

(Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.)

FIRST SNOW.

I.

The sun burns pale and low Along the gloomy avenue of pines, And the grey mist hangs heavily in lines Above the torrent's flow.

II.

I hear on the purple hill The caw of the blackbird dying from the cold, And hum of insects hiding in the mould Under the ruined mill.

III.

The deep embrowned wood Is garlanded with wreaths of fleecy white, And the stark poplar stands, like Northland Muffled in snowy hood.

IV.

Afar, the village roof Glistens with foam—the bridge that spans the Is carpeted with down—the harvest plain Gleams like a crystal roof.

V.

Heigho! the silver bells, The gaudy sleighs that glide so merrily along— The crunch of slipping hoofs—the woodman's Loud, echoing in the dell.

VI.

The pine knots brightly blaze And shed a cheerful heat in wintery homes; The look of earth, immersed in cosy rooms, Heed not the wintry haze.

VII.

But in the dark, damp lanes, Where shrieks the pauper girl in rags, How dimly falls the snow upon the flags, Athwart the broken panes.

VIII.

With quick, convulsive breath And hollow cough, the hopeless sufferers greet, In cruel winter's ice and snow and sleet, The harbingers of death.

IX.

But chief on her headstone Who sleep "neath summer roses, cold flakes rest, And filter by drops upon her breast, Thy virgin breast, my own!

X.

White on my uncaring head, Yea, on my sunken heart distils the snow, Chilling the life and warmth that in it glow, In pity for my dead.

XI.

Not till the crocus bloom, And April sunbeams thaw the frost-bound slope, Will my numb heart, Louise, to light re-ope, With the flowers on thy tomb.

JOHN LESPERANCE.

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THE NEW MAGDALEN.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

SECOND SCENE—Mildethorpe House.

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

Horace was innocent enough to answer her seriously. "You would not even let me speak of our marriage just now," he said. "Never mind what I did just now," she retorted, petulantly. "They say women are changeable. It is one of the defects of the sex."

"Heaven be praised for the defects of the sex!" cried Horace, with devout sincerity. "Do you really leