forgive my question, sir, but, as I shall have to answer to God for this opportunity of speaking to you, I dare not be silent. Are you saved? Do you love one another? Are you ready to meet Him, call you when He may?"

"They are serious questions, and difficult to answer," he replied, his mind involuntarily going back to the day when, as a boy, he listened to Charles Garrett preaching on God's delight in mercy."

"They are serious questions, sir," she returned, "but they are not difficult to answer, since every man and woman that is truly born again of the Spirit of God knows that death would spell glory to them, for we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and all old things have passed away, and all things become new."

She looked yearningly, pleadingly into his face as she added:

"Seek God, sir, formulate all men; come to the cleaning Fountain in Jesus' name, and know when you are pardoned, that you are saved. God bless you, sir, and good-day, I must be away on my business."

She gave him a graceful bow, then darted away. He gazed after her a moment, then, musing on the fact that she was a good-dealing girl, as was evidenced by her culture of speech, and by every other mark of good breeding displayed by her, he moved on, some strange new thoughts about immortal things moving through his brain.

An hour later, he was back at the hotel, carrying his surprise present with him.  

A few minutes after Jack had started from the hotel on that errand to the Bon Marche, Danvers arrived in a carriage, bringing his luggage with him. The hotel had but few guests at that time of the year, and there were plenty of rooms, en suite or single, to be had.

In response to his request, he was shown the vacant suites, and decided upon three rooms, which, while on the other side of the house to those occupied by Armstrong, yet had one, which opened on to a balcony to which Jack's and Millicent's apartments had access.

There was a curtain of stuff, wide-pink-and-pale-blue stripe canvas strained across the balcony, making a barrier opposite the two suites of rooms. By unhooking one ring of this canvas, on his side of the balcony, he could pass through to the part opposite the Armstrong room.

He had not mentioned, even to Millicent, his intention.
"Now I must go, darling," he cried.

Having taken the rooms, he set about making himself comfortable in them, disposing of his luggage, as he unpacked it, in drawers and wardrobes, etc.

CHAPTER V.

NEMESIS

On his return, Jack found Millicent asleep in a chair in their sitting-room, and creeping quietly up to her, he passed round the back of the low arm-chair, and, silently taking the necklace he had bought for her from its morocco case, he clasped it about her neck, waking her, of course, in the operation.

There was a moment of pretty by-play between them, then she discovered her prize, and, half-frantic with delight, began to shower her thanks and caresses upon him.

It was in the midst of this scene that old Jonathan Armstrong was suddenly introduced, having bribed a servant to show him in without announcing him.

Just for one instant the pair stared at him. Jack with a guilty, found-out expression on his face, while Millicent's wide-open eyes asked plainly enough, "Who are you?"

She soon knew, and writhed under the bitter, cutting sarcasms which the old man hurled into her face.

The scene was a fearful one, the old man not only looking himself into an awful rage, but cursing Jack's temper, and changing Millicent into a perfect fury.

"You idiot! You!" cried the old man at last.

"Had you no more sense than to rush into a mad mar-
A MAD MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWO AOVE.

The first impulse of Millicent, on leaving the room where she had assaulted Jack's uncle, was to rush into the corridor. The next, as she turned the bend, was to look back at the room, in which she had flung her hands and face, and to see if Jack was following her. The two impulses were actually on the threshold of her room, when she turned, and with the muttered words, "I'll hear all that passes," she returned again to the corridor in which she had left Jonathan Armstrong and his wife, was situated.

On either side of the corridor near to the sitting-room, there was a small alcove, each screened off from the corridor by a heavy plush curtain. The two alcoves were exactly alike, each with a large and curiously-shaped window, and each with the door of the apartment which the sitter had left. Jonathan Armstrong and his wife were standing there.

Darting behind the curtain that screened the alcove on the left, and listening to the silence, she heard a man's voice, and a woman's. It was a strange sound, and the two voices were not identical. The man's voice was clear and strong, and the woman's was softer and more melodious.

"What's up?" said the man. "Who's Jack's coming?"

"Tell you all by-and-by," she replied, in tones so low as to be scarcely audible.

A moment or two later, deeming the coast clear, she made her escape to her room.

CHAPTER VII.

"IT IS TRUE—WHAT FOOLS WE ARE!"

For five minutes after his angry uncle left him, Jack was still standing by the window, gazing into space, seeing nothing outside, hearing no sound of the city's life that moved by in a myriad forms, his mind wholly absorbed by the awful blow that had just fallen upon him. Even in this state of intense sorrow, he felt that he could not approach her, that he could not even speak to her on the subject of her absence.

Chapter VI continued:

"It can't go to her yet," he muttered at last, "I must go out in the open air. I must think. I must get my brain quieted a bit before I can face her with the story of this horrible disinheritance."
"Is it true, I wonder, that there is what is known as the Spiritual realm of things—a relationship, a communion with the unseen God and His Son Jesus Christ, by the aid of the equally unseen Holy Spirit, which enables the possessor of that relationship to live a life of strength and courage under all circumstances, however adverse, can meet? If there is such, what fruits are we not to embrace such a condition?"

Remembering, suddenly, the reason which had prompted him to rush from the hotel, and realizing that in his wilder state of emotion and excitement, he had not considered, and how, if it is at all possible, to get somewhat reconciled. Simpson's a lawyer, it is true, but he is a good fellow, has a kind heart, and has known me from a baby, and my mother before me. He'll close the hotel now; in another two minutes he would be in the presence of his wife, and he murmured:

"I wish Milly had left the old man alone. I'm afraid that shock in the face she gave him will make things harder to negotiate with him."

At this moment his way became blocked by a surging crowd of Parisians of every type—gamin and bourgeois, gavette and princess, gendarme and civilian, crowded and crushed against each other. Then suddenly the bellowing of a military band rose above the hum of voices of the crowd, and Jack Armstrong knew that the military were coming.

"Vive le vainqueurs d'Algerie!" yelled the crowd, giving to Jack just the same woe and terror as part of the French Algerian force returning to Paris.

The next moment he was wedged into a position that fortunately gave him a full view of the passing troops. A battalion of infantry; a squadron of cavalry; a section of mounted artillery; chasseurs à cavalerie; zouaves; spahis; carabiniers; vivandieres—all were there, even the "incurable" who had dragged la boudet under the Algerian sun. The breasts of the staff-officers glittering with their orders and lace, the pick-pick and sous-officers bawling orders to their sobersided men behind all the gay of face and voice, as they flung back their rapturous "Vive la belle France!" to the "Vive!" of the populace.

On they swept, those bronze-faced, glad-eyed returning warriors, and Jack had to wait until the thronging, thronging crowd swept by with the troops, before he could pursue his way to his hotel.

He found his wife in her room. She had made a fresh toiletté, and now looked, as he thought, more bewitchingly, bewilderingly beautiful than ever he had beheld her before.

"Oh, Jack, my darling," she cried, and leaning to meet him as he entered the room; and wringing her arms about the neck, she gazed up into his eyes with an adoring look in her own.

He held her clasp to himself in an embrace as close as death, for she was very dear to his young, boyish, impressionable heart.

They were both silent for a moment, then, his voice hoarse with the emotion that filled him, he said:

"Well, little woman, what do you think of Jonathan Armstrong?"

"He's a beast! He's positively all that, and more, and I should like to have—to have—I was going to say shaken him, but I would have skinned him, if I could!" She won't forget you as it is, for many a day to come, I'll warrant." Jack tried to smile as he spoke, for the memory of that ringing sound from his wife's fingers on his uncle's cheek recurred to him with a certain irresistible sense of humour. Then, as the memory of his own experience came back to him, and he realized the need of prompt action in seeing Simpson, his lawyer, the smile died out of the lines of his mouth, and drawing his wife down on his knees as he dropped into a chair, he said:

"I raced out of the place; after he left, Milly, for I wanted to be alone to think—to think what I ought to do, for he has cast me off entirely, my darling, and, except the little cash that I have about me, the remainder of the loan I raised in a hurry from a Hebrew before I left.
England, I have not a copper in the world, or the prospect of raising one.

She was staring at him in well-acted wonder, just as though the news of his disinheritance was absolutely new to her.

But she did not interrupt him; she had decided, before he came in, upon the role she would assume. He continued telling her of his immediate projected journey to England, and its object.

"Don't fret, darling," he went on. "With a wife like you to inspire one, any man would find a way of winning, and he had left Paris, or should have left him.

With a beautiful assumption of childish trust and abandon, she clung to him, and dry-eyed and joyous of face, she kissed him again and again as she cried, "And I don't care if you live, or die, dear. All I only want you and your love—that is enough for me.

We shall always be able to find money enough for bread and a salad, with now and again a slice or two of Strasbourg sausage, and always our coffee. Besides, she went on, deliberately, 'Will you tell me, love, about that? Why should we not set up a riding-school? You teach the ladies to ride, and I the men. Or I could set up as a vet—fancy a lady vet. My! but it would catch on like a fresh on a patient."

You put it in a nice little thing," he cried, half scorching her with kisses, as he proceeded to dismiss every idea of her working at anything.

"You must be Milly only," he went on. "Just my sweet, beautiful Milly! Just the glorious inspiration that any man would be ever blessed with."

A clock on the mantel announced the hour in a pretty chiming. He glanced sharply towards it, saying:

"I must not stay another moment, dear, if I am to catch our train."

Once again he wrapped his arms closely about her, and kissed her passionately, murmuring:

"Bless you, dear little wife!"

Her arm went upwards to his neck, and she nestled her face against his shoulder:

"Never fear, Milly, my darling," he went on. "I'll be back within a week, and shall doubtless have some good news for you—fore us both. You must not mope, dear, but get about all you can, and enjoy yourself at least as much as you can, if we are ever blessed with a train."

He looked down into the beautiful face, a world of yearning tenderness in his eyes:

"I wish," he sighed, "I could have seen Darves, I'd have asked him to have taken you away. But I'm afraid he's too much for me—Paris, or should have left him."

He told me yesterday that he might receive a wire any moment summoning him away, so you may depend he's gone.

"Very likely," she replied, in so careless, it-don't-matter-menier-tone. "I'm in a kind of tone, that even if Jack had had a suspicion of the real state of things, he would have supposed his suspicion unfounded.

"Now I must go, darling," he cried.

He strained her in his arms, covered her face with his coat, and then, as if unwilling to leave, as if unwilling to leave, he turned himself away, entered the fiacre waiting for him, and was driven rapidly to the railway-station.

In the train as he was whirled Calais-wards, his heart strengthened by what he had felt was a glorious inspiration of gods of his lot, he found himself thinking of Will Carleton's "First Settler's Story," and murmuring to himself:

"My girl wife was as brave as she was good, and helped me every blessed way she could; she kep' our log-house neat as wax, and once I caught her fooling with my axe.

She learned a hundred masculine things to do—she learned to be pretty Jack, she didn't have the muscles (though she had the heart), in out-door work to take an active part, though in our firm of Duty and Endeavour, she wasn't no silent partner whatever:

When she was logging, burning, chopping wood, she'd linger about and help me all she could, and keep up fresh ambitious all the while, and lifted tows just with her voice and smile, with no desire my glory for rob.

She used to sport around and boat the job; and when first-class success my hands belted.

Would proudly say, "We did that pretty well!"

"She was delicious, both to hear and see—That pretty wife-girl that kep' house for me!"

He thought again of his own wife's brave words, and his eyes sparkled with the pride that filled him, and he said softly, under his breath, using the poem-line by just changing a word here and there.

"She is delicious, both to hear and see—That pretty wife-girl that spoke brave words to me."

How little he dreamed that they were words only, and that in her utmost soul she was a traitor to every syllable she had uttered in that fit of acted heroics.

CHAPTER VIII.
A SHOCK.

JUST for the first quarter-of-an-hour in that train Jack Armstrong was positively too self-engrossed to realise that he had a companion in his coach, or that the gentleman as he entered the carriage, but he had failed in his worried self-absorption to realise the fact of his presence; and it was only after his mind had conjured up that "Carleton" suggestion of his own little wife's presumed bravery, and when he had once more come back to the present, that he gave a little start as his eyes rested on the fresh young face of a girl of sixteen or seventeen who sat in the further corner of the compartment.

As he was struggling with the carriage window, it had jammed (not an uncommon occurrence on a continental train). Jack sprang to her help, and was thanked with the spontaneous freedom of a happy child—the girl was a real child in heart.

For the greater part of the journey she gave quite chatty, Jack being really glad of anything to take him out of himself. Tapped by a head-off question on his part, the girl told him the story of her life. She had been born in Burmah; had lived there with her father and mother until a year-and-a-half before this time, when they went and then the train.

"I have come to Europe, from Burmah, to get a little finish to my education," she explained, "but I am afraid I have disappointed my teachers, for they they consider finish, 'I call' 'veneer,' and I hate veneer. If I had to lie in a cottage I would rather have the crudest, dirtiest, scrubbed, table, the gimmer, varnished, veneer things one sometimes sees, and which are only a shiny delusion and a snare.

Father died a month after I left Burmah, and now mother has been here with me in England, but we are desperately poor, now that poor father's affairs are really settled, and we shall have to live in a cottage, and I must work to keep mother, as well as myself."

"Can you do any work to do to earn a living?" Jack asked.

"Write for magazines, and all that sort of thing," she replied; and there was the ringing confidence of the amateur novelist in her tones.

"Have you ever tried anything in that way?" he asked.

"Well, I have never had anything to a publisher, but I have been writing ever since—well, a warm little blush suffused her face as she added:

Please don't laugh, but I have actually been writing ever since I was ten.

Jack did not laugh; he looked interested, and, emboldened, the girl went on:

"I have scores of short stories and sketches, principally Burman or Indian in their colouring, since I know these two countries better than any others.

With a shy look at Jack, she said:

"I have one—the last I wrote—in my hand-graph. May I—show it you? Would you glance at it for me, and tell me whether you think it would stand any chance if I sent it to a publisher of a magazine?"

She opened the handbag she had on the seat by her side, and taking out about half-a-dozen sheets of foolscap clipped up in the corners with a brass paper-fastener, she handed the MSS. to Jack.
"I won't even watch you while you read," she said.

"See! I will do some knitting."

Sitting in the action, she began to knit, and Jack, intensely interested in the brave little soul, began to pursue the MSS., which was headed "Love's Transforming," and began.

"Dawn was breaking in faint flashes of light when she left the bungalow hospital for sick soldiers, and passed, by well-known but comparatively unvisited paths, on her way to the deserted palace.

"Every step she gave was outstripped by the race of the giant sun, who, smiling faintly at first, soon broadened his face into a glowing grin, until all the earth awoke to day, and lifted dew-laden lips to his kiss.

"How beautiful all things were! The gleaming night-diamonds that edged the leaves of the palms made them look like sheaves of glittering sawdust. Paint but ever-increasing sounds of awaking life were on every hand—life that was unseen, but was making itself heard. Bird life was static, insect life, animal life, human life—far behind the trail grass-plated or mud walls of the native nuts the murmurs of voices in thick, morning speech, told of labourers preparing for the day's toil.

"Silent, but watchful, keeping her face screened, Fatima, the native lady, moved on her way until she arrived at a hollow in an outer wall of the abandoned palace, that looked like the half-closed arch to an old fountain.

"Glancing swiftly right, left, all round, and assuring herself that she was unwatched, she bent her beautiful neck and shoulders, and passed under the arch-fragment.

"Thrusting aside the light but close bushes that filled all the back of the hollow, she passed through into a lovely garden beyond.

"With sure, swift step she moved across to the closely-planted circle of palms almost hid a great circular basin. The sun, flashing down through the palm-crests, made strange, fair, fantastic pictures on the gleaming waters.

"With another swift glance all about, she paused between two of the tree-trunks, and quickly stripping, was soon busily engaged in a refreshing wash in the marble bath.

"Glooming with the coolness of the water, and the rapid exercise, she climbed the marble steps of the basin, and passed rapidly on towards the palace.

"The lovely gardens were almost a wilderness, but there was still very much left to admire. Rarest of rare Eastern plants, glorious roses—each bush a garden in itself—tended by rare attendants, with a myriad other beauties all aglitter with sparkling dew—these were the things through which Fatima passed.

"How often in the old days had she delighted in all this beauty? Now this morning, she sees little or nothing of it. Her mental eye is filled by the pale, worn face of the soldier whom she has just left, and whom her heart has learned to love.

"Passing between two mango clumps, and along a covered corridor, she emerged into a small, mosaic-paved courtyard, from thence into another covered court, which grow darker at every step of the way.

"For a few seconds the tinkle of her anklets told that she was moving, even after the darkness had swallowed her up. The music of the bangles presently ceased; there was the sound of the shooting bolt of a door, then a sudden gleam of light flooded the passage. Just for an instant Fatima was framed in an arched doorway of sunshine, then she passed through the light, and the door closed behind her.

"The room she entered bore traces of great beauty, and was most richly appointed, though on every hand the marks of a hasty departure were only too evident. Leopard and tiger skins, that lay upon the floor, were curled up or carelessly folded just as hurrying, racing feet had turned them, or interrupted fingers had dropped them.

"Articles of Eastern feminine attire; toilet articles; quaintly-packed cosmetics, and perfumes in rare and costly glass; articles of jewellery; tiny painted earthen pots of dyes for hair, for eyelashes, for face, lips, and nails; these were strewn confusedly about, everywhere, over the long, low, gilded Eastern bench-like table.

"This room, at least, had not been entered since I left it, she murmured. 'Here I can at least be quiet and safe, until I can think out what I shall do in the future.'

"Clearing a divan of its litter, she sank back among the soft, luxurious cushions, and was soon fast asleep. The stream upon her during all the recent self-imposed tasks she had set herself had been very great, and now that she was free to rest, nature asserted her right, and closed the tired woman's eyes in deepest slumber.

"It was the middle of the afternoon before she awoke, wondering for a moment or two where she was. Memory returning in fits and starts, she sighed as she rose languidly from the divan.

"For the next half-hour she was quite busy in getting a meal, bathing again, and putting on a toilette. Then she seated herself by one of the windows of the apartment, and let her mind run into a deep reverie.

"'Torn from her village home by a Dacoit chief when
THE girl, who had been carried away to the mountains, but, managing to escape the very next day, she found her way to the banks of Burma's great water-highway. Wearyed out by her flight, she—

Jack Armstrong had read thus far when there came a sudden rocking of the carriage, and the next moment the thing was buried over on its side. The train had left the (city).

An hour later he awoke to consciousness. He had been stunned, but not so really, as the passengers had not been so fortunate. He did not resume his journey until next day, and from first to last saw no more of the little Anglo-Burman girl, so decided that she had escaped unharmed, and had pursued her way with the other uninjured passengers by a relief train that had started about the time that he was awaking from unconsciousness.

"I should have liked to have finished that MSS.," he mused, little dreaming how, when, or where he would complete the reading.

CHAPTER IX.

A MISTRESS LETER.

JACK'S interview with his old friend, Lawyer Simpson, had not resulted in anything at all hopeful for his future prospects with his uncle. For your dear, dead mother's sake, Jack," the old man had finally said, "as well as for your sake, I will do what I can for you; and if the worst comes to the worst, you shall not starve, for I will keep the actual wolf away from your door. God help you, dear lad. You have made a tremendous blunder. I know the girl whom you have married, and I know that she is as utterly unfit to be your wife as I am to play harlequin in the next Drury Lane pantomime.

The hot, angry colour mounted into Jack's face, and his eyes flashed fire, as he burst out impatiently:

"Hang it, Simpson! she's my wife, and I can't bear you, or any other man, run her down or —"

The old man interrupted him, and in kindly, conciliatory tones said:

"My dear Jack, I would be the last man to hurt your feelings; but I am old enough, and so utterly desolate of your true friend, that it would be disloyalty on my part not to warn you. We lawyers, like doctors, get to know many things about people little suspected by the general mass; and in my legal capacity I have had a good deal to do with your wife's family, and have seen and heard a great deal about her herself. And all I know compels me to warn you that she will bring you trouble, especially now that you are not only a poor man, but a poor man without any prospects."

The old man talked on for a few minutes longer, Jack chafing sorely under his speech, yet unable, from many causes, wholly to resent it.

When he left the office of the lawyer he made his way swiftly to the Charing Cross Hotel, where he had put up on arriving the night before. A letter was waiting for him. It had only just been delivered. It bore the Paris postmark; the address was in Wilmot's handwriting. Tearng open the envelope with feverish haste, he opened the big foreign sheet within, and began to read—

"MY DEAR JACK,—Your journey will be useless, I know, I am convinced. Even if your uncle was willing to forgive me this wrong, I should be —"

What a little spitfire she is! he mused, a smile wreathing his lips, and never dreaming how long it would be before he would smile again.

"I know, as I said before," the letter went on, "that you will have all your journey for nothing. If I was not in the case, that wretched old curmudgeon might forgive you, he might reinstate you, so I have decided —"

**CHAPTER X.**

BAFFLED.

THERE was a gate of wind in the Channel. Twice the Colas boat started, and twice it had to return to the pier, and finally the officials decided they must wait until the gale and sea moderated.

Jack was half-frantic with agonized impatience, and in spite of the drenching sprays and even the seas that broke over the pier, he persisted in going back and forth between the Lord Warden Hotel, in which most of the passengers had taken shelter, and the moored steamer.

One day closed in, dark, stormy, gloomy, and everyone knew that the morrow would be no better than to-morrow, and there would be no crossing, and not even then unless there was a marked change in the weather.

Jack had wired twice to Millicent, but got no reply to either message; and this dead silence increased his anxiety, since it pointed to the fact that his wife had already left the Parisian hotel.

In despair he wired the proprietor of the hotel: "Is Mrs. Armstrong ill, or has she left the hotel? Wire me fully. Expense no object." Later on he received a reply from the hotel proprietor, worded:

"Madame left the hotel two hours after your own departure. She left no address; took all her luggage. Can you help me? God help us both!" he cried; and if the double prayer was merely the cry of need, the Unknown, the Unseen (as doubtless it was); if behind it there lay no definite sense of God, no onlooker, no sense of the need of voicing his prayer through the one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus—yes, and twice, deeply, "Then I will find her! I will save her!" he cried, ignorant of all her falsehood and treachery to himself.

He was but a boy, after all, in many things, and all the bewitchments and glamour of this woman's face and form were about him. He had been living in an enchanted realm, never once dreaming that beneath the softness and outward tenderness of the woman whom he had made his wife, there lurked hidden every evil germ of trickery, falsehood, and deceit.

His nature was an unsuspecting one, and he would as
A MAD MARRIAGE.

soon have doubted himself as his wife. All that fiery, passionate thing which the mere boy conceives to be and calls love, had been suddenly awakened in him for the horse-breaker's daughter, and he had lavished everything at his command upon her. In soul, in heart, he had been her slave; he was less slave still; and to be locking his heels at Dover, with that wild, impassable sea between him and that land where he had left her, and where she might now be (if her letter to him and the hotel-keeper's wire were true) was self-made wanderer, an exile for his sake, was maddening to him.

When, finally, drenched to the skin from exposure on the pier, and when the last hope of crossing the Channel that night was entirely gone, he made his way to the Lord Warden Hotel, had a bath, changed his clothes, and tried to eat.

He had been hungry for bourn, but had not realised it, the misery of his heart; over-mastering every other sense and emotion. For a moment, when the food was now set before him, he loathed the sight of it. But the aroma of the strong coffee he had ordered won him to take a cup of the hot, fragrant beverage. After that, the way was opened for him to eat, and he made a hearty meal, eating mechanically though, and without regard to the food or to its effect of thought or of enjoyment.

The meal finished, he returned to his room, an aimless, restless way, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, his mental gaze filled with the face of the wife whose check had rested against his in that farewell such a few short days before, his eyes filled with what, to him, was ever the same. His voice, the loud, clear voice, whispering endearment, though farewell, words.

He had been out half-an-hour and was wandering down Shagrate Street, when a sharp spatter of heavy rain suddenly fell, while a long rumbling of thunder overhead told of a coming storm.

Glancing about him to see what place of shelter he might be near, he found himself close to a chapel where a service was just going on.

Regardless of what seat the place might belong to, he entered and was dropped into the first pew where he saw an end seat empty.

The service was far advanced, for the hymn before the sermon was being sung. Bowing his head one moment in the conventional way, though never once thinking of prayer, he raised his head again just in time to hear the singing of the last verse of the hymn:

"Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart,
Come quickly from above,
Write Thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new, best name of Love."

Something in the words arrested him, and he suddenly found himself strangely interested in the service.

The preacher announced his text:

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

The opening words of the discourse further riveted Jack's attention.

"A natural food—finds a bone," began the good man; "it is a bone of a bird—of an extinct, or at least an unknown bird—and from that single bone he builds up by scientific deduction, and delineates upon paper the deduced form of that bird entire. This is no fancy idea; it is a fact. It has been done, and the labor involved by a naturalist; and though no mere earthly illustration can wholly typify Divine things, yet, in a faint way, that single bird's bone may illustrate the great fact of our text, namely, that the cross of Christ, when found, proves the key to a knowledge of what the law is to an arch, so, in a sense, is the cross of Christ to the whole spiritual structure of redemption. And by redemption I do not mean the mere salvation of the lost soul from the punishment of sin, salvation from hell; but I mean redemption in widest sense, taking in at least the utter and final redemption, and the joy that comes when we meet our Redeemer in the air, our bodies shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and when, seeing Him as He is, we shall be like Him.

"We must know the meaning of this, before we can learn the mystery of the cross of Christ. The guilt of the race is the key to the cross. Times may change, customs may alter, races may differ, but sin remains sin ever the same."

For forty minutes, with wondrous force and ever-increasing lucidity, the preacher went on, concluding with the thought that those who are saved the preaching (the facts, the subject) of the cross are the power of God, and finally ending with the appeal:

"What will you do with Christ? His work, His atonement, His cross?"

Jack Armstrong became utterly absorbed. He had never heard a sermon like this, and all poured forth ex tempore, and with a burning eloquence that was a revelation to him.

The storm which he had supposed to be imminent, causing him to take shelter in that chapel, had passed over without coming to anything. But he had been too engrossed with the (to him) wondrous service to note any outside weather signs.

Full of new thoughts, he made his way slowly back to the pier. There was light enough here, from the various gas and electric lights, etc., for him to see that the foaming, dashing water was of fiercer and unutterable as ever. Had he not been able to see this, he would have known the state of the sea from the evidence of his other senses, since the blinding, cutting sprays that broke over the pier drenched him thoroughly.

Once again, as his strained gaze swept those stormy waters as far as his eyes could pierce their dimly-lit surface, the intense agony of an hour before came upon him, and an awful fear swept into his soul lest, in her misery, his wife should seek her own life. Sick with the dread, he tried to thrust it from him, but the more he tried the closer the hideous fear clung to him.

Then a strange mood suddenly swept over him. Perhaps it was made possible to him by the power which the service he had just attended had exercised upon him, for though he had never been affected so before, yet now he began to think of the Almighty power, the omnipotence of the great unseen God, in Whom, at least nominally, he believed.

From somewhere far back in the recesses of his memory there came a man's mind the story of Christ stillling the storm, and for the first time in his life he definitely, intelligently prayed. The words of the hymn for sailors leaped to his lips, and on the wings of the storm-blast there passed upwards the cry:

"Eternal Father, strong to save,
Who from ourvic seat the heaving wave,
Oh, bid the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep.
Oh, hear me as I cry to Thee."

He paused an instant, for his memory of the words carried him no further. Then, a moment later, he cried:

"Oh, still the storm, great God! Make a calm, Thou loving Christ!"

His idea of prayer went no further. An instructed Christian soul would have voiced it's difficulty, and putting Millicent into God's hands, would have besought Him to keep her, and to quickly restore her to her husband.

But Jack Armstrong was not a Christian, his soul was not an instructed one, and his cry to God only went as far as the personal experience of what he conceived himself could not do. He could not still a tempest, but he thought that he was well able, by the aid perhaps of detectives, to trace his self-exiled wife.

A species of calm settled down upon him after his prayer, and with a very slight effort he forced himself to return to the hotel, where he almost immediately retired.
CHAPTER XI.
THE CHIEF OF THE POLICE SMILES.

The boat had crossed to Calais; it had been a trying passage, but was accomplished safely at last, and Jack Armstrong had started immediately for Paris, the old feverish, agonising impatience consuming him.

As he arrived at the station (Paris), he drove to the hotel where he had left his wife, and interviewed the proprietor, and the servants who had had the most to do with Millicent and himself.

But he learned nothing more than that his wife went out almost immediately after his departure. She was never seen again, and they had, gone about an hour, then, on her return, she had packed her boxes, a cab had come for her, and she had departed, stating that as she could no longer afford a good hotel, she was removing to the Hotel de H——.

The official had nothing definite to report. "The thing is very strange," he remarked, "that we cannot trace the driver of the cab which took Madame from the hotel."

He looked searchingly at Jack as he spoke, for there was a thought in his mind which as yet he had not cared to express. It was that Jack's behaviour, which had caused him to smile inwardly the day before, and was to the effect that Madame had had a secret lover; that she had only waited for her husband to start for England, to take her flight to her lover, and that the vehicle in which she had left the hotel, with her boxes, was a private one, one hired from a distance, perhaps from one of the numerous villages around Paris.

"I went twice to the Morgue yesterday," Jack said.

"I saw three bodies, but none of them was my wife," he added.

"Did she say anything to you two days later, that she was going to suicide, Monsieur?" the official remarked.

Jack sighed. "I have had no other thought, I think," he said, since the horrible conviction swept over me three weeks ago to-day."

The commissioner smiled again, only this time it was openly, though Jack, who was gazing out of the window, did not see the smile.

How do the valiant of the desert know that they have fallen upon the hot sands, forty, even fifty miles away? Some poor wretch, escaped from a slave gang, and hoping to strike out a trail of salvation through that maddening waste, eventually faints, dies his leader feet through the glowing, yellow sands, then, straggling, with his bare, black toes, the hot, yellow dust in a last effort to drag himself along another yardle, he stumbles, falls, rolls over on his back, and sees that the filthy, ravenous, cruel birds wait hungrily above him, until the last quiver of his starved frame shall give them the licence they barely wait—for to strike into his poor, defert, helpless body.

How do they know these birds of prey? How do they track down their prey thus? Ask the sailor, or the scientist, how the shark that follows the ship knows that a man is sick unto death on board?

No one can answer these questions, any more than they can answer how the Frenchman detectives caught the presence of a child in a certain villainous district of the gay and criminal city. But there they were, forcing their way into a house, a tiny crowd of curious gamins and others slowly gathering.

A subdued excitement dominated the little crowd, which gradually swelled. Did the people rise up out of the earth? Or how were they attracted?

As one empty room of the house, on the floor that was so thick with dust, lay the body of an beautifully-formed woman?

The body was absolutely nude. The hands were tied behind her with a long, rich, silkener garter. Her black hair, as though locked in a severe struggle, was spread in a sable stream among the brown dust of the floor. Her beautiful feet were crossed as though she had been in the act of falling while through her back a broad-bladed, murderous-looking bowie knife had been driven, the bloody point sticking through the pure, white breast.

The face had doubled itself upon the floor in the first hour of death, but the grim hand of Death had smiled and taken with it the face, that of a beautiful woman?

The questions crowd upon the mind, and we cannot new answer them.

CHAPTER XII.
AT THE MORGUE.

Outside the private room in which Jack was closeted with the chief of the police, at the end of a narrow corridor, was a report and inquiry office. At the very moment that Jack was smoothing over his statement of belief that his wife had taken her own life, a gendarme was making a report of the discovery of the dead body of a beautiful woman in an empty house at the end of a curving lane near the Crimean Hotel; the commissioner's official, that is.

"The body was discovered by a class of clothing which was found," the man reported, "and that it was a case of murder was evident by the fact that the hands were tied behind with a long, silk garter, and the poor body was pierced through by a long-bladed knife."

The report went on to describe the woman—that she was olive-complexioned, with very black, arching eyebrows, a wealth of black hair, and with a beautiful Spanish-like face.

This description tallied so exactly with that given of the missing Mrs. Armstrong, that the inquiry officer, knowing that his chief was at that very moment closeted with the English husband of the missing woman, went at once to report the discovery to his chief.

The gendarme was sent for, and his report was repeated in the presence of the chief and of Jack.
Jack's horrified excitement and emotion were fearful to behold, and he insisted on going to the Morgue at once.

Five minutes later the sharply-driven fiacre turned down past the Notre Dame, and a moment or two later stopped at the noted mortuary.

A crowd of women, chiefly factory girls and dressmakers, was about the doors of the place and passing in and out in swift succession. Jack could not have come at a worse time of the day, for the morbid curiosity of hundreds of women and girls brought them here every day in their dinner-hour.

The gendarme who had accompanied Jack from the commissaire's office cleared the way for the anxious, excited, fearsome men to pass in, the women and girls standing aside with respectful, sympathetic looks on their faces.

With an eager rush Jack made his way between the two rows of women. One glance at the beautiful corpse was sufficient, and with a cry of "Millicent! Milly! My love! My wife!" he flung his arms about the cold, still form, great, scalding tears starting from his eyes as he held the beautiful face to his lips and kissed the dead, cold lips.

For a moment or two a deathly silence filled all the place, his sobbing cries being the only sound to break the awesome stillness; even the gendarmes—used to such scenes—were momentarily awed by his passionate grief.

With a fast kiss upon the dead lips, and a final sobbing cry of "My darling!" he laid the still form upon its hard bed.

"It is madame?" queried the gendarme who had accompanied him from the police bureau.

"It is." he answered, hoarsely.

Stunned with his grief and horror, he moved with tear-blinded eyes down through the rows of silent, sympathetic women and girls, and passed into the street.

The brilliant sunshine smote upon his acute sensitiveness with a sense of object pain, and in the impulse of the moment he felt a sharp spasm of angry irritation at the brightness; for to his poor, dumb, bleeding heart, light and beauty and brightness seemed a mockery.

"I await monsieur's directions." The gendarme's voice aroused him. He looked at the

The child laid her hand softly, caressingly upon his toast.
AND MARRIAGE.

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READ.—They both recognized the body as that of their daughter and sister respectively. The chief of police confessed that the —— was wrapped in greatest mystery. She was accompanied by a sweet-faced, lady-like woman. She tore the letter from the finest of pieces and scattered them upon the breeze. He opened the door and called "Ralph." The gipsy came at his call. Dulcie laid down the book, and a sigh escaped her. The mighty current of three strong wills was driving her on to a fate that —— tears damped her pillow as she moaned out, "If only God would deliver me from this awful marriage, how freely I ——"
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28 New Brown St., LANCASHIRE.
Job Bulford had begun life as a stable-boy "in a marquis's establishment," as he was fond of boasting, when he would add: "An' if I hadn't give much 'ention to heddicatin' myself, that don't count nothing again a matter o' forty thousand as I'm wuth, all told, today.

Job Bulford only talked like this on certain occasions when he had taken enough "lotion" (alcoholic drink) to make him what he would call "cherry-merry."

In the ordinary way he was a quiet, reserved little man, who said very little but thought the more. We have called him little, and he was, but not small enough to please himself in his younger days. "If I'd ha' been just a chinnery bit smaller than I was, an' had weighed a stone less, there wouldn't ha' been a jock as straddled a pig-skin as 'ud ha' been able to 'old a candle to me."

Having grown too big and heavy for a jockey, he had often wished, as the years went on and he succeeded in life, that he could have been at least of medium male height, instead of the little man that he was.

"* For commencement of this Story see our No. 368 "A Mad Marriage."

**Chapter I. Father and Son.**
When we meet him here for the first time he was fifty years of age, with a shrewd, keen face, with small, black, piercing eyes. He was clean-shaven save for a strip of whisker just under each ear, these being about an inch wide and an inch-and-a-quarter long, the hair iron-grey, and clipped to within a quarter-of-an-inch of his face. His round-topped little head was quite bald on the crown, the short, grizzled, grey hair that was allowed to grow belted down the side of his head, 'where there was no parting,' being short, well-brushed, and copiously anointed with a favourite pomade highly scented with cassis.

His dress was heavy, and across his rotund, sellaquin-waist, discovered little stomacher he wore an immense cable-link gold guard. Every walking moment that he was not eating or drinking, his teeth and lips gripped either a thick cheroot or the everlasting stare allowed by so many habits.

He had been a widower for ten years. He had two children living—a son, "a chip off the old block," and Millicent, whom we met in our last book. Millicent had kept house for him from the time she was fourteen, and though he was proud of her good accomplishments, yet both he and his son were always at loggerheads with her, and when the trio happened to be together in the house there was sure to be friction.

The father and son got on well together, but it's daughter always convinced to be a disturbing element.

Job and his son had been down to the stables, to take a final look for the night at a three-year-old of great promise, which, having been "off its feed just a bit," had been put into the stable, and fed on a mysterious concoction of steel, nitre, gentian, etc. They found their beauty sticking up the last few oats of its supper with a relish that proved that its appetite had quite returned.

Satisfied so far, they passed out of the stable, giving a parting direction to the hand who would be on duty for the night, and were returning to the house, when a telegraph boy loomed in sight, making his way towards them. A moment later the lad banded the wire to the older man. He opened it in the careless fashion of the man accustomed to receive almost every message of his neighbours by telegraph. But his first glance at the fancy pink slip sent a sudden pallor into his cheeks, and made him give vent to a sharp exclamation, pain and horror filling his face.

"What's up, dad?" asked his son, sharply.

"Milly's dead. An', Gawd help us, she's been murdered, Tommy," he said, the older man thrust the open note into the younger man's hand.

At first the younger man said nothing, but after a moment, "Then, as the waiting boy's voice asked: "Any answer, sir?" the old man awoke to the needs of the present, and reading the way to the house, wrote out a reply, wrote addressed to "Armstrong; Hotel de E—, Paris," and signed "WILL."

"What's it all mean, dad? How's it happened? And who's done it?" asked Tom Bulford, when the messenger had gone.

"How's I to know?" snarled his father, pettishly, as passing to the sideboard, he poured himself out a glass of whisky and drained the raw spirit at a gulp.

"Poor old Milly," ejaculated the younger man, as following father's example, he, too, helped himself to the grog closet.

The old man watched him as he measured off and drank the stuff, then, in an irritable tone, he snapped out:

"If you're going to Paris with me you'd better draw it mild, for crossing the Channel with a skinful of drink ain't the thing for you, Tommy, I've seen enough of that in my time.

What time's we going?" retorted the young fellow, answering father's question in the same breath in which he couched his own query.

We'd better look it up in 'Bradshaw,' at once, remember I'm more parenthetically, and with a sigh: 'My poor little Milly.'

"Seems as though a fellow had been a'lovin' her all her life, instead of being allus sixes and sevens with her, now we knows she's dead, poor gal," remarked Tommy.

He had time enough of taking the "Bradshaw" out of the rack, thus, glancing over the tail of his eye at his father, and seeing that the old gentleman appeared to be in deep thought, he stealthily returned to the whisky decanter, poured himself out another stiff dram, and drained it.

As he put down the glass he found his father's eyes fixed upon him. "This murder business has made me feel all of a creep an' a chill, dad," he murmured, apologetically.

"That's no reason why you should make a fool o' yourself, regards the time's murder. Look up those train connections, and pass that whisky an' glass over here then it'll be out of your way, an' we won't be no temptation to you."

The young fellow passed the decanter and the glass across the table, set them before his father, and buried his head in the funny eye-signals in the pages of the time-table.

The elder man poured himself out a second glass of spirit, and drank it to the accompaniment of a mumbled "Poor little gal! Poor little Milly!"

"Look up the train, boy," he said.

"Well, hain't yer found it, Tommy?"

"Yes, dad, an' we've got to be off in less than 'art-hour, so I'll jes' tell Joe to 'arm the mare inter the cart, an' then come back an' get another suit o' tags, heistereter."

CHAPTER II.

"THE SADDEST MAN ON EARTH."

Ol' father and son were as nearly drunk as they could well be, short of being speechless and helpless, when they stood by the bier on which the beautiful but murdered woman lay.

Both of them were now much under the influence of the drug, and having crawled over the still, white face, as though they and she, in her life-time, had been the tenderest, most loving of friends, instead of always living the proverbial "cat-and-mouse." They both recognised the body as that of their daughter and sister respectively, and swore to the identity.

Jack Armstrong held himself aloof from the pair as much as he could, for he was too disgusted with the habitual state of indecision in which they kept themselves to feel free to fraternise with them.

His heart was sore and bleeding, and he was both mentally and physically unstrung with the shock and horror of his wife's murder.

Again and again his mind reverted to the words of that sweet child-preacher whom he had met on the boulevard, and he had gone so far as to purchase a Bible, and to look up the passage he quoted, until, like some wondrous musical chord which the brain has seized hold of and retains, so he repeated the closing words of the speaker, and as he did so the words, "They went and told Jesus," kept up their constant chiming in Jack's soul.

"Would to God I knew how to get comfort out of prayer and religion!" he moaned once, when his anguish was exacerbated by the small man's question. "But I'm afraid the child's suggestion that he should deal with Jesus.

In spite of that note from the chief of police, which he received on the morning which closed our last book, nothing had really been discovered about the matter.

The actual discovery of the body had taken place in a remarkable manner. A mongrel dog had bitten a lady's poodle in the street, and a gendarme, who witnessed the occurrence, had given chase to the mongrel, believing it to be mad, and determined, if possible, to destroy the dog.

This was in the rue de la paix, when the gentle creature, cut-de-sac, and race down the ill-paved entry, and finally disappear through what, on reaching it, the gendarme found to be a broken window in a wretched, uninhabited house. Arriving at the place, he beat out the few remaining rotten sash bars, and climbed into the room, passing from thence to another room at the back of the house, where, to his horror and amaze, he found the body of the murdered woman, as previously described.

The chief of the police confessed that, from the beginning to the end, the whole affair was wrapped in the greatest mystery. "If," he remarked, "we could but discover who drove her from your hotel, sir, we should, of course, learn to what place she was driven, and might then get on the track of the criminals who have so finely murdered her in such a manner that even at last we followed all that remained of the once gay, frivolous, loved woman to the grave."
He never forgot that ride to the cemetery. He buried her at Pere la Chaise, and, in spite of his grief, his eyes took in and photographed with the feeling of our infallible chief spots of interest passed on the way to the most renowned of all the French cemeteries. The way led east from the Madeleine to the Bastille, across the Place to the left, and along the Rue de la Roquette. A very short distance beyond the church is the Petite Roquette, the Grande Prison on the one side, and the Petite Roquette on the other, the latter a prison for juveniles. The five grim, black slabs that mark the position of erection for the gargoyles were passed, and then presently came the cemetery.

The father and brother of the murdered woman followed in another carriage, the pair almost too drunk to stand by the grave-side. The service was gone through, and Bulford and his son Reeled to their carriage, crying and haud, and after the mauldin fashion, of drunken men of their type.

Jack remained by the grave-side for a time, and when he finally turned away, was amazed to see the child whom he had twice before seen on that boulevard. She was arranged for the unforeseen, and determinedly, evidently her mother, from the great likeness between them.

He raised his hat to the mother as he greeted the child, then, speaking to the mother, he explained how he had come to be acquainted with her daughter, and remarked how much she had learned from the little one.

"You are Mr. Armstrong?" replied the sweet-faced woman.

He made a gesture of assent. She extended her hand to him, and there was a world of sympathy in her voice as she said:

"My little Florence, here, told me all that you said to her that last time you met in the boulevard, and when I read in the newspaper the account of that awful discovery, I knew at once that the lad upon earth, the little one had said you called yourself to her, was the bereaved husband of that poor, murdered English lady."

She was holding his hand in a warm, firm, friendly grip.

"I am a country woman of your own; I have a dear son about your age, just married to a lovely girl; and when I saw in this morning's paper the body of your dear one was to be buried here to-day, I noted the hour arranged for the funeral, and determined to try and see you and speak to you, for, from what Florence told me, I feared that you were not savingly acquainted with Jesus, and—"

Great glittering tear-drops suddenly filled her eyes, and her voice trembled as she added:

"I cannot bear to think of a countryman of mines having to bear so fearful a burden of sorrow as yours, with none to carry the heavy end of it for him.

"Touched intensely by your marked disinterested sympathy, Jack, I tell you, his voice broken, with the deep emotion that moved him.

"Shall we sit in that little arbourn seat, and talk a few minutes?" she asked. She pointed to the spot she had in her mind as she spoke, and the trio upon the bench, the child Florence slipping from her mother's side to Jack's left side, and taking his hand.

For a quarter-of-an-hour the lady preached Jesus to Jack—Jesus the Saviour of men; the Man of Sorrows; the High Priest of our confession, the Crucified, Risen, Mediatorial, and Coming Christ—pleading with him to seek that Christ.

"I will!" he cried. "My poor heart and brain are so torn and muddled, so stunned now, I am not sure that intelligently trust Him. But, Miss Armstrong, when I am a little calmer I will certainly face the whole question.

"Have you a Bible, dear friend?" she asked, adding quickly: "You will excuse my asking you, for though almost every cotter in our dear old England possesses a copy of the book, the feeling with which I read it to the young men, at least—of the upper class who seem to possess such a thing, or, if they actually possess one, do not know it, or do not know where to find it!"

"It is only since your little Florence talked to me on that boulevard-seat," he replied, "that I besought me to get a Bible.

A document or two later Jack parted from the pair, having exchanged cards with Mrs. Fortescue, as the lady was called, and promised, should he remain in Paris, to call upon his new friends.

My husband would be delighted to see you, and to help you spiritually," she continued, "so come when you will. Do not stand upon ceremony, for we are utterly unconventional people!"

Two minutes later Jack was driving back to his hotel, the warmth and light of the Fortescues sympathetically stealing over his cold, haggard face. Had he been so done so he would have heard from the servants of the hotel, where the pair were staying, that they had drank themselves stupid, and were then sleeping heavily.

CHAPTER III

AN ALTAR TO MOLOCH.

DULCIE CONVEYED her surroundings as pretty a picture as it was possible to conceive. The day was a superb one, warm, clear, bright, with breeze enough to temper the heat; and Dulcie was clothed infinitely more naturally than the women of her social group. Had she been so, she would have heard from the servants of the hotel, where the pair were staying, that they had drank themselves stupid, and were then sleeping heavily.

She was tall and fair, with big, expressive eyes, and the sweetness of mobile mouths. She would not be considered by contemporaries in such matters, dazzlingly beautiful, yet there was something singular, and striking, and arresting in her face. Careful analysis of the face would have proved that it was in the expression of the eyes that this distinctive beauty lay.

But it was when she smiled that the most wonderful power of attraction of the face was distinctly noticeable. Noveltists have used a very wide and comprehensive nomenclature to describe the smiles of their female characters, calling the smile "bewitching," "captivating," "enambling," "dazzling," and using a score of other distinctive adjectives. Dulcie Convey's smile was all this, and more, for it was, above and beyond all else, full of scorn.

When we meet her here, for the first time, on this glorious summer day, she is sitting in a camp-chair in the deep shade of a wide-branching, magnificent old beech-tree, in the centre of a broad bit of park-land.

And here, in the grand, magnificent, half-dozen fawns, each striving to attract the fullest share of her notice. Just at the moment that we come upon her, she is too much absorbed to give to the beautiful creatures any very especial attention, for her mind is occupied with the contents of a letter which she has come to this quiet spot chiefly to read.

It was from a girl, one of her old school-day chums, and part of it greatly disturbed Dulcie.

"I wonder," this part of the letter said, "whether you have had any news yet? Somehow, Dulcie, dear, I don't think you have, for it never struck me that you were 'built that way,' as my brother Fred is fond of saying about people and their characteristics. I remember, you dear old darling, that in those old girlish days—it seems ages ago—when I never cared for boys or young men. Not that you had no heart, for I believe you had as much capacity to love as any half-dozen of we other girls all put together, only—only—well, how can I put it—that you were not so superficial as we all were; you had a father, dear Dulcie, and that made all the difference; there is a nature which, when it loves at all, will love most deeply.

"But now, dear Dulcie, for my news. Perhaps you have heard it too, but in case you have not, let me tell you—"I am going to be married. When the matter was first proposed to me, I declared that I was too young, but mother laughed at my remonstrance, and said that eighty thousand pounds was not to be picked up every day (my fiancé is an eighty-thousand-pound man)."
"Friend," I look at the word as I write it, and somehow it seems an inappropriate term when I remember that the man is turned sixty years of age; is almost absolutely bald; is short, pody; unkindly in his movements—very gouty; is very shaky in his English; and juggles with the letter a in a way that is simply marvellous—horribly marvellous, I mean.

"When first he began to pay me court I used to feel an absolutely physical loathing for him, and the first time he offered to kiss me I shuddered, and, I believe, I screamed a little, as I covered my face with my hands. "But it is astonishing how soon you can get used to anything, and I have grown not to mind him so much, for he makes me lovely presents, and—that straight line stands for a sign, Dulcie—have accepted him as my mate. We are to be married in ten days; my wedding-day will also be my birthday. I shall be thirty, he is sixty-three. There's a May and December business for you!"

"You will be disgusted, dear Dulcie, I fear, but I cannot help myself; and if you had to battle with a purely worldly mother, like my dear, dear mother, I expect you would feel bound to give in."

Dulcie glanced at the concluding lines of the letter, then, with a look of intense sorrow upon her face, she rose sharply to her feet, and muttered:

"How awful! How revolting! And fancy any mother sacrificing her child like that! It is a kind of nineteenth century Moloch business, only that we have not the excuse that the idolatrous heathen had who practised Moloch offerings in those dark days in distant lands, for we have Christianity, the light of the Gospel, as our worst often says."

She paced up and down in momentary impatience, the disturbed fawns darting away to a little distance, troubled by her vehemence, which was so utterly new to them. "No wonder we speak of the marriage altar," she exclaimed. "It may well be an altar, since maidens are sacrificed as poor Ima is about to be."

Slowly, sorrowfully—not angrily, she tore the letter into the tiniest of pieces, and scattered them upon the breeze. Then, as she seated herself again, astartling thought came to her, and she murmured:

"How do I know but that my father and mother may some day wear to sacrifice me in this hideous fashion, and marry me to some man, old or young, whom I cannot love, or maybe, even respect?"

For a moment or two, her mind conjured up one or two little scenes to which she had been witness, between the daughter of her old nurse, and her artisan husband, and, remembering the tender affection displayed by the newly-married young couple, and the love-light that had flashed in their eyes as they had exchanged glances, she sighed a little regretfully as she said softly, aloud:

"One could almost wish one had been born of the humbler class, that one might have loved and married according to the heart's dictates, and nothing else."

She sighed again, then rising to her feet, she muttered:

"It is a little too warm for energetic rowing, but there will be a cool air on the lake, so I'll just dawdle over the water for an hour."

Only pausing to give a tiny sweet biscuit to each of the fawns, and to pet each graceful creature on the neck, she made her way slowly down to the old boat-house, and a minute or two later was gliding gently over the smooth, cool surface of the lake.

CHAPTER IV.
A RARE GIFT.

The two years which followed Jack's lying to rest the form of the murdered woman whom he had buried in Pere La Chaise, had wrought wonders in his life.

We left him journeying from Paris to London to interview Simpson, the lawyer. The old gentleman's letter had hinted at good news, but Jack had no idea of what this good news might be.

On his arrival, after a hearty, kindly greeting, the old man had proceeded to tell him that a great-uncle whom he had never seen, had left him property, well invested, which brought in an income of four hundred pounds per annum.
"So the beggary you anticipated, Jack," the old man added, "has not quite come to you.

"But, this interview finally concluded, the old man said, "You know the kind of simple, bachelor establishment I maintain, Jack. Now, what do you say; will you come and be my guest for a few weeks, at least until you decide on some course for your future. I am away all day, as you know, but we can breakfast and dine together, and you can lunch just what time you please. In my absence, the house, and all in it, is yours as much as the mine. Come, what do you say?"

Jack said "Yes," very gladly and gratefully, for nothing, under the circumstances, could have suited him better.

Within a week after becoming domiciled beneath the old lawyer's roof, the greatest event of his life happened to Jack—he passed from death into life.

The old man, his host, was a quiet, earnest, devoted Christian; and this high light of face, shrouded under his roof, he had urged the claims of God upon him.

In response, Jack told him all the incidents in connection with the raising of his conscience to divine things under the child-ministry of the little Fierry Portes, and the old lawyer followed up the work already begun, until by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Jack realized that Christ had borne his sins on the Tree, and that God meant what He said, when He cried, "He that is in me is greater than he who is in the world."

Taken diffidently, he appears to your super soul, and your super soul to be taken. I will make an everlasting covenant with you even the sure mercies of David."

Life, Light, Liberty came to him, and in the joy of the new life, he loved to sing:

"This done! The great Transaction's done—
   I am my Lord's and He is mine.
   He drew me and I followed on,
   Cannot confess the voice divine.
   Oh, happy day! Oh, happy day!
   When Jesus washed my sins away!

For two months he had accepted the lawyer's hospitality, and on one day he met a friend whom he knew a few years before, when he himself had been curate-in-charge of the village in which he had been brought up by his uncle.

This man was an elderly, rather a retiring, and very sober one of their parish clergy.

"Where are you living now, Charley?" asked Jack, adding another question in the same breath. "Are you still a curate, or have you got a church of your own—ise?"

His friend Charley Brandon smiled, as he replied:

"I am neither vicar nor curate now, for I have left the Church of England, and
   'Left the Church of England?' cried Jack in amaze.
   Charley, Brandon went on, 'My eyes were suddenly spiritually opened to what seemed to me the blasphemy of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, and I was so troubled that I went to see my Bishop. He tried to explain that the expression 'made a child of God' was rather a circle without God, and when I said that the 'figure of speech' was using thousands of saints along the church-sanctioned lines of an awful deception into the very depths of an eternal hell, he got angry with me, and told me that the Church knew better than a curate. 'But God,' I replied, 'Who in the Holy of the Holy Church—the Church of all true believers—knows better than the Church, and He has said in His Word that no riches could save, but only the New Birth.' The upshot of it was, I left the Church of England, made an exhaustive study of the tenets of the groups, visited their assemblies both on Sundays and week-days, and finally, conceiving that the Baptists came nearest to the lines laid down in God's word, I joined their ranks, preached in some of their churches, soon after received a call to the pulpit, and am now settled in Gerrard in Whatshere, and am as happy as I believe it is ever given to a man to be on this disjointed old earth of ours."

Neither of the men had lunched, so they turned into a restaurant, and over their meal, Jack told his friend all his own sad story, and how, following close on the heels of the awful tragedy that had so shadowed his life, there had come to him the light and gladness of Eternal Life in Christ Jesus.

"Come down to Gerrard with me for a few months, Jack," pleaded the young pastor, and Jack promised.

Three days later, he went.

Everything in this new life as the guest of the young Baptist pastor was a revelation and an inspiration to Jack.

Charley Brandon was unmarried, and utterly devoted to Christ and His work, and, being saturated with spirituality, made the very best of companions for a young convert of Jack Armstrong's type.

I am an interesting example of this, Charley Brandon was not content with the mere routine of his work as pastor of a town church, but had launched out into the villages, and had already two thriving little off-shoots of the parent church, meeting in variously-appointed rooms and buildings.

From the very first week of Jack's arrival, the young pastor had induced his guest to take some part in these village week-day services, and it soon became very evident that the new convert had exceptional gifts for public utterance.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," was verified in Jack's case. He became an insatiable Bible student, and what God revealed to him by day he would tell on to the people at night, and conversely, became the order of the day at the services which he presently conducted far and near.

The first convert given to him at the first meeting which he conducted wholly and alone was a middle-aged gipsy, a man of striking personality and very remarkable character. Between Jack and this man Ralph, there sprung up a friendship of the closest and intensest character, the gipsy craving to Jack with an almost doglike affection.

Perhaps it was out of all this that the thought for Jack's near future was born, for, shrinking from anything like a collegiate course, or the settled pastorate which Charley Brandon assured him he would soon be able to take, and for which he equally assured him he would have no use, he dreamed of the gipsy, the sleeping Gospel-can, in which he would travel through the land and evangelise wherever God's pillar of cloud should lead and direct.

This van, specially built for him, had been delivered two days before the close of this chapter, and was now fitted out with every requisite, and was ready to start early in the morning on its first bit of evangelistic work.

Now that all was ready, Jack went up into the van, shut the door, and solemnly re-consecrated himself to God, and besought the definite guiding of the Pillar of Cloud for every journey, every halting-place, as well as the time which he was to remain at each place.

For nearly twenty minutes he held such sacred and high communing with God as he deemed to have never known before, then, rising at last, with Heaven shining in his face, he opened the door of the van and called Ralph.

The gipsy came at his call.

"I thought," Jack said, "that I would like to have a little time with God, quite alone, Ralph, before I called you in; but now that I have spent a little season thus, I knew that you would like to join me in a renewal of our vows of consecration to Christ, and a consecration of this van."

His servant Ralph said: "Amen!"

The gipsy led off in a prayer of wondrous power and unction. When, later on, the pair rose again to their feet, Jack held out his hand to his loyal companion and his brother in Christ, saying:

"For Christ and the soul, sir?"

"For Christ and for souls, sir?" replied the gipsy, grasping Jack's hand.

At seven o'clock next morning, the van started on its first journey.
DULCIE CONYERS was quite as much at home in a boat on the lake, as she was moving about upon her own two strong, but dainty little feet on terra firma.

For an hour she had paddled and drifted, just as the whim took her, hither and thither on the placid waters of the lake, enjoying herself to her heart's content—at least as much as her heart, disturbed by her recent thoughts, could entertain compulsory marriage, would let her.

In the midst of her enjoyment an awful thing happened. A huge tree-trunk, submerged for years beneath the waters of the lake, and held down by the strong and tangled weed-like trails of a great water-weed, became suddenly released, and drifted upwards with terrific force.

There was no warning of what was happening, but swift, silent, death-dealing in its noiseless course, the trunk rushed upwards, and, striking the frail, cedar-built skiff in which Dulcie was quietly paddling, it smashed the little craft, at the same time driving a sharp-splintered stump of bough right through the bilge. Then, as the heavy trunk rolled over on a self-righting balance, it took the smashed boat with it, hurling Dulcie into the waters.

She was a capital swimmer, but, besides being hampered with her skirts, she had received a nasty blow upon the head, which had rendered her unconscious, and consequently she sank like a stone.

Captain Danvers was in England, and visiting friends about three miles from the Conyers' estate.

He had come out for a stroll this morning, and striking a very pretty, winding stream, he had decided to follow it up for awhile to see where it might lead, and eventually found himself on the banks of a lovely lake.

At one spot, where the landscape opened up, he got a good view of the Conyers' house, and paused a moment or two to take in the exquisite beauty of the whole scene.

"I guess I'm trespassing," he muttered to himself, "but whether I am or not, I am bound to go on until I see the Lake-head Falls, of which I have heard so much."

Compelled to make a detour, on account of the heavy bank-growth, he suddenly came out close to the boat-house and a landing-stage, and the same moment caught sight of a pretty girl, dressed in white, idly paddling with two white-scrubbed oars in the daintiest of little, polished cedar skiffs.

The tiny craft with its fair occupant was not more than fifty or sixty feet from the landing-stage, when suddenly Danvers saw something like the head of a hippopotamus loom up out of the water, and the next instant a huge black trunk was driven through the planking of the little boat, and he saw the fair occupant of the wrecked thing hurled into the water.

Danvers, though a man of many vices, was not lacking in a certain dash of pluck and courage, and in a moment he had flung off his coat, waistcoat and hat, had kicked off his shoes, and plunged into the lake.

"I'll save her," was the first thought to come to him, before he shot out from the river's edge, and, with no time to lose, he dived for the girl, who, he saw, was quite ready to give up the struggle.

Making straight for the spot where the girl had disappeared, he was just in time to seize her as she rose to the surface.

But his grasp was at too extended an arm to allow of his gripping her securely, and she slipped from his clutches.

He could dive like a duck, and in a moment he had gone under after her, rising again almost immediately with her, and with the strength of an accomplished swimmer, he struck out for the landing-stage, bearing her head Skillfully above water.

From the top of the garden's water-lawn, where he was at work greasing the automatic supply-wheel, one of the gardeners had witnessed the catastrophe on the lake, and had given the alarm, so that when Captain Danvers neared the landing-stage, he was cheerled to see quite a little crowd waiting to help him get his fair burden out of the water.

For she was very fair, he told himself, ever and ever again, as he bore her shorewards; but that her beauty did not lighten her weight or lessen the difficulty of accomplishing his task was made equally apparent to him through the strain upon his muscles.

Among those who had gathered upon the landing-
in the most indiscriminate manner, not hooding a title of what the old pomposity talked about.

Half-an-hour later, having had a good bath, and, having elected to take the doctor's advice, he was lying in bed, he smiled as quietly to himself as he mused—

"The role of invalid won't hurt me for twenty-four hours, for, who knows, it may be worth my while to—"

He did not finish his sentence, even to himself, but turned upon his right side, and having turned night into day for the past week, sitting up till dawn over the cards, he was asleep in five minutes.

CHAPTER VI.

A LINGERING GUEST.

ough a fairly strong man in the usual way, Danvers had really taken a violent cold by remaining so long in his wet clothes, and when the doctor visited Dulcie on the evening of the day of her recovery, and afterwards looked in on the captain—more for form's sake than from any thought that he would find him any the worse for his share of the escapade of the morning—he found him manifesting the first signs of an unusually heavy, feverish cold.

For three days Danvers had to keep his bed, and even then, on rising for the first time, to use his own expression, he "felt as weak as a crowing rat!"

In forty-eight hours, save for a sense of insufficiency, nature under the circumstances, Danvers was almost as well as ever, and with only the very faintest idea of what her rescuer was like, she began to long to see him and to thank him for saving her life.

"For he did save my life," she mused, "since that blunder in my temple had rendered me unconscious as I sank.

She shuddered as she thought of death, as those unprepared to meet God ever shudder at the thought.

From somewhere out of the dim recesses of her memory came there recurred the words, "After death the judgment."

Where or when she had heard or read them, she did not at first recall, then suddenly she realised that they were Bible words—God's word, and her heart grew troubled.

The call on the captain—visitors, especially friends of hers—her merry-hearted people, full of life and brightness and witty repartee, took their thoughts from the more serious consideration that had begun to fill her mind, and, for a time, the subject seemed to be effectually banished.

But by twenty-four hours later she met Danvers for the first time. He had almost literally crawled into the small drawing-room, feeling, as he declared, "ridiculously weak."

The affair were quite alone when they met, for Mrs. Conyers had slipped out to find Dulcie, while the girl herself, almost immediately after her mother's departure from the room, entered it by another door from the small conservatory.

I was an expected meeting on both sides, and for the twelved minute of a second both were silent; then Dulcie broke the monosyllabic spell, as, with a warm, pretty blush filling her cheeks, and with the bluest light of a glad welcome in her eyes, she advanced to meet him where he had been from the first, saying:

"Can I thank you for all you did for me? Do you know that you saved my life?"

She had extended her hand; he had taken it in his, and stood holding it in his clap, his dark eyes, full of a deep admiration, fixed on her face.

She felt as well as saw the ardency of his gaze, and flushed deeper than ever under it. To break the spell of this awkward moment, she began to ask him about himself—whether he felt better, etc. Then, fortunately for her, her mother re-entered the room, giving her full time to recover herself.

Whether all the lingering weakness which Danvers professed was real, or whether, for his own ends and purposes, he made himself sillier than he was, was best known to himself. One thing was certain; that was that he showed no sign of hurrying from the Conyers establishment.
CHAPTER VII.

AGAINST HER WILL.

Danvers had been under the roof of Theophilus Conyers nearly three weeks, when he made up his mind to hold a private interview with Dulcie.

From enquiries at a source which he conceived to be thoroughly reliable, he understood that not only was Dulcie's father an enormously wealthy man, but that the girl was possessed, in her own right, of a very considerable fortune.

"I'll marry the girl," he told himself, "get hold of her oof, then, with certain very taking fancy-hits that I shall be able to add to her price."

If Dulcie had not been taught that when I say a thing I mean it, and if I say she is to do a thing, she has to do it.

There was more in this strain, but at the earliest moment that he could decently leave the room, the excellent ward was left to make Dulcie.

He knew that she always spent a certain part of every fine day in a roomy old summer-house that stood upon a knoll, the highest points of the Conyers estate. This summer-house was divided into two separate rooms, and fitted up most costly.

Dulcie kept many of her favourite books, and always devoted at least two hours each day to some special reading and study.

Having discovered this rule of her life, Danvers had always endeavoured to add to her wealth by his presence when he knew that she was in this sanctuary of hers. But this morning, after his interview with her father and mother, determined to lose no time in pressing his suit, he made his way to the summer-house.

Dulcie was absorbed in what to her was a singular book, just where it had come from, or recovered it, none can tell; it was not among her books, she could not at first perceive; but searching the fly-leaves, she found the name of an old servant, whom her father had summarily dismissed the house for being, as he designated it, "ultra-fanatically religious."

The title of the book was "Grace and Truth," and it bore on its cover, "by Mackay, of Hull."

For an hour she had been utterly absorbed in the perusal of the book, each moment deepening her amaze, at the evident though hitherto unknown truths the pages contained. Every scriptural statement that was made, she turned up to the directed passage in her Bible that she might verify it.

Twice over she read the chapter entitled, "There is no difference."

The subject was so amazingly beyond all belief to her, at first, that she could not take it in, yet the writer gave a definate word of God for every statement he made.

"A lady told me once of a friend," the chapter went on, "I, having heard a preacher of the Gospel describing the awful state of unsaved people, and giving a solemn exhortation to be saved immediately, said, with great surprise, 'But what is it all about? I feel as happy as a bird.' She really could not understand that any thing the man had been saying had any reference to her.

"The people had never then discovered anything very bad; she knew how it had been trained up under the influences of a Christianized society. They never knew vice in its open nakedness; they never felt anything at all evil in their hearts; they never been face to face with God, nor taken God by the arm, so that they knew how it had been revealed in Scripture. I do not mean that they are titilators or infidels in the popular sense of the words—they know a god that is a sort of being for pulpits use, a being that is to be addressed as a matter of course and religion duties in certain lines of particular solemnity. They have a few ideas, derived from various sources, of a being called God, but of the God of Holy Scripture they have no conception. The God Who judges sinners they do not know of God at all, or even know how it had been revealed in Scripture."

Dulcie laid down the book to think over this, and a sigh escaped her. Her gaze became fixed, but though her eyes stared straight out of the window, she saw nothing, at first, of the view beyond, for over and over again she was repeating a few of the lines of one of the paragraphs she had just read:

"For there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. This is what God has said.

"And now, dear reader, you who are happy and amiable, this is the one thing I wish to tell you from—There is no difference! This is what you never could and never can feel; it is a thing for which you must believe God. . . . He says there is no difference; all have sinned, all have come short, all are alike condemned already."

For twenty full minutes her mind was deeply exercised in thought, then, like one waking from a sleep, she awoke to her surroundings, and, sighing heavily again, she murmured: "I must know more of these things."

Some slight noise outside arrested her attention; she listened, and then caught distinctly the sound of a man's footsteps, and at the same instant, the whistled notes of a bird, a watering-round wind, and which had played and sung the night before, floated to her ear.

A look of irritation crossed her face as she realised that Danvers was about to invade her quiet. A moment or two later he tapped at the door, and she rose to let him in.

"I'll not forgive my intruding on your quiet," she said, "but I wanted to see you very specially. May I come in?"

"Certainly." She pointed to a seat as she spoke.

"I have just had a long talk with your father and mother, Dulcie," he said.

Her eyebrows lifted, and a warm, red spot flew into each of her cheeks as she used her christian name. She did not reply to his remark, and leaning well out of his chair towards her, he went on:

"I told them that I loved you, dear; that I wanted
torment to address you on the matter; that I wanted to marry you, and—

"Oh, don't! don't!" she cried, making a deprecatory
motion with her hand.

"I know, Dulcie," he went on, "that all this sounds
very cold-blooded, but believe me, dear, my heart has
to keep itself to itself all that I have felt almost
ever since the moment when, living "unsensibly in my
arms, I bore you to the shore of the lake."

The latter part of his speech was a bold bid for a
patient hearing, and though she had begun protesting
against that day of his rescue of her, her protesting
hand dropped to her side and she sighed. Then, as the opportunity for speech
came, she cried:

"Do not misunderstand me, Captain Danvers. I can
never be too grateful to you, never, never forget all I owe
you during my life; but, believe me, I can never marry you."

He wanted to interrupt her, but she cried:

"Let me finish, please; let me be frank with you. As
I said before, I can never forget what I owe to you, never
forget that you saved my life; never cease to be obsequious
to you; but I do not, and I am sure that I will never
be able to love you as a woman should love the man
she weds.

"Is there anyone else?" he interrupted. "Is there
any other man in the case?"

"No!" she answered, emphatically.

He smiled in a very confident way as he continued:

"Then if there is no one else, Dulcie, I'll trust my
love to your lightest wish.

He laid his hand upon her wrist, and his eyes sought
hers. They held her glance in the power of that strange
magnetism which had already troubled her more than
case.

She had never known before anything like this sub-
jection of her will to the silent force of another's.
She had been trained to subject herself to her father's autocratic
rule, but that had been a yielding to an expressed
determination on the part of another person; and she had
been responded to by her, with a certain sense
of required duty.

But this sense of yielding to Danvers was a different
thing. She recognised no duty to him in the matter; she
wanted nothing from her. She was conscious only of a silent, subtle, magnetic power that well
rightherb her of all speech, and completely numb her
action.

He saw and felt the power he exercised over her, and
draping her hand warmly, he said, in low, tender, assured
tones:

"Yes, Dulcie, we will leave all that matter of your
feeling of love towards me—that will come in time;
meanwhile, you must not keep me waiting long, for
I want you in my life and in my home to bless me, dear.
A wild, humented look came into her eyes as she talked
of an early marriage, and she lifted her glance to his to
protest again, to plead with him. But again his gaze
closed her lips.

He drew her towards him and kissed her. She shuddered,
and a sudden scene of hysteria came over her.

The voice of her father, evidently speaking to her
mother, broke upon her ear, and acted like a quickener to her
falling powers, and with a sickly smile on her face she passed
out of the summer-house, eager to get into the
space between to end the life—a life with her unloved
lover, even though she must needs meet her father, whom she
cared for as little, and dreaded almost as much as she
did her unwelcome suitor.

"Ah, here you are, Danvers!" shouted her father, as
the pair emerged from the summer-house. "All settled,
eh, Dulcie?" he went on.

"All but the day, sir," replied the smiling captain.

"The day? Oh, that is easily settled," chortled the old
man. "This day month—no later. Don't believe in
these confoundedly long engagements. Mrs. Conyers and
I were married in less than a month after we first met,
and you two have known each other intimately for nearly
three months already. So, you must be ready for
the marriage, you will know as much of each other as
if you had known each other two years instead of two
months."

He turned to his wife, and in his commanding way,
said:

"You understand, Therese?"

Mrs. Conyers nodded and smiled, then pushed out in
her weak, sentimental fashion:

"Oh, yes, Theophilus, we understand, Dulcie and I, and
you need have no fear—we will be ready for the
big day even, the day after.

She saw the protest that rose in her child's face, and
began to swamp it with her own talk, as, addressing
Danvers rather than Dulcie, she said:

"I am glad you want an early marriage, Captain
Danvers, for, as my husband has said, we both dislike
anything like long engagements. He said we had only
known each other a month when we were married—he
might have said it was only a fortnight."

She broke off suddenly, for, empty, sentimental fool as
she was, she saw something in her daughter's face that
warned her that there was danger of a scene. Turning to
her husband, she said:

"Theophilus, you and Captain Danvers go along and
talk your side over, while Dulcie and I turn back into
the summer-house and have our talk.

Taking her daughter's arm, she turned sharply away,
and a moment or two later the pair were inside the
Retreat.

The sound of the reaction from the strain to which she
had been subjected, now that she was clear of the influence
of her unwelcome suitor, Dulcie burst into a passion
of tears, and clinging pitilessly to her mother, cried:

"Oh, save me from this marriage, dear mother! Don't
—don't let me be sacrificed thus! I am grateful to Cap-
tain Danvers for saving my life, but I fear him as a man.
I shrink in an accountably loathing from him. His
eyes magnetise, mesmerise me; he will make me do what
he wants—what father has decreed I am to do, but oh,
mother, mother, how can I do this when, in my soul,
I dislike this marriage?"

Mrs. Conyers spoke soothingly but unpityingly, for her
heart was so excised with utter worldliness that neither
the anguish in her child's eyes nor the piteousness
in her tones could reach or touch her.

When, twenty minutes later, dry-eyed but with bursting
heart, Dulcie walked back to the house, she realised how
irrevocably her hateful fate was fixed, and how, like some
fruitless with its rudder shackled, she was being swept
down Life's stream by an irresistible tide, the mighty,
unquenchable current with which was driving her on to a fate
that looked to her like a living death.

"God help me!" she moaned, despair filling her heart.

Danvers was away for a day or two on business, and,
full of her brooding dread of the coming marriage, Dulcie
suddenly conceived the idea of appealing to his sense of
honour, to release her and go away, and break off the
engagement.

"I could write what I could not say to him," she
mused, "not that I should fear to say all that I could
write, but I could not speak out my heart while in his
presence, because of that awful bond of my will that
he exercises over me."

A far-away look came into her eyes, as she said softly,
questioningly to herself:

"Is there anything in what I have read of hypnosis,
I wonder? Have men like Danvers the power of hyp-
notising others? So, how? And the power of devoted
ministers and Christians possessing, or at least using
the power, may one not safely assume that, like spiritualism,
it is a bit of real demonology?"

She sighed wearily, then, crossing the room to
her writing-table, she took paper and pen, and wrote:

"DEAR CAPTAIN DANVERS:—I must write this to you;
I must make one final appeal to you—to your manhood,
to your honour, to your love—if, as you declare, you
do really, truly love me."

I appeal first to your manhood, and ask you if it
manly to compel me to fulfil the command of my always
autocratic, unloving father, who has, for reasons of his
But with his eyes fixed upon her—with that strange thrill running through her.

own—caring nothing for my feelings or happiness—decreed that I shall marry you, when, as I have told you myself, I have not, and never shall have, the love and respect for you which should fill the heart of a wife for her husband.

"I appeal to your honor—to your chivalry. Is it the boasted chivalrous conduct of an English gentleman to oppress a weak and helpless girl, to take advantage of her helplessness to do her a life-long injury, to outrage her every thought and feeling of what is due to her."

"And, lastly, I appeal to your love. You declare you love me. Surely, surely, if you did, you would listen to me, you would free me from this hateful bond, for 'love seeks not her own.' You would go away, contenting yourself with writing to my father, telling him that since I cannot bring myself to love you, that you prefer to break off the engagement. It is just possible that, if you do this—and I pray God that, for the sake of the future happiness of yourself as well as myself, that you will—your father, in his fury, will cast me out of his home, etc., but he would lose money for me to become an outcast than to wed a man whom I did not and could not love!"

She closed her letter with an appeal pathetic enough to move a stone, then, a moment or two later, catching sight of one of the gardeners, who was passing her window, she called him, gave him the letter, and asked him to take the earliest opportunity to post it.

She did not say, "Do it secretly; let no one know," but she dropped a shilling into his hand, and smiled a request that he could not fail to understand.

Pocketing the shilling, and slipping the letter into his breast pocket, the man slipped away.

Three minutes later he was prowling along one of the box-hedge-lined walks towards a small, out-of-the-way postern gate, bent on catching the morning outward mail, when he was suddenly confronted by his master, who, in a towering passion, cried:

"Give me that letter!"

The man sulkily produced it.

"You leave my service, you plotting, impudent rascal!" he went on the enraged master. "Leave at once. I will give the head-gardener your money, and you will be off my premises by twelve o'clock!"

The pompous old autocrat had been an observer of what had passed between the young gardener and Dulcie.

Would Dulcie's appeal, had it been allowed to reach the hands of Danvers, have won the release she asked? Who can tell?

That afternoon, an old crony of her mother's, an utter woman of the world, called, and heard whispersings from the mother of Dulcie's attitude of insatiable regarding the marriage.

"Oh, you leave her to me, my dear," she grumbled the caller. "I'll bring her to her senses, as I have more than one girl. My own daughter is very fit for a husband, and I hear whisperings from the mother of Dulcie's attitude of insatiable regarding the marriage."

"I hate him," she cried to me. "Look at his age! He's several years older, and I am not yet eighteen. He's ugly, and has lived an abominably evil life.

"But, my dear child," I said, "you forget that, with one foot in the grave, it is probable that he won't live a year after his marriage. Then you, still in your teens, will be free, and the mistress of a hundred thousand pounds, a town house, and two lovely country places.

"She gave in like a wise girl, and after her wedding, the old lady, her husband, consequently shuffled out of life, and she was free to marry the man she had always loved—a penniless captain in the Blue Guards, her present husband."

The worldly old woman concluded in a self-satisfied way, and went off into the garden to interview Dulcie.

Half-an-hour later, as she drove away from the house, she muttered to herself:

"She's an altogether impossible girl. I was never so snubbed and insulted in my life!"

CHAPTER VIII.
A CARAVAN CAMP.

I wanted a week to her wedding-day, and with her heart growing more and more desponding every hour, Dulcie started out for one of her long walks—she had grown fond of walking. She had tried to plead with her lover to give her up, but in his presence, under the power of that strange, mesmeric influence which he held over her, she was powerless.

But with his eyes fixed upon her—with that strange thrill running through her.
"Only a week!" she Shouldered as she repeated the three words.

She was passing up a lovely lane at the moment, and hearing the sound of some heavy vehicle coming towards her—there was a bend in the lane just ahead—she stood in a gateway to let whatever it might be pass.

But just as the thing got halved and surprised her, it was a huge house on wheels. It was painted an exquisite dove-colour, the carvings and mouldings picked out tastefully in two other subdued colours.

In the panels that formed the front, which first came into view, were bold-lettered terms in a rich, shaded with gold. In the large panel that ran across above the door, she read:

"God commendeth His love towards us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

She had just time to take this in, when her attention was absorbed by the figure of a young man who sat in the open doorway of the caravan, reading. He seemed utterly absorbed in his book, and had evidently not noticed her.

A gipsy-looking man sat upon the opposite shaft, driving the new magnificent draught-horses that drew the splendid van.

A moment later, the thing was abreast of the hollow in which Dulcie stood, and she got a good look at the two men, so far as might be surmised from the due out curling face, and alighted in a knickerbocker costume of a rough, loosely-woven, light-fawn tweed, with thick cycling stockings and brown shoes, the thing which shone her up in his appearance was a certain look in his face that betokened a forceful spirit and a heart and being.

"If it were not too silly," she mused, "I should say that he was an aristocrat; but, of course, a travelling preacher—for he must be that, with all those texts about him—would not belong to our class.

As the vehicle moved past, she read on the side, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned everyone unto his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon Him [Jesus], the iniquity of us all."

On the other side, she read:

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

"The soul that sinneth shall die." "Jesus tasted death for every man."

"He bore our sins in His own body on the Tree."

"In Him we have Redemption."

"The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

"At first, as she moved up the lane, the texts filled all her thoughts, but presently the face of the reader in that doorway came up before her, and, wondering much over the evident marks of refinement and culture in his face and general appearance, she decided to walk slowly back a little way, and see what this man wanted which impressed anything about the van—not the man, oh, no, of course not.

She found the old woman at the cottage of her call—she was a pensioner of his—full of the subject of the van.

"It be a preachin' man, Miss Dulcie," explained the old woman, "an' I've bin goin' to pitch up at Vernon Fowler's cross corners, yes, a tidy-didly bit clear o' the flat-path as crosses to Farhurch.

To Dulcie's surprise, to what cost the man belonged, the old woman replied:

"Never a soul seems to be able to make out, miss. Tyburn don't favour his comein', so I reckon he ain't church; and folks at two chapels don't seem ter know one 'bout him, and don't seem to up-tender 'him' his preachin'.

Mary Dawkins asked him, and Sully Cummins told me, what 'persuasion' he was, an' he kinder smiled as he said back, 'I'm persuaded as there ain't no principles or fears as is able to separate me from Jesus Christ.'

So he's a tootishly bold, up-sto'lin' sort o' Christian."

Dulcie did not go for a very long walk that afternoon, for the texts she had read on the side of that caravan persistently haunted her, and made her long to be alone in that garden place of hers, and somehow the horn of 'Grace and Truth,' returned to her mind immediately.

She spent two long hours in reading the book, and then, with a sigh, rose to go back to the house, murmuring to herself:\n
"What kind of woman must I be in the sight of God? I hear the utterly unsaved woman, according to this book, and the book only appears to emphasize and make clearer what is scattered up and down through all the Bible."

Her soul grew more and more troubled.

Some strange fascination drew her to Farmer Fowler's Cross Corner foot-path next morning. On arriving in sight of the place, she was surprised to see a good-sized tent pitched close to the van.

There was no one in sight, and an unaccountable curiosity prompted her to get a glimpse; if possible, of the interior of this canvas preaching-place.

Just as she reached the tent, and was about to peer cautiously in through the tie-back flaps that formed the door, a young man, dressed in such a masterly fashion, sounded out, and at the same instant, a rich, full tenor voice began to sing:

"Begone, vain world, then hast no charms for me, My captive soul has long been held by thee."

"I listened long to thy vain song, And thought thy music sweet; And thus my soul lay grovelling at thy feet.

"What are thy charms, could I possess the whole? Thy mingled sweets could never feed a soul.

A nobler prize attracts my eyes, Where trees immortal grow—

A fruitful land where milk and honey flow."

The voice sang on, and Dulcie forgot everything in the double miracle of the musical charm of the performance, and of the power of the words as they were carried to her soul.

Presently the fifth verse of the grand old hymn rang out:

"He signed the deed with His bleeding Blood, And ever will to make the payment good; Should hell, and sin, and law come in, To urge a second claim.

They all retire at mention of Thy name."

The singer had just uttered the first note of the next verse when, in her intense gassiness, Dulcie, as she leaned over the window-box, heard a sharp noise in righting her balance again, at the same time noting a little Scotch terrier which she had not before noticed, and which had been dozing at his master's feet.

The barking, snapping little dog made a rush for her, and had almost reached her when the singer turned sharply, and crying "Down, Rough! Down, sir!" rose from his seat quickly and came to the door of the tent.

He raised his hat as he came face to face with Dulcie, and began to apologise for the dog's rush and onslaught.

"Of course I do not mean to consider the apology as due, but I think the dog should come from her, since she was the intruder, and that doggie was well within his rights in resenting her intrusion.

"The fact is," she added, frankly, "your beautiful van was parked in an exceedingly small place, and an inconsiderate or shall I say a woman's—curiosity, impelled me to come and see what this tent could be for, and, if for preaching, how it was arranged.""

"What a perfect gentleman this man is!" she mused, as, yielding to the invitation, she passed inside the tent to more fully examine the arrangements.

Time passed very rapidly, for Jack Armstrong had a winning way with him, and talked well.

Presently he brought the conversation round to the personal question:

"Have you passed from death into life? Are you Born Again?"

"I fear not," she replied, sadly, "I have just been reading a book called 'Grace and Truth,' which has aroused within me some strange thoughts."

He smiled as she spoke of "Grace and Truth," and said:

"My dear friend, if you have been reading that book, and will keep on reading it, verifying its statements by reference to the Bible, and will pray constantly to God's Holy Spirit to lead you into the Truth and Grace of God, you will not be long before you come into the blessing of Eternal Life."

Before anything else could follow, a lad appeared with a telegram for Jack, and Dulcie, taking the hint, wished the missionary good-bye, the pair exchanging a very hearty hand-shake.

The questions, the statements of Jack Armstrong foli-
loved and clung to Dulcie, and her heart grew sadder every hour. She looked very little like a little-girl-elect, for her eyes grew red with secret weeping.

Then, as the days of that last week swept by, how swiftly they passed, she found her thoughts dwelling upon the strong, noble-faced missioner, and deep down in her heart she cried:

"If it was a man like that whom I was going to marry, a man to whom I could look up, a man who instinctively urges me with respect, with...

She paused in her musings, and a hot colour leaped into her face, for, almost, she had added to herself—"with love."

It was the day before that fixed for the wedding, that an irremediable desire seized upon her to hear the missioner preach once at least.

She had learned from the old woman at the cottage, from whom she had before enquired about the van, etc., that there was to be an afternoon service that day, and she determined to go to it.

When the hour for the service began, and she arrived at the tent, she was amazed to find so many people gathered.

The missioner was standing, hymn-book in hand, on the tiny, low platform, about to begin the meeting. The gipsy gave her a hymn-book, and showed her to a vacant seat.

She bowed her head, conventionally, and when once more she lifted her face, looked towards the platform, her eyes met those of the missioner, and she knew that she was recognised.

Dulcie felt that to the day of her death she should never forget that service; it seemed to her as though the speaker, by a divine power, tore away every vestige of her covering, so that, "poor, wrecked, naked, blind, undone, unholy, unthankful, condemned already," she stood, shuddering with a certain fearful looking for judgment before God.

As the closing hymn was being sung she slipped out, determined to go to whom she might otherwise feel compelled to speak.

But, even as she hurried away, like a last despairing effort of some seeker of her soul's good, the words of the hymn followed her:

"If you tarry till you're better
You will never come at all."

As she laid her head down on her pillow that night, her lips moved in the darkness, and she murmured:

"If only I dared rebel against this hateful marriage! For wouldn't the missioner, at that service, be a lie. I cannot, then, kneel before God to-night and ask Him to make me His child."

Tears damped the pillow, as she moaned out:

"If only God would deliver me from this hateful marriage, how truly would I seek Him and serve Him!"

CHAPTER IX.
A MAGAZINE STORY.

AFTER Dulcie had left the preaching-tent, Jack Armstrong discovered that she had left behind her, on the organ, a magazine she had been carrying in her hand. The book was perfectly plain and bore the rubber-stamp brand of the only stationary and fancy shop in the village.

"She takes the mag. in every month, doubtless," he told himself, as he picked it up, "and had called in for it to-day, before coming here."

He opened the book and glanced carelessly at the pictures, as the leaves slipped slowly from beneath the clasp of his finger and thumb.

Suddenly his eye caught the black-lettered title of a chapter, entitled, "Love's Transforming," and, like a flash, he recalled that episode in the Calais-bound train.

"It would be curious," he mused, "if this should prove to be that little girl's story, and her eyes were racing over the first paragraph, and, with a little exclamation of delight, he murmured, half aloud:

"It is the same story!"

Recalling fairly readily all the first part of the little sketch, as he had read it that day—the opening scene, with Fatima, the Burman maiden, walking away in the breaking dawn from the military hospital; her arrival at the chief's palace, and the marble halls, her entrance into the silent, empty palace; and her discovery of the one special, secret room which had remained unopened; her sleep and awakening; then the deep reverie in which she had fallen, as she reviewed her past life.

Now, at the age of fourteen, she had been torn away from her village home by a Dacca chief, who, with his band of cut-throats, had made a raid on the village.

She had been carried away into a mountain fastness, but that same night, she had contrived to escape, and had found her way down to the banks of Burman's great water highway.

Wearying out by her flight, she had entered a long cargo-boat that lay moored to an old landing-stage. Finding herself among some of the lighter, lesser cargos, she immediately fell asleep.

Jack Armstrong read on in the printed story before him:

"She did not awake until noon, and then discovered that the long, uneasy craft was sweeping down the river at a great pace. Seated in the stern, in a high, carved teak chair, was an enormous Burman. He was steering the boat, the carved coxcomb that formed the handle of the tiller, grasped in his strong right hand, his eyes half-closed, and a thick, green beribbon stuck between his lips.

"Fatima was hungry and thirsty, and having little fear that she would be kindly received, she crept out from her hiding, and stood by the boat-stoker, concocting a pretty little fiction to account for her presence on the boat.

"She had been right in surmising that she would meet kindly treatment, and at sunset landed at the place of the boat's destination.

"She had scarcely landed when she came face to face with an old man named Peg Bolo, whom she immediately recognised as her father's brother. He, too, recognised his niece, and hearing her story, took her to his house, kept her until, by his influence, she got into the palace of the prince of the place, as servant.

"Three months later, there came one of those Burmese national troubles, that brought the native authorities into conflict with the British. The prince fled; his place was seized by his brother, who found, and the British troops were encamped in the neighbourhood.

"Among these troops was a man who, though in rank only a common soldier, was popularly considered—and rightly so—of good birth, in fact he was a gentleman of rank.

"This man—Jack Smith, as he had chosen to call himself, while walking alone one evening, out of camp, had the good fortune to save Fatima from a drunken trooper, and thus won the pretty little Burman's eternal regard.

"After that day she met Jack Smith frequently, though always apparently by chance, though, had the English soldier been less self-absorbed, he would have recognised that, on her part, these meetings were not so accidental as they appeared.

"But the first day a week when Fatima missed him, and heard that he was ill—delirious with fever, and she managed to get taken on as nurse to him.

"No mother ever watched or nursed a bale more devotedly or self-sacrificingly than did this Burman girl the man whom her young and impressionable heart had learned to love dearer than her life.

"A strangely complex thing is the heart of a woman, be she only as young as Fatima!"

"When the crisis of the fever had passed, and her self began to show signs of recovery, the Englishman, the craft away, as we saw her in the first few paragraphs of our story, lest she should betray herself to the nick-man."

"All this passes through her mind, as she sits in that same corner room, with an unconscious smile,

"...I never knew love," she mused. "'Til I met sahib Smith. I have heard the songs of love of our own land; I have heard of the love which the mem-sahibs bear to

"..."
their lovers and husbands; I have seen an English maid-
gathered to the heart of her English soldier-lover, while he 
had bent his proud neck and kissed her again and again; I 
have seen that at such times the whole face of both of the 
lovers has been changed. They have been transformed 
with a new beauty; their eyes have had a
light in them, a light that one might think were the 
gods of our race—not the idols we worship, which are 
soulless, hideous things—but the gods our old, 
sacred stories tell of. Yes, I have seen all this wonder-
tul transformation in the faces of the English lovers, 
and we said to myself—

"What is this great, this strange, this marvellous 
thing—love? For I have never known or felt it.

"But that day, when I looked up into the face of my
sahib, who saved my life, and every day and night since 
I have nursed him, I have learned what love is, for oh

She clasped her hands in front of her; her face was 
momentarily transformed; her body was thrown forward 
with a kind of eager, expectant movement, as she con-
tinued—

"Oh, for my Jack, my sahib, I love you! I could 
die for you—I will die for you, if needs be. But oh, my
love, can I ever win your affection? Will you, an English
soldier, ever love a Burman woman? Would you ever
mane her?

She sighed; two great tear-drops rolled from her beau-
tiful black eyes as she added—

"I fear not! Then what, what shall I do? Must I
live in heart-longing all my days? Must I die of want of
him? Is it not my fate to do my best and play my part?

"If I cannot see you sometimes, I am sure I shall die!

For a few moments she sat still and motionless, 
as though cast in bronze. Slowly a smile crept into her 
face, and, her lips parting, she said half-audibly—

"Does love transform my face? I wondered

"Her eyes gleamed with a wondrous light as she let
her mind dwell upon it, and her lips softly speak, the name
of the man she loved

"I will see if love has changed my face," she said, as,
caressing beneath the cushions of the divan, she drew
forth a good-sized hand-glass, and gazed long into
its mirrored surface.

As she studied herself in the glass, her eyes seemed to
grow fuller and brighter; her face to glow with a strange
lightening of the dusky skin, and a brilliant smile to rest
upon all her features.

"Yes," she mused, "I think love has transformed my
dark face, even as it does the faces of the English
women.

"And holding the glass before her, thought suddenly
suggested, 'What is the use of your love for him, if he
does not love you? What use is the transformation of
your face, if he does not see it and know its cause? If
he does not gaze upon you with an eye which, what
matters, the reflection of your face in the glass?'

"This thought was too much for her. She lifted up
her voice and wept.

"When the sobs and tears had passed away, she lifted
her face from the cushion where she had buried it, and
starting to her feet, she drew herself up resolutely as she
said aloud—

"I will go to the ruined temple—none will see me
there. I will ask the gods to help me, then I will help
myself, for I think I know what will be good to do. We
shall see—"

Five minutes later she had left the apartment, and
by ways well-known to her she was going swiftly to the
ruined pagoda.

The ruins of the old pagoda, gleaming white with their
covering, showed clearly through the trees by
which it was surrounded. The ground all about was
strewn with debris, but the main part of the domelike
interior was fairly perfect.

Through a rent in one part of the outer wall, the
claring sunshine filtered in, flooding half the place with
light. Beyond the line of that light, the place gradually
melted into dimmer and yet dimmer recesses.

The inner corridor was recessed at regular intervals,
making room for small shrines, which held dimmier
reproductions of the great idol, who, like Dagon of old,
lay face downwards amid the litter on the floor of the
pagoda.

Into one of the dimmest, darkest of these recesses,
before one of these subsidiary shrines, Fatima prostrated
herself, murmuring the strange gibberish she had learned
as prayer.

For nearly an hour she remained in worship, then
sighing deeply, because of the ever-unsatisfying sense of
the presence of him, that in her worship, she rose and
passed slowly out of the parlour.

Returning by the same way that she had come, she
gave herself up to think out the problem of her imme-
fiate future. She had asked the gods to help her, but, as
before, when he had hinted, she expected that the real
help would come from her own exertions, and her mind
was busy as she briskly walked, as to how best to help
herself to the consummation of her desire—to gain the
love and become the wife of her sahib.

Dusk came on when she had slept all the morning, she
got up and began to gather many things together and
make them up into bundles.

She found plenty of jewellery, much clothes, and
knapsacks of one kind or another, and the whole mag-
in some of the subordinate officers of the force in pos-
session. Never before had she seen such an outpouring of
ladies and gentlemen as to the presence of the present and
place.

Fatima had thanked her relative, but had told him she
preferred staying, and it had been by his assistance, 
later on, that she had secured for herself the office of
madam to Jack.

"It was to her uncle that she had now decided to
go. She could act as housekeeper for him, and would
thus be close to her sahib. She would always know
what he was doing, where he was likely to go, and, she
thought, she would have opportunities of actually seeing him,
and perhaps—"

The thought made her heart thrill with wondrous
hope and delight. Perhaps he would get to know she
was near, and would learn to love her.

When at his leisure in the morning and at sunset—there
was no moon that night—old Fatima got up and return from
the palace to the hut of Peg Boloos, and on each journey
from the palace, she was loaded with spoil.

When day dawned, Peg Boloos's hut was a little
mine of wealth—*

* For a long time after his recovery, and when he was free
to go whither he would, 'Ranjer Jack,' as his com-
rades had christened him, had a vague consciousness
that he was constantly shadowed by some presence—
more especially was this the case in the hours of even-
ting and night.

At first he thought it was only a relic of nervousness
that had been part of his convalescent experience. Then
slowly it dawned upon him that whatever it was that be
somehow so often felt near him, it was at least a cor-
porate presence.

Sometimes he had half-defined fears of Indian thug;
at other times, he wondered whether among the Borozzis
there was someone following him, he said, 'as far as the
vedetta of Corsica and Italy. If so, had he aroused
ones of these blood-scents against himself by his boldness
and daring in the Dacot hunts of the past?

Once he twice, walking quietly the streets of the
evening, when he had become conscious of this shadow-
ing presence, he had dived off in the direction he had
felt it to be. At such times, he had heard the rustle of
the foliage through which the shadow had passed, and
once he had been almost certain he had seen a female form, but he thought anything or anyone.

"His mind was, however, more at rest after this last experience, for he jumped to the conclusion that this puzzling shadow was the Burmese woman, Fatima."

"But why did she lose so mysteriously after nursing me so faithfully?" he asked himself. "Is it possible I wonder, that the dear little thing in love with me? Phew, that's a complication I least looked for."

"At first he smiled at the thought. Then, though the darkness hid it, his face became very grave, as he wondered whether such a thing might mean."

"I must be careful," he said softly to himself, as he turned and went back to his quarters.

"We need to tell our readers that it was Fatima who thus shadowed our hero. Her poor heart, starved for love, could not remain in her uncle's hut when there was any opportunity of seeing the object of her affection, so she had taken to dogging his steps when he walked about the grounds.

"But it was poor fare for a heart like hers, to feed on, and, tiring of her scanty love-rations, she determined to throw herself in his way, and at least give him a chance to return her affection."

"She was searching for my care of him," she told herself. "These English savages never forget those who help them. I will not follow him out at a distance tonight, I will meet him. He will recognise me; he will stop and speak to me, our hands will touch; I shall see his face; read his eyes, have his smile rest upon me. I shall hear his voice speak my name, Fatima. None of my own people ever spoke my name to make it sound so sweet as he does. We shall walk and talk together. I have asked the gods to help me, and I will just let my love work on Jack, so that he must love me."

"We shall see! We shall see!"

"With the radiant smile of a great confidence, she began to prepare herself for the evening.

"A quarter-of-an-hour later, Peg Boolee came into the hut, churning with news.

"What dost thou think, Fatima? he asked.

"Then, answering his own question, he went on:

""The soldier sahib who saved you from the drunken forger, who was killed, who has made you a great officer. He is the son of one of England's great ones, though none knew it but himself, for he made himself the common soldier. But he does not stay in our land. His father, the great one in England, has sent for him, and the Queen does not keep words or so that he must love you."

"When does he go?"

"Fatima's voice was hawse and low as she asked her question. Her heart was dead and cold within her. She told herself that she had delayed her wooing too long.

"Suddenly hearing her uncle's reply of "Oh, very soon," she began to inwardly upbraid herself for her procrastinating folly."

"But he was the poor soldier only, I might have won his love, but now that he is a great man, a rich man, a big officer, he will not notice me."

"The comb in her hand, with which she had been dressing her long black hair, was cast aside, her hand fell nervously into her lap, and she gave herself over to sorrow.

"She did not shadow her sahib that night, nor for many other nights, but she kept herself posted up with all the news of his movements."

"During the progress of a farewell banquet given to Lord John Avolling (as Ranker Smith was now known to really be), he strolled out into the cool gloom of the moonless night for a breath of fresh air."

"He had gone but a hundred yards, or so, when he heard a woman's voice close to his side cry:"

"Sahib!"

"He knew the voice and he knew the figure, as turning, he saw Fatima near to him."

"Astonished as he was at finding her there, and at her voluntarily addressing him, he was no less pleased to see her.

"Greeting her warmly, he held her hand in his—what a soft, pretty, shapely little hand it was, despite its dusky skin—as he talked gratefully to her of her race and nation."

"But why did you go from my side, Fatima, just as I was beginning to come back to life. I had no opportunity of thanking you."

"The beautiful Burmese woman might well have been of the newer India race, so startlingly did she reply."

"With a passionate warmth, and wonderful expression in her imperfect English, she told the amazed Jack that she dared not stay until he was conscious. Told him in language, and with a warmth that truly took away his breath, that she had never known what love was until she saw him. That her heart was overweiomened; that she had purposely kept out of his way, lest her love should prove too great for her to hide it. Told him everything that we knew, then wished him blessing, and before our astonished hero could grasp the situation fully, she flung her arms about his neck, crying:"

"Sahib! Sahib! Farewell! Fatima will never see you more. Kiss me once for the love I bear you."

"Jack bent his head, and kissed her smooth, brown forehead. Her arms were swiftly withdrawn from his neck, and with another heartily-uttered "Farewell!" that sounded like a great sob, she plunged into the darkness of a thicket of mangroves, and was gone.

"But where was her wall of agony was there in that last word! But who would have dreamed that she could have conceived such an affection for me?"

"His name was called twice across the grounds before he was moved. When he did reply, and went back to the mess-room, there was a strange gravity in his face, and a soberness in his heart, that kept him comparatively quiet during the remainder of the evening. He was thinking of Fatima."

"And she? She lay upon her face amid the debris of the ruined pagoda, staring, with her broken heart, to curse the helpless, powerless gods of her race, whose aid she had sought, but who had failed her. She had done her part to win her lover, her gods had done nothing."

As Jack Armstrong read the last word of the little sketch, he murmured:

"Not bad for that little, unsophisticated, Eastern-bred child! I was wrong to think of a small and whether she is really making a living, or whether she is starving, with her mother, in some wretched garret, instead of rubbing comfortably along in the little cottage she had talked of. I should like to meet her again. Perhaps I may, who knows?"

CHAPTER X

IN THE RHODODENDRONS.

UCLIE awoke on her wedding morn with a sense of horror upon her, that, for a moment, puzzled her; but she quickly recalled the meaning of her horrid sense, and while the starting tears filled her eyes, she murmured, almost ghastly:

"Oh, that God would interfere for my deliverance!"

No Venetian virgin ever dreamed for her life-long sacrifice with more sorrow than did Dulcie, as she clutched herself in her wedding garments.

"God has not helped me," she moaned to herself, as she passed up the church-nave, at the hour appointed for the performance of the tragedy—the italicised words are all that any one who could involve calling the affair a religious service."

Even as the cleric began to recite the "office," Dulcie involuntarily half-turned, and looked round the church as though she thought God might, in some way, interpose to stop the scene that she had consented to act."

But there was no interference, and the words were finally pronounced that made her the legal wife of Captain Danvers.
In the Danvers family there was a fine old property consisting of a lovely old Elizabethian mansion and grounds and park, all well and carefully maintained, together with some forty-five thousand acres of land, all let at good rentals as dairy and other farms.

The present owner was an uncle of the Captain Danvers of our story, a man named Archibald V. Danvers. This valuable property, on the death of his uncle, would revert, in its entirety, to our Danvers, but as the former was only fifty years of age, and hale as a fifty-year oak, there seemed no likelihood of its coming into the hands of our Captain Danvers for many a long year to come.

Between the uncle and nephew there was a very firm friendship, and on his nephew's arranged marriage becoming known to Archibald Danvers, he wrote to say that, as he was off for a very long cruise, he—"Charley"—might have the use of his place for a good long honeymoon, an offer which Captain Danvers gladly accepted.

Immediately after the wedding-breakfast, Dulcie and he started for Gowricadden, as the old Elizabethian mansion was quaintly and cumbrously called.

The whole village through which the pair passed, after alighting at the station, was instinct with life and movement, in a word, it was in fête.

Bunting, gossip, laughter, joking, everything that was merry and bright, even to brilliant sunshine, was abroad. All work had been suspended for the day, for every man-Jack, woman and child in the place lived in one of the Danvers' cottages, and the Danvers were good masters, had always been, and the people were loyal in their glee on this day of the marriage of their future squire; and the welcome which the bridal pair had received, quickened even poor, sad-hearted Dulcie into something like smiling responsiveness.

Her husband had been unable to make anything of her through all the journey, and to all his would-be caresses she had but one answer:

"Don't force your kisses on me. I have told you frankly I cannot, at present, love you. If the time ever
coming that I can, I will be more patient—more yielding.

He let her be. In his mind, black, evil soul, he felt murderously savage with her, but he hid his feeling, some instinct warning him that it would not do for him to goad her into any kind of open rebellion.

They arrived at the house at six. Dulcie was ordered for half-past seven, and Dulcie went to her own room to wait and to prepare for this first dinner in her new life as wife.

She had some tea brought to her, then, robed only in a loose wrapper; she had the windows shaded, and laid herself upon a couch and tried to sleep.

But every few moments convinced her that sleep was out of the question. "I prepare to meet thy God!" words uttered by that missioner in her hearing, lived persistently before her mind, and ringing in her ears she seemed to hear the words that had followed her across the field where the tent was:

"If you tryst till you're better
You will never come at all."

And with a passionate, sobbing cry, she buried her face in a cushion, crying:

"It is too late for me, for have I not lied in the presence of God before that marriage took to-day?"

Downstairs, the angry Danvers began his household censure by shouting himself up in his den—there was a room he always used when at Gowickenden—and by drinking freely.

"It would serve her right," he muttered, "if I get eddily drunk and go upstairs with this whip"

He took a long, heavy riding-whip from the corner as he spoke, and with a murderous look in his eyes, he slashed the air once or twice with the whip.

"And flogged her to my heart's content," he added;

"and I would do so, if I went on."

"Public opinion" loomed up before his mind, and he feared the giant. Draining his glass, he presently opened the door of the room and passed out, the merry laughter of the tenants, who were being entertained in the park, reaching his ears as he emerged into the hall.

"I'll look well just to go out to those joshins," he muttered. "Put in some sort of appearance; make an apology for my lady's non-appearance; tell them she's got headache and all that from the journey, and promise that when our first baby is christened they shall have another joshing like this, and that then my lady shall be present among them."

He laughed grimly at his own miserable joke, and
taking his hat and stick from the rack, he pressed out of
to his way to the park, and was soon moving about among the people, chatting as affably as

There were several hundred people, all told, in the place, and they were everywhere—in groups, in little crowds, in couples, or singly.

He soon quartered an hour in the park among them, then, hearing seven o'clock chime from the steeple clock, he muttered to himself:

"By George, I must be off and dress!" Then moved rapidly away.

He took what he conceived a short cut back. This way led him past a great clump of very high rhododendrons.

He was hurrying along, when clearly, distinctly, there came to his ear, out of the clump, the double call:

"Charley! Charley!"

He gave a quick, alarming start, glanced all round, then, with wonder, glanced, and saw a shadow in the very face of this clump.

There had been a note of command in the voice that called him, but this in itself would not have pulled him up so sharply, or have caused him to respond to that call. The fact was, he recognised the voice, and knew that its owner was not to be trifled with.

Swiftly, silently, after another cautious look all round, he motioned a few of light into the very heart of that rhododendron clump.

No one ever knew all that passed between him and the unknown visitor, whoever it was. No one saw him enter, and he never came out.

The following, thrashing tenantry were suddenly startled by the sound of a shot, and many eyes turned towards the spot.

Dulcie came down to dinner dressed with special care, and waited in the drawing-room for the coming of her husband.

No one could tell anything, save that he was seen going towards the park a little before seven.

Messengers were sent, but their enquiries resulted in a certain amount of alarum, for people talked of a shot that had been heard.

The rhododendrons were searched, and the missing man was found dead—shot through the heart.

The next stage of this story will advance under the title of—"A VOW OF VENGEANCE."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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CHAPTER I.
IN HER OWN RIGHT.

"What if he shoot himself, I wonder, an' if he didn't, who did shoot 'im?"
The village oracle propounded this double-barreled question to himself first, then to a favourite knot of local gossips. But, save to remark that "that's jes' wot us 'ud like to know," the gossips had nothing to reply to the two queries.

Everybody connected with the case desired to know exactly what the oracle and his cronies agreed that they too, wanted to know, but no one could discover anything as to the perpetrator or the manner of the perpetration of the crime.

From the first moment of the doctor's examination of the body he was assured, and he declared, that the wound could not have been self-inflicted. Then there was the fact that no weapon was discovered anywhere though all

Dulcie noted how grave he looked as he read the two wires, but she was not prepared for their startling import.

the neighbourhood of the thicket, where the body was found, was carefully searched, every yard of it; and the medical testimony was conclusive that death must have been instantaneous, and a person dying thus could not, therefore, have disposed of a weapon in any way, so that this finally disposed of any suggestion of suicide.

Then who shot Captain Danvers, and how was it done? No one knew; no one could suggest anything; no one had discovered anything.

The body had not been borne to the arranged bridal chamber, but one of a suite of rooms which the captain, when living, had been accustomed to occupy when visiting his uncle.

Dulcie was, of course, more or less prostrate with shock. She could not grieve for the murdered man after the fashion of a wife, since she had never loved him, had literally loathed him. Still, she would have been less than human if she had not been shocked at the occurrence, and the nervous tension she had been enduring through the trying month of her engagement helped to make her more susceptible to the horror of the new and awful situation.

The inquest opened about two in the afternoon of the next day, but there was very little of real importance to be gleaned, the function becoming almost purely formal.

Dulcie gave the little evidence that was possible to her, which only amounted to this—that on arrival at the house, after their journey, she had gone to her room, to rest previous to dressing for dinner; that she had left her husband downstairs, and had not seen him alive after that.
Neither doctor, coroner, jury, servants, nor anyone else present had any idea of the peculiar relations that had existed between the husband and wife, so that many wagoners of the town of Dulcie as she gave her evidence, a very few only recognising the forcedness of this calmness.

After Dulcie's evidence and retirement from the court, one or two other witnesses were called, but nothing new was brought forth. A fact the less noticed was that the murderer by some person or persons unknown was paroled; permitted to inter the body was granted, then, like martyrs of other crimes, the affair was relegated to that limbo of dark, undiscovered deeds, the list of which is so long that every day, almost every hour of this crooked world's history.

In a week from when the murdered body had been discovered, it was laid in the family vault. After the funeral the will of the dead man was read—a will made and altered only three weeks before his marriage and death, and framed to meet the new condition of life upon which he was about to enter.

There were no relatives to gather to hear the will read, the absent travelling uncle being the only living relation, and having been bequeathed to at no less than four different foreign towns, and three distant ports, no word had come from him.

The will was a short one, for, as we saw in our first book, Captain Danvers was not burdened with mummy; or, to put it a little more quaintly, left a lovely, old-fashioned place in Berkshire, not a large estate by any means, but beautifully, picturesquely situated, and full of old-time historic associations.

The place—The Beaufors as it was called—with other properties, realizing barely eight hundred a year, and all other estate real and personal, was left absolutely to Dulcie.

The latter had been to The Beaufors once, Danvers having taken her to see it one day. Dulcie had then been charmed with the place, and her heart had cried out in its silent agony:

"If only I could take to the man as I could take to this lovely old place."

In quick calls with the Danvers solicitor over her position, she had just begun to beg him to take up her abode at The Beaufors, when two wires were delivered at the same moment to the lawyer. Both were dated from the same place abroad, one of them having been telegraphed to the legal gentleman's office, whether it had first gone.

Dulcie noted how grave he looked as he read the first wire, but she was not prepared to hear the startling import. Her late husband's uncle had died suddenly, and the news was delivered on the very day when the verbal stipulation had hurried the captain into the presence of God.

The old lawyer had been legal man for both uncle and nephew, and now, after the first shock of surprise was over, he informed Dulcie that by virtue of her marriage with the heir, all the property was hers, and that the death of the uncle had gone to her—her—every thing possessed by the older man, including the magnificent place in which she was then domiciled, together with a handsome old house, and an enormous amount of well-invested capital, became hers, so that she would be an exceedingly wealthy woman in her own right.

Her father and mother were staying in the house, having come for the funeral, and immediately after the interview between her and the lawyer, the latter, after having informed them of the surprising intelligence just received, hastened to congratulate Dulcie on her sudden accession to wealth.

They did not find her very enthusiastic with them, for their affluence had always been known to her. Dulcie had been under the utmost limits since they had so cruelly sacrificed her to that loveless marriage.

She made the interview very short, and as her friend (for she found him all this), the lawyer, was compelled to return home, the very day, she desired to spend some time alone, leaving her father and mother to their own devices, for she was in that mood when unassuming society would have been a literal torture to her.

She met them, as usual, at breakfast next morning, and after the hurried meal, which she had taken, her thoughts began to unfold several little self-consented, self-conceived plans for their future, which they had evidently discussed over together.

These plans, as Dulcie saw, meant that they proposed to fasten themselves upon her in a variety of ways, and she immediately determined:

"You must listen to me a moment or two, mother and father," she began. "I am going to be frank with you. I can afford to be so now, after all that has passed between us during the past five or six weeks."

She paused for the briefest fraction of a second, then continued:

"I shall never forget that you are my parents, and will give you all the honour which I can honestly give you, but, at the same time, I cannot forget that you sold me to a man whom I loathed as just as though, in the inhuman slave market, you had sold me to the first Sultan's agent who might have bid for your female child to augment his master's harem. I cannot, I say, easily forget this, or that out of that hideous, unholy transaction with the man whose name I bear legally, and whose body was torn in half before marriage, death, and a year later, the last traces of the marble vault, all my sorrow of life has come—"

"And your wealth, too, miss?" bellowed her father, in his blustering, angry fashion.

You must not bellow and bluster in my house in that fashion," she replied, quietly, adding, as her father glared at her in blank, helpless amazement:

"No wealth can ever make up for what I have suffered, and the absolute sense of shame which was more before my marriage, as I contemplated the hideous life into which you sold me, I can scarcely think of my present weakness, had yielded my promise to complete."

Again the pompous old man interrupted, and with eyes now blazing with rage and anger, he began to bellow out some new protest, but Dulcie stopped him. Cowed by her surrender, the man, who had never seen or even known that she possessed in her composition, he turned sharply, savagely to his wife, saying:

"Go and pack up! We'll leave here at once!"

An hour later they were gone, and, alone in her room, Dulcie, on glancing through her relations, found she had never seen or even known that she possessed in her composition, she turned sharply, savagely to his wife, saying:

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"Go and pack up! We'll leave here at once!"

Even as she murmured the words, the memory of a line or two sung in her hearing by one of the housemaids in her father's house, returned to her, linking themselves to the text:

"I've found a friend, oh, such a friend! He loved me ere I knew him."

This friend must be Christ," she sobbed, "but I do not know, I do not understand how to have him for my friend."


CHAPTER II.

A TROUBLESOME VISITOR.

The days had merged into weeks since that unknown assassin's shot had sealed the fate that bound Dulcie to her unhappy husband. She had closed up the vast mansion where the Danvers had lived and considerably reduced the instructions old to the lawyer to put the estate into the market. Thin this he had done, and had had no difficulty in finding a good purchaser in the person of Caleb Stubbs, a man who had begun his life as a colt boy on a farm, and who, to perfect his industry and training, had drifted, at eighteen, into the fastest ranks of the hard-working navvies of our land, and at thirty-six years of age, when he purchased the Danvers property, he was one of the largest contractors for canals, railways, and cities. Thus the couple, who a short time before had been looking for a man of their own kind, the Danvers estate he took letters of patent, and having the Caleb Stubbs of his birth registry, he took the name of Sydney Danvers.
Dulcie had retired to the Berkshire place, and was busy (by means of some of her immense wealth) in beautifying the interior of the old house, which had been allowed to fall out of condition considerably.

But amid all her other thoughts, the desire to find God was ever present with her, and full of this desire, she made a special call upon the vicar of the parish, the Rev. Cunningham Corinth.

The vicar was a tall, well-built man, with finely-chiselled, patrician features; a broad, high, massive brow; a clustering mass of silver-white hair; a smooth, clean-shaven face; the smile and grace of the courtier, yet bearing within the stamp of the scholar.

He was, in fact, a noted scholar, an authority on more than one branch of archæology. He was a religious man, but neither converted nor spiritually-minded, but just the deadest of dead formalists.

He listened to Dulcie's yearning, passionate cry for guidance, for direction, for light upon the path to God, His face, all the time expressing a certain mingled surprise and amusement.

"My dear Mrs. Danvers," he began, in reply, "believe me, you are distressing yourself quite unnecessarily about these things, your present state of feeling being doubtless that peculiar morbidity which frequently affects the female mind as a consequence of severe shock. The horror of the tragedy that has so recently come into your life has doubtless affected you thus."

His eyes wandered from Dulcie's earnest, beseeching, troubled face to a cluster of remarkable fossils, which he had been in the act of classifying when she had been announced. His heart was with his hobby, and the business of his wealthy parishioner bored and troubled him.

But Dulcie's heart was too eager for the peace which the world could not give her, to be easily daunted, and returning to the subject, she told him that she was not a bit subject to morbidity, but that her whole soul was in full stretch after God.

"God, my dear Mrs. Danvers," he replied, in his suave, even tones, "is to be found only in the faithful performance of the ordinances of the Church: we find life—physical life, I mean now, by my illustration—in the food of which we partake at our daily meals, and we find spiritual life as we perform the ordinances of the Church."

He smiled in a self-satisfied, triumphant fashion, as though this last utterance must be regarded as final and conclusive. His two large, white, carefully-cared-for hands came together as he spoke, the thumbs and finger-tips meeting cone-fashion.

Then, before he could follow up his ultimatum with any further utterance, Dulcie cried eagerly:

"I do not follow you at all, Mr. Corinth. You say that we find physical life in feeding on the food we eat. I always supposed that life was given to us in birth, and that we took our daily food to sustain the life thus given. There is a life from God, I am sure—

A Divine life. A good old nurse of mine used to speak of it as the New Birth,

"Oh, SAVe ME! SAVe ME! I shall be ruined if you don't."
A VOW OF VENGEANCE.

spirtual change, and it is this new, this higher, this Divine life, which I wish to find. Tell me, show me how I may receive this life, and then (it may be) that it may be sustained by religious ordinances, as the physical life of your illustration, Mr. Corinth, is sustained by the daily food that you transport to your body.

A distinct shade of annoyance filed his face as he replied quickly:

"But our Church, Mrs. Danvers, teaches that an infant, admitted into it at baptism, becomes a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of God—that, in plain old, the rite of baptism becomes what is known as the New Birth; and all this jargon about conversion is only the product of a ranting, ignorant, unlearned Nonconformist."

Dulcie’s face was full of protest, and her voice rang with surprise as she said:

"I cannot, cannot conceive that what you now say can be the right view, Mr. Corinth, for many reasons. You must pardon me if I speak plainly, because this question involves so much to you. In the first place, if the rite of baptism makes an infant a child of God and a member of the Kingdom of Heaven, how does it happen that, as is well known, quite ninety per cent. of all criminals have passed through the Church’s rite of baptism? Then as to my expression of desire after the New Birth being the responsibility of the infant, the Church makes no mention of it at all, but the repetition of the words of my faithful old nurse, who was a loyal, staunch member of the Church of England, and who was converted under the ministry of a Church of England clergyman, one who taught from the Bible the rite of the New Birth."

The vicar squirmed about in his chair, puzzling how to reply to the richest parishioner he had, fearing to offend her, for he was anxious about the land which he had just started for the tower and bells of his church. Then, as he rose to go, he added:

"Will you let this matter remain in abeyance for a week, Mrs. Danvers? Meanwhile, I will consult what authorities I can find on the subject."

Dulcie never quite understood how she came to think of or to say what she did, but rising to her feet to leave, considering that his request closed the interview, she said:

"I must leave the matter, evidently, as far as you are concerned, Mr. Corinth, though it seems a dangerous and stupid uncertainty of life, to defer a matter like this for a week, when it concerns one’s welfare for a whole eternity, and when one may die before the present day ends, to say nothing of a week."

She picked up her card-case, which she had laid upon the table, and with a sharp little smile, as she prepared to go, added:

"Yes, it must be left, Mr. Corinth, as far as you are concerned, though I wonder that, since the Bible is the only Word of God we have, you cannot consult that, and a glance through it would tell you half the truths of the other."

She laid out her hand in farewell. He took it, and ignoring her last words, said with a relieved smile:

"I will, if you like, Mrs. Danvers, call upon you this day week, and shall hope to be able to put your mind at rest."

She assented silently to this arrangement, and turned to leave the room, when, laying his hand upon her cluster of newly-arrived fossils, he said blandly:

"I wonder, Mrs. Danvers, if you could interest me in a few of your fossils?"

She stared at him in blank amaze for an instant, then said in sad, reproachful, reproving tones:

"I want bread; you offer me stones."

For once in his life a touch of shame mounted into the smooth, even face of the great church dignitary, and, absolutely speechless, he accompanied his guest through the hall, and saw her safely into her victoria.

And Dulcie, riding away from the vicarage, and thinking over the strange ignorance and unconcern of her host, together with his evident exclusive interest in the ologies, found herself softly repeating certain lines she had met with the day before:

"Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But his love to that which is dear.
That never, never dies,
How make mine own election sure,
And when I fall on earth, secure
A mansion in the skies."

"God help me!" she softly cried. "I wish I knew to whom to go for help in this matter."

To whom should you go, Dulcie Danvers, save to the Christ of God, for He hath not only "the words of eternal life," but He Himself is the Life.

CHAPTER III.

A FROWSY GODDESS OF LUCK.

THE BEAUFYGS, as Dulcie’s Berkshire home was called, was three miles from Stanfog, a bustling, thriving little town of thirty thousand people, most of whom were employed in the many factories which raised their tall, grimy chimneys high above the lofty city. They felt their foul smoke contemplatively to the heavens, filling all the firmament with so dense a haze that it is little wonder that the eight-year-old Stanfog schoolboy, when asked what colour is the sky? replied "A colour of a sold slate."

In one of the back-streets of the town was a mean little house with three entrances. One of these entrances was in the front of the house, and from the street; another at the back, from a narrow alley-way that ran between the backs of two rows of houses; and the third at the side of the house that abutted upon a piece of wild waste, once a bit of moor, but long since made into beaten desert by the constant play of thousands of footballers.

It was not without design that the party who dwelt in the house had chosen its triple entrances being a dosser-entrance to her peculiar calling, and having regard to the necessities of her customers.

"Lottie Luck" was the name by which she was known to the hundreds of people with whom she did business, though whether she was entitled to the first half of her name was quite as doubtful as her right to the second half.

Lottie Luck was a bold, fast, young-looking woman, handsome in a faded, deteriorated style, and with incredible marks of much dissipation stamped upon her face. She was generally seen (for unless she was engaged in a strong leaning towards rank tawdriness, and a decided cast towards that slovenliness which so often follows on the heels of drink.) on Monday morning, about eleven. Ever since eight o’clock, when the hooters of the various factories had belloved their breakfast note, there had been a constant coming and going of people of all ages and both sexes, the majority of whom left the house by an exit other than the way by which they had entered.

She walked at her own rate, and went in and out with her many customers, varying the very free-and-easy chat, and the smoking indulged in, with snatches of music-hall song.

A nobody, red-faced woman, carrying a puny, sickly baby in her arms, and wearing two fully-developed black-eyes on her face, slithered in with the shuffle of downtown slippers, and dropping into the chair opposite the female bookie, asked:

"Wot’s yer think o’ Wild Danvil for the Market; Lottie? What’s yer offerin’ on her?"

"Seven to one," replied the bold-eyed Lottie.

"Right yer are, my dear. Book me in bobs," replied the frowzy creature, placing her coin in Lottie's hand. Then with a "Can’t stop a minute this morning, my dear," she started going, but as she dealt with her many customers, instantly followed by a white-haired, tottering old man, whose hands, palsied with heavy drinking, could scarcely hold the coin he took from her pocket to stake.

A boy of fourteen, an errand boy from a grocer’s in the town, with his basket on his arm, followed the old man; there was not more than five minutes’ break between the going of the one and the coming of the other. Lottie was full of smiles to the little fellow, and as he came nearer, walked to meet him, and lifting the corner of the newspaper that he had just bought with some goods in his basket, she laughed cunningly as she said:

"What’s the brand to-day, Freddy"

"Three Star." Real tip-top. The very best we keep," laughed the boy. "An’ look here, Lottie," he went on, "I’ll have to allow me one cigarette, and you give me all these brands as I bring yer, or it won’t be worth the chances I takes to run this yer blockade business."

The bold-eyed, evil-hearted tempress lifted the bottle of brandy from the basket, popped it quick on a shelf
A VOW OF VENGEANCE.

CHAPTER IV.

BY THE LAKE-SIDE.

The girl Carrie Harding was apprenticed to a dressmaker in the town. Her mother had been left a widow with the one child, Carrie, her all-life and all-wealth, struggles as any ever endured or written. She had eventually taken to service again, her child being old enough, and pure enough, as she dreamed, to be safe in lodgings with a kind Scotchman, whom the mother and child had at one time lodged together.

Carrie had been a regular attendant at one of the churches in the town, had belonged to the young women's Bible class, and though not a converted girl, had taken very near to the Kingdom.

"Lend money!" The woman laughed mockingly as she spoke. "Not me, my dear. I wouldn’t lend money, not a penny piece, to my own mother, if I had one—a mother I mean, not a penny piece," she added quickly, "for I’ve got one or two moulder pennies left yet."

She laughed again, a cruel, mocking, insulting laugh, as she added:

"No Carrie, my girl, you have come to the wrong shop to borrow money. I’m straight and square with my customers, but I bar lending; so you’d better put a few of your legs up the spout, my gal, or try someone else, for I—"

With a cry wildly, pathetically pleading enough to have moved the sympathy of a bronze statue, the girl broke in with:

"Oh, don’t, don’t refuse me! I shall be ruined completely! I will pay you without fail on Monday, when I return from seeing my mother."

The mocking face of the woman grew red with passion, as she cried angrily:

"I can’t see why you here making a scene and a row. If you could not afford to put your bit on your fancy, you had no business to do it, and it is no use your coming to me inveigling like some kid that has spent its happy, eaten its cake, then blubbers because the currants have given it the stomach-ache. No, my dear, you must—"

With a cry more passionately agonising than before, the girl, in her desperate pleading, flung herself on her knees before the woman, and seizing her hand, cried:

"Oh, save me, save me! I shall be ruined if you don’t!"

The woman snatched her hand away, and attempted to draw away from the pleading girl; but she was not quick enough, for the child caught the hem of her dress, and lifting up her lips, cried in a frenzy:

"I will kiss your feet, I will do whatever you may demand of me in repayment, if only you will—"

"Bah! Get out of that, you sickening little ——" cried the woman, snatching her dress from the clasp of the girl, and spurring her on to her back-door.

The girl fell over on to her side, but quickly recovering herself, renewed her suit, still in the blind, frenzy way that possessed her.

"You may—your—sister, Carrie," she screamed, "help me! Lend me your two shillings. It is such a little sum to you, and it means so much to me, for I dare not destroy my mother’s trust in me! Besides," she hurried on, "it trouble came upon me, and it became known to Mrs. Danvers."

A sudden change swept over the face of Lottie at the mention of the name of Danvers, and with a little start, and a sudden quickened interest in her face, she said:

"Danvers? What Danvers is that?"

"Captain Danvers, who lives at The Bear and Brandy," cried the girl, the light of a sudden hope leaping into her face as she saw what she conceived to be a relieving look in the other’s face.

"She is a widow," she went on. "Her husband was shot the very day they were married, and my mother is servant in the house, and—"

The girl paused. The face before her had filled again with mocking, the hard, cruel look had leaped into the eyes once more.

There was a tap on the panel of the side door. Some new customer was coming, and with an "Off with you, Carrie," the woman literally bundled the girl out through the back door.
"Then suddenly she became acquainted with a girl—herself, her own agè, but one who was much more a woman than herself, and one to whom evil had come much more closely than it had ever come to Carrie.

This girl, Rhoda Vowkes, soon began to execute a baleful influence over Carrie, and in one hideous moment, when Carrie had pressed her upon a certain point, she had not only confessed her addiction to betting, but, showing five half-crowns, part of some recent ill-gotten gains, she incited the guilty girl to 'have a bit out of the fiddle,' and introduced her to Lottie Luck.

Like her instigator in this saturnalia, Carrie had the singular misfortune to win some trifling odds on the first thing she staked—there can be no greater misfortune beheld a budding better than to win at the outset.

For seven or eight weeks, now, Carrie had been dabbling in this same business, at first with a considerable amount of trifling good fortune, but latterly with a fierce run of ill-luck, with the result, as we have seen, that she had used part of her lodging and boarding money to pay her betting losses.

When, in a state of semi-madness, bordering on the insanity of despair, she was huddled out of Lottie Luck's inferno, she moved rapidly along that alley-way we have mentioned before, that ran between the backs of the two rows of houses, until she presently emerged on to the wildness beyond.

The proverbial scorpion, when angered, is said to turn its sting upon itself, and inflict wound after wound until it dies by the self-inflicted stings. And there are some natures so sensitive, that when they have sinned, they turn into a frenzy of despair against themselves.

Carrie had been dabbling in this kind. As far as it is possible for a young life like hers to be faced of sin, of fault, of blame, and to escape even the faintest shadow of anything that makes a lie, then her life had been all this, and never once, to her remembrance, had she been more innocent in the smallest thing, until she had met her temptress, Rhoda Vowkes, and had suffered herself to be ensnared by the gilded bait of betting.

Once, as she left Lottie Luck's, her shame, her sorrow, was so great that thoughts of self-destruction came to her.

Poor child! She was like the tiny shift which breaks away from its painter at the place in the darkness and strews its fiery ashes over its track at the mercy of deep waters and rolling billows it was never built to face.

"I cannot, cannot live! I am disgraced for ever!" moaned the unhappy child, as she stumbled on in a blind and wild way.

A filthy odour of rank weed and polluted water suddenly filled her senses, and pulling herself up, she found herself standing on the bank of a black, stagnant pond, a perfect cesspool of filth.

She stood on this deathbed into which you have been dragged!" whispered the tempter.

She looked at the pool, then shuddered, not so much at the contemplation of death, but at the hideous filthiness of the death in water like that before her.

Her life, her habits, had always been so pure, so clean, that anything like filthiness and dirt seemed greater to her than it would have done to many people, and with another visible shudder she passed on, her innate cleanliness saving her, for the moment, from the self-destruction suggested to her despairing soul.

She moved on and on, blindly as before, with no sense of time or place, conscious only of one thing—her misery, her sense of despair.

After a while, the ripple of water attracted her attention, and she glanced in the direction of the sound. A clear, glistering fish was racing by over a pebbly bottom. She followed the stream; it deepened and broadened as it went. Her feet moved amid the thicker growths on the bank, her eyes becoming more and more fascinated by the flowing water.

Presently the stream merged into a wide lake, and, conscious for the first time of a sense of physical weariness from the pace she had been travelling, and from the exhaustion of the play of her deep emotions, she dropped by the side of the lake, and sat despairingly down among the grasses and rushes, gazing at the still, cool, clear water.

"End all your misery in this clean, restful pool!" the tempter urged again. And this time, with the sun shining on the polluted lake, death by drowning seemed more attractive than it had done back yonder at that filthy pond.

The moments flee by, and with their flight her resolve to end her misery grew stronger, until at last, with a sad little desponding smile, she rose to her feet, and facing the spot where the brook tumbled into the lake over a little, rounded shelf of rock, she prepared herself for the plunge, the lying voice of the tempter the only voice she heard.

She clasped her hands in front of her, and walked calmly to the edge of the lake, there being a depth of nearly three feet to the water at this part of the bank. Straightening herself for the deed she contemplated, she was in the very act of casting herself down into the ten-foot bath, when the chief-cliff-ship of a bird very close to her caused her to glance in the direction of the sound.

In a tiny nest among the grasses on the bank, two featherless chicks were being fed by the mother-bird, and a sudden rush of tears came into the eyes of the girl.
Blessed, saving tears! New thoughts came borne on their salt waves, while, with a rush of tender memories, as she watched that mother-bird, the words learned in childhood swept back over her heart:

"Who fed me from her gentile breast? And hushed me in her arms to rest? And told me of the God Who blest?

My mother.

With the wild, low, sobbing cry of "Mother, mother!" the soul-awakened girl dropped again on the bank, crouching upon the ground, with her weeping face buried in her hands.

All the pent-up misery of her young heart flowed out with those tears, and her soul saw things clearer and more plainly than before.

As the storm of her weeping slowly slackened, and the dear face of her mother rose clearer and clearer before her mental vision, words uttered by that mother to her, on the first day of her entry into life, upon the eve of her death, returned to her. The very tones of the dearly loved voice lived over again in her ears, saying:

"Never forget this, my darling: whatever sorrow, trouble, or even sin—should such a thing ever come upon you—the help with a heart like this is straight away to mother, at all costs, and let mother help you."

Now, as this word came back to her, the tempted girl rose from her crouching amid the grasses of that lake-bank, and started for the Beaumont.

A moment's thought revealed to her that she was actually within half-mile of the house, for she had unconsciously been more or less working that way ever since she had left the house of Lottie Lack.

"And when his father saw him, while he was yet a great way off, he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."

The old, old words will surely sum up all that passed between Carrie and her mother. The girl bid nothing from her mother, and though the whole affair utterly horrified Miss. Harding, she tried to hide her horror as much as she could, seeing how utterly ill and unharmonious her child was.

When she had heard everything, had soothed and comforted her child, had coaxed her to eat and drink until the girl had really taken a very fair meal, she obtained permission of the housekeeper for her to lie down upon her own bed. Then, having seen her safe and comfortably asleep, she returned to the chapel, and, as the Beaumonts roamed abroad, and the sun crept among the trees, going down the valley, the anxious mother sought an interview with her mistress.

CHAPTER V.

"SOMETHING SHALL BE DONE!"

Ever since the vicar of her parish, in reply to her spiritual enquiries, had uttered that sneer about Nonconformity, Dulcie Danvers had begun to interest herself in the history and progress of the various Free Churches.

This morning, on opening her daily paper, an article indirectly bearing upon village Nonconformity had immediately attracted her, and she began to read:

AN UNSUNG NOTE OF SPRING.

"By RAMBLER.

"In town, maidens fair—and otherwise—remind us to song that:

Spring is coming.

The swallows tell us so.

It is true that some of the singers make us think of the caustic lines:

Swans tall before they die; there was no bad thing

Couldpersons die before they sing.

Yet we accept the song statement—Spring is coming.

The signs of that coming vary considerably according to locality, etc., the town signs differing from those of the country, just as markedly as the rural dweller differs from the metropolitan.

A town or village rural token of spring's coming might serve as theme for an article, but we confine ourselves to one, but this is a very obvious one to the bucolic mind.

"Take our valley, for instance. It is twelve or fourteen miles through, level as a billiard board the whole length, and with a village so accurately set out every two miles, that one wonders whether, in the past, some Brooding-God-daughter used them in some giant shot-drill.

"The coming of spring among the dwellers in these Hampshire villages is marked, of course, by ploughing and spring tilling and hoeing, etc., by every one of facts—mechanical, domestic, don't-care—taking it all kind of way, without a flash of the eye, a blip of the pulse, a spring of the foot.

"But let the war-cry, Annuarverry, but ring out, and make man woman and child into one comprehensive whole, that's a new life, a vigour, and flash in every soul.

The cuckoo note from the parson's clock calling through the open window of the vicarage; the pick-a-back frogs on the pond; the arrival of 't'anniversary'; the singing of the birds. The whole atmosphere of the home, of the village, of the fourteen miles of valley, of every vale and hill of Han.

And of all the neighbouring counties, pell-mell with the one subject, Annuarverry.

This week, too, and yet the snow was piled in the shaded drifts, every chapel began to prepare.

"One Sunday, the School superintendent announced—"Us wants all chil'en to meet yere Tuesday night, to arrange for Luminary Day.

"Yere not chosen, friend. If yor name wasn't chosen, and there was a preliminary canvass of, at first, jibing voices through the programme. Then came the distribution of the recitations, etc. The six-part dialogue is the most difficult to arrange.

"At last, when the superintendent's temper has been worn down, you'll be found a good laugh. The little end of the line, laughing faced, dumpling-cheeked girl of twelve, saying:

"Wot du yew say, Patty Jupp, will you take part in the dialogue?"

"No, the girl promptly, if yer pats your chap in, too.

"Who is your chap, Patty? And the worthy superintendent does not appear a bit surprised at the condition of the child's promise.

"Jargey Dork? leaped swiftly, definitely from the girl's lips.

"The superintendent looks over his glasses in the direction of George. The boy colours, loses a little klack, and, with a vacuum giggle, replies:

"I don't know aw wuf her chap; it's just I've heard on it.

"But he does not go back altogether on Patty, and he is hooked, with her, to take part in the dialogue, and children only as they really are, it is probable that from the sight for they will be recognised as sweethearts, and will end the comedy, when she is sixteen and he seventeen, by taking each "for better or worse," and, well, for the rest, let some of our town readers go down in these places and see how such marriages end.

"Who thinks of the dialogue?" asked a friend, as we left the chapel, where Patty had startled us by her condition of promise.

"Think? his companion replied. "Why, that girl has never been anywhere in her veins, for she is a past-mistress in the art of commandeering."

"Us must look out, so's not to clash wi' many other anniversaries close 'andy,' is a recognised principle in the earliest arrangements for the great and notable day, and it requires no little skill to avoid 'clashing' with another chapel within a four-mile limit.

"The day has arrived. Morning, afternoon, evening, there is a service each time. The chapel is packed.

"We used, at one time, to travel to 'Bartholomew's, Broughton, to take course at Turkish Baths, was a course every spring, now, without travelling far, and at an infinite less expense, for we can take three baths every Sunday for about eight weeks, by attending the school anniversaries.

"A special platform has been built right across the chapel, absorbing the varnished pine restraint in its temporary area. The platform is crowded with perspiring children, and an equally perspiring minister, who has been dragged over from the circuit town, with no more to do than a sermon on a railed platform for the singing, recitations, dialogues, etc., overflow, the allotted time for the service, leaving the minister with only time to say, "Now pleased he is." (Is 'towards reservation' permissible to others besides the followers of Ignatious Loyola?), and then to pronounce the Benediction.

"But the crownning time is the Monday, with its 'Mon- ter Tea and Public Meeting.' The most extraordinary
thing about these village teas is the capacity of the ordinary boy and girl's appetite. One quite appreciates the juvenile eystem of the word 'appetite.'—When I've eaten, I'm 'appy,' an' when I've done, I'm 'ight.'

The racy little nippers ran for prizes, in a meadow behind the chapel, while the workers and waiters take their meal at one long table, and some of those who have 'ead'd, an' don't want to turn out, enliv'en things by singing. Will Carleton's lines recurring to us while we listen:

"While the tunes that they sung
In bewildering throngs,
Had been mastered, when young,
To hilarious song.

The meeting at seven! What pen can describe it? Leading labour employers are sending some of their employees over to America and to the Continent, to study how work in their particular trade is done more efficiently than at home. Why then do not those the French saddles people let a deputation of their packers come over and get a few lessons from the anniversary packings at our rural spring anniversaries.

The Monday night meeting is under the leadership of a local preacher, a 'Bonnerger's from a distance. He has an easy note and is not going to be debarred of his privilege for all the recitations, singing, and dialogues ever written or delivered.

"It is true that, sandwiched between the last item on the programme and the Benediction, there is written, 'A moment's pause for prayer,' but I do not consider it not good enough for 'Bonnerger's, so, immediately after the secretary's report has been read, he sails in with a tear-head address, that bristles with racy hits, mixed metaphors, thundering declamation, and all else that makes the popular ditty—rural, we mean, of course—of a good speech.

"Mind your P's and Q's is a good old saying," he begins. 'Now, I'm goin' to take some P's to-night, an' I'll tell you another story. The Four P's—here they are:—Place, People, Pulpit, Parson.'

He is a rapid speaker, an interesting and—from the ordinary level of his hearers capacity—an instructive speaker. Every head of his address is made to yield a world of entertainment, and nothing but profit. He plays upon every emotional faculty of his hearers as a Paganini on a violin.

"He comes to the third head—Pulpit.

I've been studyin' the subject of pulpits,' he declares, an' I've found out for a fact that'Lord taketh not in tight legs o' a man, so I suppose that pulpits was made fast to tide t'reaper's legs!"

"A hundred and forty faces cracked right across at this, and the place rang with laughter.

"He was forty years old when, lifting the programme up nearer his eyes, with the 'slim' smile of a Nelson when he put his blind eye to the telescope, said:

"The next item on the programme is a song by the children and choir."

"After this song, he announces the collection, remarking:

"I don't believe in driving off the business up to the last, for a man loses that way, they people havin' to go out for stores.

"There is a clanking of plates, and four collectors prepared to squeeze their way, somehow, between the human salamander, when he steps them with:

"We want a good collection. Let me tell you something else before our friends go round with the plates. I've never had no regular edderkoppin', as yer all know. I've never been to collidge, but I've took ter readin' o' lair, an' from the speakin' of late I've been studyin' botany—'s that's the language an' 'istory o' flowers, an' I've learned this: God hev a put into the cup o' every flower a certain amount o' suggerme, or honey. But if all this honey was to hide in the cup o' the flower, it'd all out, an' the chaps'd walk aro'er its time. So, to balance this, God made the busy bee go to work an' 'ave out so much honey i' all the flowers, an' preserve 'em that way.

"Now, they some of you people's like they flowers, an' you've got so much money in yer purse that, if there weren't no collections to help yer to de-gorgeitten and rot yer lives, an' you'd drop yer off stalkin' afore you time. Friends, go round with the plates, an' save some o' them people's lives! The collection will now be made!"

"Country people, with their eleven, or, at the outside, twelve shilling's a week, know how to give, and a bumping dinner is the result."

Later on, just before the Benediction is pronounced, the chairman has one word on the blessings of spring anniversaries.

"Said a fool local to me 'other day, 'I wish all our members, if they die off in winter, that they've a full o' vernal fire, fur I've terrible feared that when summer, wh' club feasts, an' 'Bank 'Oldays, an' all such like comes, an' 'ther in t'rest fields be about, an' all that, there won't be much 'ligion left in 'em.'"

To baldullic my belief in the same. Et there wery any danger o' that sort o' thing, why, there's ailus the anniversaries to sore fire us all up again.'

"'Bonnerger's was right. And strange as much of country anniversary celebrations may seem to the town and city dweller, yet, since the cities draw from the villages for their fresh human supplies, anything which will help to make and keep the rural population true to God and to morality must be a national blessing.'"

Dulcie had read thus far when Carrie's mother came to her, seeking an audience of her.

"Dulcie, as a mistress, was fairly idolised by her servants, so that Carrie's mother found no difficulty in getting this audience of her mistress.

"Dulcie put the sad-hearted woman at her ease at once, and the latter poured out her heart unreservedly to her mistress.

"While I feel I should like to tell you all this at once, ma'am, 'was gone, best mother,' was that it seemed to me that if you knew, you might feel constrained to try to get this awful woman stopped from causin' and ruinin' the innocent Dulcie."

The flash of a mighty resolve suddenly kindled in the eyes of Dulcie, and after expressing her abhorrence of the evil work in no measured terms, she cried:

"Thank you very much, Lucy—she always called her 'Lucy' by name—'for sharin' your trouble with me, and for giving me the privilege of doin' something to put a stop to this fearful outrage against right and truth. I will drive into Stonfigh by the very first thing in the morning and see the chief of police about this business here, in the interest of the safety and honesty of our young people.'"

Mrs. Harding began to pour out her thanks, but with kindly deprecation, Dulcie stopped her, asking:

"What have you done with that poor child of yours, Lucy?"

"She is in my room, ma'am, lying down. I asked Mrs. Barter's permission, for the dear child was ill with excitement and sorrow, and I could not let her go back to her home."

"Mrs. Barter did quite right to give you the permission, Lucy," cried Dulcie, enthusiastically, "and I will speak to her about Carrie, and tell her she may either shake your room or have one to herself, for a while at least, for the poor dear must have a rest. This, I am sure, is imperative. You must let me see her to-morrow, for I feel as tenderly interested in her as though she was a child of my own, and—"

"You have not told Mrs. Barter or anyone else, what the trouble is, Lucy?"

"No, ma'am.

"That is well," Dulcie went on, "as it will give the poor child case of mind to realise that no one knows of her slip."

Dulcie was as good as her word, and by ten o'clock next morning she was closeted with the inspector of police at Stonfigh, telling him all the shameful story of the infamous dealings of the woman Lottie Luck.

"Some specimens of woman's nefarious work," replied the inspector, "have just been laid before me, and I had determined only yesterday to put the wife of one of my constables on the case, and get her to hook this Lottie Luck.

"I was told the constable's wife. I ought to explain," he went on, "was attached to a private enquiry office, previous to her marrying our man. She has a distinct, a decided gift for detective work, and has already done us some good secret service. Meanwhile, independent of Mr. Galton's work of enquiry, do I understand that you may proceed with a case on behalf of—"
"Yes, yes!" Dulcie interrupted, full of eagerness and determination, and added: "If a prosecutor is needed, and I can be that prosecutor, I am perfectly willing to stand, or, if I can witness against this creature, I will gladly answer any questions which it might be desirable to ask."

The inspector explained that they could doubtless get up a good case on their own responsibility.

"Though," he added, "if you don't mind having a share in the affair after the marriage, Mrs. Danvers. I would of course help you in the case, but you must say that from certain knowledge I have, you had left it your duty to acquaint us with the facts of which you had become cognizant."

Lottie Luck had had an unusually busy week, and was full of gloe over her winnings. That is part of the damnable evil of chance, that their glee over their luck is always akin to the joy of frenzied in hell, since it is at the expense of others' losses.

Let me tell you the story of two new and distinctly good customers during the week, notably one who appeared to be a very superior type of upper servant.

"That sort of woman," she mused, "that fully bitten, always go the whole hog before long, and after I've let her have a morsel or two, I'll bleed her beautifully, or my name is not—"

She smiled, but left her name unuttered. This proposed victim of hers entered at that moment, and Lottie thought she recognized her in her friendly familiarity. The pair were comfortably hob-nobbing when the errand boy, Freddy, entered by the side door.

Lottie's visitor was sitting well back in a high-backed arm-chair, the back of which was towards the door by which the boy entered. He did not note her presence, and came quickly forward with a hearty "Morning, Lottie."

The light was upon her face, and the customer who sat by her side. She caught the sudden gleam of alarm that flashed into the bold eyes of his visage.

The next instant Lottie had leaped to her feet, and crying: "All right, Freddy! You've brought the groceries. I'll light off you in the kitchen, as the—"

She had hustled the boy out of the room by this time, drawing the door to after her.

Then her visitor did a curious thing. The moment the door was closed, she started violently to her feet, and with one swift, decisive movement over to the cretonne-screened shelf which we mentioned in a previous chapter, lifted the little curtain, took a swift mental inventory of its contents, and actually pocketed a small, thick-skinned, parchment-backed book that was thrust behind a biscuit tin.

In the brief space of forty-five seconds, she contrived to accomplish quite a number of curious investigations, yet, when Lottie appeared on the scene again, the former found her seated just where she had left her, and in exactly the same attitude.

The pair resumed their former topic. Until another customer arrived, when the searching, inquisitive woman took up, and, wishing Lottie "Good-day," left the house by the front door.

CHAPTER VI.
A CUTE WOMAN.

SERGEANT GALTON was considered an excellent officer—a real acquisition to the Stag-fog police force. Arriving home at two in the afternoon to his dinner, his first question to his wife was: "Well, have you found anything further, Polly?"

"Pretty," replied the wife, facetiously, adding, "Let us get dinner over first, for I am as hungry as a hunter. Then I'll go into the whole matter with you.

Twenty minutes later, they pushed back their places, and "She was not a bit cautious with me," began Mrs. Galton, "and let me sit there while her customers came in, and she did two or three bits of incriminating business while I was there. Then a boy came in; she called him Freddy. He was an errand boy from Constantine's Stores, I know, because I have seen him there—"

Sergeant Galton looked up sharply as she mentioned the name of the lad in connection with an errand boy named Freddy, but he did not interrupt her. "The boy had a basket, and I am convinced that there was something contraband in his errand to that woman, for I saw alarm leap into her eyes, and she jumped up quickly and bolted."

"The room, I made the most of the time she was absent, and besides noting a number of useful things, I contrived to get hold of this."

As she spoke, Mrs. Galton produced the parchment-backed book that had been taken from Lottie Luck's shelf.

"What is it?" asked her husband.

"Her entry book for a month or more before the present month."

The sergeant smiled, as he said: "Makes interesting reading from our point of view, Polly."

"Very," she replied, "especially as in scores of the entries she has been fool enough to put the addresses as well as the names, or, as it appears more often, the nicknames of her drip. One after the other, Polly, the sergeant nodded and smiled again, as he went on:

"What a cute lass you are, Polly?"

Then his face grew a shade more serious, as he said: "There is nothing in the entry which would convict Constantine's, and that this woman called him Freddy."

"I did, my lord," replied the wife, mercifully, aping to perfection the style of some budding barrister.

"How beautifully things are fitting in to-day for us both, the realist and the searchers."

"Which has how does yet mean, murgit?" queried the wife, and this time, the tone, the style, the vernacular, were those of the East End of London witness to the life.

"An hour and a half before I came in to dinner," he replied, "I saw Constantine himself, and he asked me to step into his office for a few minutes. I went in, and he told me that he had been considerably troubled of late about the continued loss of bottles of the best brands of brandy, as well as some very expensive liqueurs. I fancy," he said, "I know now who the thief is, but I wish you'd take a turn with all my employees. Ask each of them a few questions, and see if you cannot hit upon the person whom I suspect."

He had finished, and soon decided who the thief was. He was one of the errand boys; they called him Freddy, his full name being Fred Harris. In ten minutes, since he would not confess what he had done, and there was no trace of him, we had him locked up. He's a tough-hearted little customer, and we should have found it difficult to have got anything from him, I think, if we had not got hold of your valuable clue, Polly; but with what you have seen and heard this morning, we shall be able to lap Master Freddy very easily, I think."

The sergeant was right, and later that afternoon they tapped the boy for all he was worth.

CHAPTER VII.
AN UGLY THREAT.

STAGFOG had never had such cause for shame and for excitement in the whole course of its history, as that which the raid upon Lottie Luck's house, her arrest, and her trial gave. The trial was hourly exciting greater and greater interest, for each moment revealed further how widespread was the cult of crime, both for private gain and against the state, that the public was made to believe. Some of these stories of ruin were of the most pathetic character, others, again, in spite of the efforts of the officers of the court and of the other officials, bad sensations were directed against the prisoner.

The evidence of the boy Freddy was most important, since it enabled the authorities to charge him with the act of receiving stolen goods, knowing the same to be stolen.

Dulcie had been as good as her word, and allowed herself to be questioned and to be known as the primary mover in the prosecution.
CLOSER AND CLOSER the meshes of the law were woven around the prisoner, and it looked as though nothing could deliver her from a long term of imprisonment.

Then suddenly a technical point was raised by her counsel, and the appeal of the case, as regarded the probable sentence, was decided considerably. The case finished at last had lasted through the whole day, and not until after twenty minutes, the jury returned with their verdict of guilty on all counts, and the judge addressed the prisoner.

"But for the technical hitch which would have been preferred in your favour," he said, "I should have had infinite satisfaction in sentencing you to full years imprisonment, for a more shameless creature have never had before me. There are many evidences that you have moved in a superior walk of life, you are not an ignorant, but woman; you cannot plead that you were poor, and resort ed to this infamous calling to make a living, since your bankbooks declare that you were possessed of several hundred pounds in hard cash, while there are rumours of property, to a considerable value, which you are said to own. You have lied yourself out of entrap the young, the guileless, the ignorant. You have tempted them, and guided them to sin—as, more, you have—in the case of the errant boy Freddy—you have induced them to crimes which you know, if they were discovered, would blast their characters and reputations. Such women as you, are worse than devils, and I repeat, I cannot send you to penal servitude for five years; the utmost I can give you, owing to your counsel's technical contention, is six months' hard labour.

"Everywhere felt that the punishment was utterly inadequate: the people could not see the great O'Connell's illustration of the loops of British law through which a wagon and six horses could be easily driven, came to the minds of many.

"The next instant, Lottie had leaped to her feet."

CHAPTER VIII

HE HAD NOT FORGOTTEN.

Jack Armstrong's nomadic life had proved of untold spiritual blessing to him. Many hours he was alone on his journeys in his Gospel Van, from one place to another, were all utilised by him for Bible study, and for that silent communion of soul which makes spiritual giants of men of God.

Everywhere he went he scattered blessing. In the cottage of the various villages through which he passed; in the homes of the rich in which, at times, he was a guest, he never failed to uplift Jesus; in the visitation of the clergy upon whom he always called previous to pitching his van and tent in the villages where he was led to stop; in the homes of struggling pastors of the various Free Churches with whom he came into contact—everywhere, at all times, he sought to be a blessing to his fellows.
Like his divine Lord, Jack Armstrong had learned to say, "My mission is to do 'Thy will, oh God.'" And now, through this vision, was filled with divine joy, and he constantly proved the truth of St. Augustin's wonderful lines:

"Peace, perfect peace!
By throning duties pressed;
To do the will of Jesus,
This is rest."

He had become a remarkably remarkable preacher, for having a natural gift for language, a clearness of spiritual vision born of constant communion with God, a mind unfettered with religious traditions, a style natural to himself, and not the result of any particular school of training—with all these things and many more, he preached, not—like the few college-trained men, in whom nineteen-tenths of the individuality that should characterise them is crushed and burned beneath the artificiality and cast-iron methods imposed upon them as theological students. Jack burned with the same power which characterised the early Apostles, being moved and dominated by the same power—the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

Dulcie, who of the social life of his class, caring less and less to mingle in spiritually uncongenial circles. During the worst winter months, he said his van up, and either accepted invitations to occupy various town pulpits for missions of a week, ten days, or a fortnight, or he would go to church and sit there to distantly feel, take the largest public hall, and advertise All-day, Sunday, and regular Week-night services.

A missionary of his stamp always becomes a subject of great interest to unmarried women—old, middle-aged, and young, and more especially to the converted to religious women of more or less independent means.

Such women as these—religious gypsies as a rule, roaming from one set of meetings to another, from one convention to the next—become a perfect terror to some churchwomen. It was a devilish hard to keep themselves close of these feminine hawks.

Few evangelists ever succeed in holding themselves quite as solely aloof from these would-be marrying women as did Jack Armstrong. For one thing, his thoughts, his life, was so much with the divine service to which he had been so definitively called, to have many thoughts for other matters. The mighty love of God pulsated so powerfully through all his being, that save to love all his fellows, regardless of sex, rank, station, color, he could not endure.

Then, as regard women in particular, and as regarded marriage, he had no desires. He had long since learned that his feeling for the woman he had yearned in courtship boyish haste, and after the giving of the marriage knot, not been born in the deepest, truest sense, but just a species of fascination that had possessed and overcome him.

No other woman had since had any attraction for him until he had met Dulcie, on the one night she ventured to the conclave of religious women of more or less independent means.

She had been, so true and such as at such times as this, "that one can never tell what may happen, though often it is the unexpected."

"Dulcie had not given up her quest for God. The process of the vicar at the end of the week, and which he had suggested, had resulted in nothing. He came to her, it is true; he talked learnedly of the authorities he had consulted, but he had no light to give her—he had no light in himself. "The profound light he had within himself was darkness, and "how great was his darkness."

"Miserable comforters are ye all," cried Job to his three so-called friends, and the same is true of these clergymen, whether Episcopalians or Nonconformists, who, believing themselves without the light of the glory of God, in the face of their Christ, attempt to give the moonlight of a dead church tradition to the seeking, stumbling souls of men, instead of the glorious light of the Gospel, of the Church of Righteousness."

The vicar's fund for the tower and bells of the church languished, and he had not the sense to know that he was a hindrance rather than a help to souls in their distress, and had refused in Christ, the Church, an approach into which a man was destined to go in his blinded vision. He never once saw how that his very office demanded of him that truly spiritual life and preaching that should result in the souls of his flock being drawn to God. Then the chimes of Heaven's joy-bells would be set ringing through all time and eternity.

But Dulcie was not to be deterred in her search for God because this man who should have known how to have led her feet into the path of life was as ignorant and cold and dead as the stones and fossils to which his soul-cleaved.

Dulcie's interview with Mrs. Harding, the mother of the poor girl Carrie, had been followed by one or two others, for Mrs. Harding was a true Christian. But, with my dear Dulcie, she had very little ability to make known the way of life to others; still, her influence upon Dulcie had been decidedly helpful.

It was a fortnight after the trial and sentence of Lottie Luck that Dulcie was alone in her favorite sitting-room, full of the odors of roses, and fresh water and the way to God; her heart's silent cry, like one of old, being:

"Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!"

She had opened her Bible at the word of that morning, and had been literally fascinated by the clearest verses, and now she read them over and over again aloud:

"Acquaint now myself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee." 

"Receive, O thou child of My heart, and lay up His words in thine heart."

"If thou return unto the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, and thou shalt put away iniquity far from thee." 

Yes, the Almighty shall be thy gold (marginal), and them that had dwelt in dark.

"For them shall thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God."

She had got thus far when she laid the Book down, and with a yearning wildness in her beautiful face, with my dear Dulcie, she had very little ability to make known the way of life to others; still, her influence upon Dulcie had been decidedly helpful.

"Acquaint now myself with God." What a wondrous thought that one can have a real acquaintance with God, and...

There came a tap at the door at this moment; a servant entered, and the blind woman heard the words.

"A gentleman to see you, ma'am," she said.

Dulcie took the card and read:

"Mr. Jack Armstrong."

A warm flush suffused her cheeks as she read the name. She recognized it, and all the circumstances connected with her meeting with the owner of the name. She had even kept the fellow card to the one she now held in her hand, the one she had handed her by way of introduction that morning in the tent.

"God may have cut it out, him," she mused, "to help me in my soul-trouble."

Aford, to the servant, she said:

"Show the gentleman in here, please, Emily."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LONG STARTLED THEM.

I TRUST you will pardon me, as a stranger, calling upon you, Mrs. Dalvers," began Jack Armstrong, as he entered Dulcie's presence. She had risen to meet him. The light was full upon his face, she stood somewhat in shadow. The warm flush still tinged her cheeks. She saw that he had not recognized her, and for a moment supposed that he had forgotten her face; her name, she knew, would probably be unfamiliar to him, since she was Miss Conyers when they had met before.

As she extended her hand in greeting, she also advanced a pace, and turned her face further to the light. In a
moment, then, he recognised her, and his eyes grew very bright, while the warmth of colour that leaped into his cheeks gave the deeper brown of his fair, smooth cheeks and his voice became more strength.

His voice was very joyous as he cried:

"We are surely not quite strangers, Mrs. Danvers.

We met once before—"

She smiled as she interrupted him, saying:

"Yes, I remember that day before my marriage that I last saw you, Mr. Armstrong, though not to speak to, on that occasion. I had only gone in to hear you preach."

Their hands were still clasped, but he suddenly remembered, and released her.

She cleared the tears from her face, and she said, and do what she would, she could not keep the colour from rising to her face.

But in a few moments she grew more at her ease with him.

"And you recognised me at once, Mrs. Danvers?" he remarked.

"I recognised your name on your card, when it was brought to me," she replied.

"Your face was in momentary shadow, when I entered," he went on, "or I should have immediately recognised you, Mrs. Danvers; or, had I known that you were once Miss Conyers, I should have thought it possible it might have been the lady whom I once met in my Gospel-tent."

He hesitated a moment, then quickly added:

"I had no idea, you see, in my heart; and I have been more interested in Captain Danvers, a Captain Danvers, of the—Riffes."

"He was my husband for about seven hours," she cried.

"He was murdered—shot—just before the dinner on our wedding-day."

"Fond wife, Mrs. Danvers," he hastened to say. "I have doubtless awakened, unwittingly, some sad memories, and—"

She lifted her eyes to his face, and something in the look that filled them made his heart ache. She looked at him during that instant's silence, then, with a trustful smile filling all her face, she said:

"It will be better, Mr. Armstrong, perhaps, as a friend. I cannot express my confidence in this proposition, if I explain at once, that, having been forced into marriage with Captain Danvers by my parents, and having no feeling of—well, I could not even respect him, his awful death came, of course, as a shock to me, but, under the circumstances of the peculiar relations existing between us, I could not sorrow exactly as a young wife should, or—"

She paused a moment, then added:

"I need not explain further." She turned to him, Jack Armstrong could not suppress a certain sense of elation as he heard this confession, though just why the fact that this fair, sweet-faced woman had had no affection for the man whom she had been forced to marry should have been so acceptable to him, he could not explain. It was apparently the fact that Dulcie's love for him, her love for him, her feeling for him, her want of empowers him to turn the conversation comfortably, he said:

"You will be wondering, Mrs. Danvers, since I had no idea whom I was going to meet, why I called upon you this morning. The fact is, Mrs. Danvers, I felt a strong desire to pitch my tent in the village here, and to hold a few services, and made my way to the lady of the manor to ask permission to pitch upon that piece of waste ground just below the blacksmith's shop, and when I was led to the gate I found myself in Dulcie's presence.

Dulcie met his request with the readiest permission, and for a few minutes their talk turned exclusively upon the forthcoming services.

But in the very first break from that topic, Jack turned to her and asked her, in these words, deepening now, deeper notes:

"And what of your old spiritual difficulties, Mrs. Danvers? Have you got them settled yet? Do you know God yet? Have you passed from death into life?"

Uplifting tears rushed into Dulcie's eyes as she replied, "Yes, Jack, and I passed out of death into life, and I could not believe it. I found myself as a soul after God, and I was unselfed myself prey to Jack, telling him all the story of the past few months, especially, including her visit to the village, and its unsatisfactory results.

"This morning," she went on, "in fact, at the very moment that you were announced, I was deeply exercised in soul, and having just read Job twenty-two, from the twenty-first verse, I was inwardly crying, 'Oh, that I knew how to become acquainted with God!' and when your card was brought to me, I could not help saying to myself, 'Surely God has sent him to help me! And I will, will you not, Mr. Armstrong?'"

"And Dulcie's spirit was full of pleasantness, and Jack's every spiritual instinct was aroused, and keenly alert, as he set out to help her soul into the Light."

Noticing her Bible open at Job, just as she had evidently laid it down when disturbed by his coming, he opened the book to the twenty-fourth, and from the thirty-third verse, he had taken from his pocket, at the same place, saying:

"Every road in England, it is said, leads to London: certainly every part of the Bible leads to Christ, and the book of Job has many direct leadings thither. This particular verse has received your attention, as particularly a Gospel passage, and one which, taken with the passage in the Ephesians, two, fourteen to seventeen, opens up the way of Life into a most wondrous way. Shall we turn to Ephesians with which both Bibles are open at the passage that Jack had indicated, and he was reading in his rich, cultured, well-trained voice:

"For He (Jesus), is our peace, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between two."

"This," Jack explained, "in its primary sense, referred to the breaking down of the wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile, but the whole principle also refers to Christ's work for all those out of God."

Then, in his eye, Dulcie was looking at him again, on read on:

"Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace.

And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, therefore;

"And came and preached peace to you that were afar off, and to them which were nigh."

And this," went on Jack, "is the central thought of God's work in the Life: that there can be no way of peace, no way of becoming truly acceptable to God, either by virtue of our own deeds, and only by and through Jesus and His propitiatory, sacrificial, and atoning work. For though 'all have sinned,' yet we may be justified freely by His grace through the redemption of the body, the righteousness of God shew forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood and by the blood of Jesus we must always understand the Life given as an atonement for our sin, 'for the blood is the life,' God says, and 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.' And thus set forth Jesus to be a propitiation for our sins, and we receive the benefits of that propitiation—namely, Pardon, Justification, Holiness, Eternal Life—through faith in His Blood, so that, as the Apostle declares in Romans three, twenty-three, 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'"

"And the whole work, from man's side," went on Jack, "when he honestly seeks God, is to accept, to take freely, the Salvation wrought out and offered by God in Christ Jesus."

The eyes of Dulcie were riveted upon Jack, as, turning from passage to passage with the readiness of one thoroughly at home with his Bible, he unfolded the glorious truths of his text in language that was telling, and final.

"And the whole work, from man's side," went on Jack, "when he honestly seeks God, is to accept, to take freely, the Salvation wrought out and offered by God in Christ Jesus."

The time was twenty minutes he dealt simply, definitely with the eager Dulcie, until suddenly she cried:

"I see it now from God's word alone. He offers Salvation through Jesus. I believe His word, it is accounted unto me for the righteousness which, with my sinful nature, I could never have worked out myself; and I am saved—saved by Christ's substitution, and assured by the Word of God!"

There came no wondrous tidal wave of joy, no bright and marvellous light that shone around her, no angelic music filled her ears, yet Dulcie knew that she had passed from death unto life because it had purchased that Eternal Life for her, and because she believed God in the matter.

When the pair had rejoiced together over the wonder of it, Jack took up the other verses in the passage of Job (at Dulcie's request), and gave her a running exposition on them. The twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses being especially helpful and beautiful:

"Then was created for man's glory," continued Jack, and here we find that as soon as we are at peace with Him, then, as the margin reads, 'the Almighty shall be thy gold,' another way of saying He shall be our Glory. Then the verse goes on, and thou shalt have plenty of
silver,' or, as the margin says, 'Thou shalt have silver of strength. Now, as gold, in Scripture, in relation to God, always stands for glory, so silver is over the type of Redemption, and our strength—according to this text—is to be the place of it."

Verse after verse Jack followed these, showing the other results of being at peace with God.

"Delight not in the reproach of others," in verse 26;
"Peace in thine heart," in the 27th verse; "Success in service," in verse 28; "Faith in trial, and assurance to others," in verse 29.

The luncheon-song sounding through the house startled them both, for neither of them had the remotest idea that it was so late.

Dulcie's lightable instincs were up in arms in an instant, and she said, "You will stay to lunch, Mr. Armstrong, will you not, since I have kept you so long?"
Jack accepted the invitation, and neither of them ever forgot that more on that his Dulcie's elbow, adding of the ruin and havock caused in the neighbouring town by the woman Lottie Luck.

"He turned, for a time, on the evils of betting, and Jack said, "I met a friend a little while ago, a well-known writer, whose pen and voice have been constantly used in the cause of the Gospel and Temperance, and of Anti-gamming. He sent me a story which so impressed me that I urged him to hint to you of it, and did, and on this morning I received a parcel of copies of it: I will not spoil the story by attempting to repeat it, but will leave a copy with you, Mrs. Danvers."

He took out the little booklet from his pocket as he spoke, and laid it on that his Dulcie's elbow, adding, "You can read it at your leisure, Mrs. Danvers, and if you would like a few copies for distribution, I should be glad to let you have them."

The little pair parted, and Dulcie turned back into the room to read the story of the gambling victim.

CHAPTER X.

THE story which Dulcie took up to read was headed, "The day the Derby was run," and ran as follows:

The story would have made an exquisite picture; could the artist have been found who could have faithfully portrayed it.

"The interior of a large downstairs living-room in an old Hampshire farmhouse. Every bit of the furniture, the largest出品 woodwork was all polished, with the greatest loving care. The clock, the round table in the centre of the room, the bright oak wainscoting, all were polished like gloss with that fine old-fashioned furniture polish, beeswax and elbow-grease."

"A dozen jars, vases, jugs, etc., filled with wild flowers and graceful ferns, were placed tastefully about the large room.

"A well-worn, but still presentable, carved oak cradle, polished like all the other woodwork in the room, stood by the wide west window, with the loveliest boy of two-and-a-half years that ever was born, lying on his back, staring up at his parents, with eyes as blue as forget-me-nots, and as wide as inquiring love could make them. His fair skin was flushed with the brightest ghost of health and restful sleep—he had only just awakened from a long night's sound sleep.

"The husband and wife who stood looking down upon this rosy-cheeked cherub, were a good-looking couple, the husband dark and tall, the wife fair and of medium height.

"The husband's arm lay lightly, caressingly, across his wife's, and his eyes, full of the love in his glance was as much for her as his boy.

"Their quiet talk was interrupted by a loud but kindly hail from outside:"

"'Hurr run, Jim; let's have 'ee, lad, or thickener'll get you,' came 'ee behind."

"The eyes of husband and wife met. Her's grew suddenly moist and glinting. He put his arms about her; she twined hers about his neck; their lips met; there were a few last murmured words between them.

"Then, as two chubby, rosy arms, with dimpled hands, were uplifted, and baby cooed:"

"'Dada, this, please.'"

"The wife stooped, lifted the little pleader, and for one moment, father and child were locked in a long, caressing embrace, before a second, and more peremptory hail from outside warned husband and wife that 'Time was scarce, as well as tides, wait for no one.'"

"There were the barest hints between the loving pair, then Jim Whately climbed up into the trap that was to take him to the station.

"Half an hour later, the road turned sharp to the left, and husband and wife could wave to each other no longer.

"Bessie Whately turned back into the cottage with her baby, and, between her falling tears, told the wondering, blue-eyed little fellow that 'Dada come backee, allee, allee by-and-bye on Saturday.'"

"The house seemed very desolate with father and husband both gone.

"Jim and Bessie Whately had been married six years, and save for one dark four months, not a cloud had ever come into their lives.

"That four months of cloud, of which, with true wifely loyalty, Bessie had never once breathed a word to her father, had been caused by a fearful gambling craze which had seized her husband, and had held him in its awful grip until their last right hand, the husband a wreck, and his poor, patient, suffering wife, well-nigh sunk in despair.

"When things looked darkest, a sermon, preached by the vicar of the parish one week-end, had led Bessie to form the great burden-bearers, Jesus Christ, and He gave her rest.

"Filled with a new sense of hope, believing that the 'Conquering Saviour could break every chain,' she visited the vicar, who told her of a religious work, and the awful state into which her husband had got, and begged the kindly clergyman to make an effort to save her husband.

"The vicar was a splendid specimen of a whole-hearted man, as well as a little later, a devoted clergyman, and with the wealth of human love, and strong common sense (all too rare in our day), he visited the wretched room which was all that the Whately's could now call home, at an hour that he had learned he would be most likely to find Jem.

"...Let me not go up thither, except Thou go with me," he had prayed before he started. Then conscious of the Divine presence, he started.

"God went with him, and the first step in Jim Whately's deliverance began that very day."

"There was no falling back, but, though filled with a bitter shame and remorse, Jim went on in the work of reformation, and when we see him, four years after his reclamation, he is in a better temporal position than ever before, and is not only free from the very memory of the gambling lust which destroyed him within his soul."

"God help the man who has reformed only, and who has failed to learn that only in true repentance is there safety. Jim Whately's only righteousness was that of set, and in that lay the weakness and danger of his position towards his old besetment, and to all other sin.

"On the way to the station his father-in-law drew a small canvas bag from his pocket, and handed it to Jim, saying, "Take this and put it safe in thy pocket, Jim, lad, an' then I'll tell 'ee what it is, an' all about 'em."

"Jim pocketed the bag—it was heavy for its size, and there was the ring of gold in the clinking it made as he hung it.

"'There's fitty pun' in there, Jim,' went on the old man, an' I want ye to put it in there thicker Buildin' concern, as 'ee war speakin' to I about 'other night, where 'ee du put yer own savins'. I don't want un fur myself but for Bessie's an' your little face. All I has to come to is a couple of shillin's, but I'm wastin' away a bit, an' how I'll part wi' 'im when Bessie goes back I dauno. For his sake I be goin' ter make so much as ever I knows how, God bless the little lad.'"

"In the near distance there came the loud ringing of a bell. The clergyman whipped up his horse, and looked a bit scared as he said:"

"'It's a-goin' ter be a near tocherer ter catch thickew train.'"

"It was a near shave. There was no time for any further talk. Jim just got a place in the already moving train, and was gone, with the fifty sovereigns in his poc-
A VOW OF VENGEANCE.

...1.1...

"...The eyes of Dulcie were riveted upon Jack; as, turning from passage to passage, he unfolded the glorious truth of Salvation."
A VOW OF VENGEANCE.

The blood of the betting-stand was being bawled, shouted, yelled, screeched, and bellowed from the stands of the professionals.

Jem was alone now, he had lost the run of his friend. He hesitated about taking his cash, but it was not the hesitancy caused by, but of senseless besottedness, born of a drunk-mad brain. Blandly realizing his condition, he staggered to the nearest bar, and drank a bottle of soda water, and a quarter-of-an-hour afterwards was back in the neighborhood of the betting-stalls. Smiling generally and flinging the gold in his pocket, he stalked the sovereigns with the cool-sickness of the half-drunken gambler.

"Better have all your eggs in one nest, when the nest is as sure a thing as this," advised the bookie.

"I wasn't born yesterday, or christened to-morrow—I know a thing or two!"

"I guess you do, guv'nor," said the man, adding, with a meaning smile, "'ain't you goin' more 'fore the day is over if yer loses?"

"The man walked away, but his last words stuck to Jem.

"If I lose!' he muttered over and over again.

"If I lose!" he murmured, and the perspiration began to ooze out of his forehead with great beads, for the grim thought was sobering him.

"If I lose!" he reiterated three times over, 'he muttered. "I shall have ruined, blasted, damaged my miserable life, and soul!"

A searing sickness suddenly seized him at the next thought. He leant against the back of a chair for support, as he murmured brokenly:

"God help me! What a fool have I been! I've thrust away my hand, my home, her love; if I lose, all must be sold, and she, poor Bessie! she will have lost all confidence in me. And my boy, my blue-eyed darling—"

He buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

"Aye!" whispered the bookie, watching him, decided to keep him in view if possible.

"Them's the kind o' cases as generally goes in for suicide!" muttered the man in blue.

"Thousands of mad-eyed, mad-souled men and women pressed against the barrier, and wild of eye and soul as any of the maniacs in Bedlam or Colney Hatch, strained their gaze, and roared and screamed with frantic, feverish voices, as the race was run.

Could some mighty kodak be invented to take a life-size view of the faces of the crowd high and low—rich and poor, ignorant and cultured—at the moment of the intensest excitement of such a race, and could the pictured ones see themselves photographed, they would either shudder with disgust, or declare that the portraits were not true.

Jem Whitely's face was as mad as any in that crowd, more mad than some, as he watched the noble but sorely abused heart sweep by. One of them bore against its name, the honour, the happiness, the home, the very soul of any family the country.

Moments were millenniums. The blood in Jem's brain beat like the wild surge of some sea of liquid fire. His fingers were clenched until the nails dug deep in the palm of his hands. His teeth were set as if he were locked jawed. His breath came hot and fierce like the blasts of a furnace through his wide-dilated nostrils. His eye was crazed forward; his strained staring eyes seemed to have lost their sockets, so wide and wide was his gaze.

For one brief moment, the mad thought that hundreds of pounds were staked, that Andrew was in the right, Jem was a poor, sordid brute, his whole life soiled by his obsession and curse.

"Dammed, body and soul! Ruined utterly! The boy's money gone! Bessie's love and confidence thing to her and me, and to me! Myself dishonourd! Now—well, now, what's left for me but death?"

"Once more the policeman, who had lost sight of him amid the crush, came across him, watched him, and fol-

owed him until, seeing him enter a drinking-booth, he turned away, but turned round, and saw Jem."

"Bad as it is, that's better than suicide, for he'll very likely drown his thoughts, an' he'll be afterwards."

"Drown his thoughts? Where can the soul-conceived gambler drown his thoughts? The Bible speaks of a sea of forgetfulness, but there's no sea, that I can see, not deep enough to drown one soul's remorseful thoughts—one soul's eternal regrets.

Jem Whitely drunk, but the drink had lost all power to intoxicate him. It did but quicken his sense of despair. It sharpened the poignancy of his agony; it engendered a cruel, cowardly way out of his misery—a way that should leave wife and child to the hopeless misery that becomes the first heritage of the bereaved of the self-murderer. It did all this and more, but it did not make him drunk.

"The broken man carried the last thing out of the Whatley home to the van that waited at the gate, with a 'Thank'ee, sir,' and with a spit on the shilling, which Jem gave him by way of a tip, the man moved away.

At the same moment, a young fellow with a small, black feather-bag, came through the gate. He was dressed in a loud-patterned check tweed suit, wore a heavy, showy breast-pin, ring, and double watch-guard.

The new-comer was the bookmaker's clerk. Jem paid out the cheques and told his story.

"It's all I can make. You have everything I possess now," said the unhappy man, savagely. "You can't get blood out of a stone," he added, and unless your employer cares to take me—hale and blood as I am—he'll have no other chance.

"The clerk began to parley.

"Go out, or I'll thing you out!" shouted Jem. His face wore the mad, savage look of a wild beast, and the clerk became a husky tarred.

Jem Whitely locked the door behind the departed clerk and began a tour through the rooms of the empty house. Every nook and corner mocked him with some sweet memory of past happy days. Every room had its meaning. The very walls, even now that their garnishments had gone, found voices to speak to him.

"In the living room downstairs his blood-shot eyes noted the place where the paper was rubbed by the end of the cradle, that had been wont to stand against that wall.

"My boy! My boy! My poor, deserted, darling wife!" he moaned.

Then, mad of heart, wild of eye, full of despair—forgetful of the sin, pardoning God, of the leader, compassionate Saviour—then Jem Whitely—"

"Someone had told the police that a shot had been heard in the house. The vicar was passing at the mo-
moment. The door was forced and there, lying in his father's blood stained floor, a bullet-hole through his brain, they found the dead gambler.

Clutched in his hand was a slip of paper, pencilled on the slip were the words:

"My brain and heart reek, and are on fire. I am mad—mad with bitter shame and remorse! God help my precious wife, and care for my baby boy, and, if He can forgive a suicide, forgive Jem Whitely."

"Unseen by the finders of the self-murdered body, two demon spirits, twin brothers, smiled upon their work, and as they moved through space, they sang their demon-songs:

"It was the day the Derby was run!"

"Exit the devil of Chance, and the devil of Drink."

"Sad, drooping, broken-hearted Bessie, with her babe, fourteen months, a beautiful, a pure creation, they ran.

"Some day, perhaps, she may learn to smile again, but that day is not yet. Meanwhile, her delicate heart repeats its helpful anthem:

"God is my refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble!"

"My story is ended. I draw an inked line below, and say,' Brother, sister, whoever you are, who may read this, in the name of old England, of humanity, of God, will you not fill the line with your signature, as a pledge
before God never to approach in any way, pronounced or open, covert or sly, the fatal, hateful, dishonest practice of Play, Gambling, Chance, or by whatever name sheever the four things may be known, which murders while it smiles.

Name

"God help me to keep this pledge."

"Truly," muttered Dulcie, as she finished this story, "truly, truth is stranger than fiction."

Then she continued: "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do all things, but I can do something. And what I can do, I ought to do, and what I ought to do, by the Grace of God, I will do!"

"And though, in a sense, the final personal appeal of that story booklet cannot be addressed to me, yet, with the memory of that sweet child of my servant, Lucy, still in my mind, I was able to sign the pledge, as I would sign ten thousand such, if by so doing, I could more fully emphasise my abhorrence of gambling, or be the means of helping some poor soul smitten with the vice."

Crossing the room to her writing-table, she took her pen, and on the line indicated on the last page of the booklet, she wrote:

"Dulcie Danvers, The Beaufoys, Hanis."

Then, as she placed the signed book in a prominent place against one of her table ornaments, and sat back in her chair, her eyes flashed with a new light; her pulses suddenly quickened; and her cheeks warmed with a tender flush, for her thoughts went out, with a strange new interest, to Jack Armstrong.

CHAPTER XII.

A VOW.

When Dulcie took up the great convict establishment, where so many others of her sex were confined, she was as literally mad with passion and hate against Dulcie, and with the sense of her impotence, as if it were not possible for her, to do anything but wait in the actual condition of strait-jacket insanity.

For the first three days of her incarceration, she was silent, sullen, almost defiant to the warders. Then suddenly her wildness broke bounds, and she flung her little brown note at the warder who had brought her evening meal, striking the woman between the eyes. The attack was an absolutely unprompted one—was witnessed by the two prisoners who accompanied the warder, and who trundled the food wagon.

For the assailant, Lottie found herself locked up for three days in a dark cell on a meagre diet of bread and water.

"The hideous blackness and solitude of that three days' dark cells," sober thoughts came to her, and she began to argue to herself after this fashion:

"I have now only one purpose in life, that is, to get revenge upon Mrs. Danvers."

She saw her teeth so sharply and savagely, that in the tomb-like silence of the place, the click of the meeting ivories sounded like the cocking of a rifle.

"Curse her!" she hissed murderously through her teeth.

"If I hang for it, I'll have my revenge upon her?"

She smiled grimly in the Cimmerian darkness, as she muttered:

"I was a fool to let go at that hatchet-faced wardress, but—"

She ground her teeth in rage against herself, as she added:

"I'm not fond of humble-pie, but for the sake of my desire on that woman I hate, and upon whom I will be revengeed, I'll tell hatchet-face I am sorry I have my breech at her ill-bred face, that it was not to spare against her personally, but just a jump of temper."

The three days passed, as all time passes in the long run; it was the longest three days she had ever known. Then, at last, the door of her cell opened, and she saw, framed in the outline of light, the form and face of the woman whom she had assaulted.

She was glad it should be this particular wardress who came to release her, as it gave her an opportunity to practise her arranged humble-pie.

The woman received the confession in a better fashion than she might have been expected, and during the day passed on word of the apology to her fellow-warders, with the result that the belligerent Dulcie had a fair chance given to her, and embracing the chance, kept clean sheet all the way through her after time.

The morning came at last when her own clothes were brought to her, and an hour later the great gates opened and let her out—a free woman once more.

An evil smile filled her face, and there was an ugly snarl in her voice as she muttered to herself:

"Now for my revenge! And if I can only accomplish all my purpose, I don't care if I have to go under myself—afterwards!"

She made her way to the railway-station. She had plenty of money for all her immediate needs, and her first destination was London.

In London, she was very busy for two days, then one more she took the iron road, muttering once again:

"Now for my revenge!"

Did she accomplish it? If she did, of what nature was it?

How faced it between Dulcie and Jack Armstrong? Who killed Major Danvers?

These and a score of other mysterious questions will be unfolded in the next—the last book of this series, entitled, "THE LADY OF THE CREST."

NOTE.—The pair moved on, the cunning woman crept from her hiding place, and, at a distance, dogged their steps, her soul filled with evil design, her heart with evil hate. . . . . . He knew who the speaker was, no other voice on earth could thrill him in this voice.

A few seconds later Dulcie pulled up her pony directly under the spot where the spy was hiding, every word that passed between the lovers rose clear and distinct to the ears of the listening woman. Every gesture, every movement of limb and feature was watched by her, and she gnashed her teeth in rage and hate as she saw

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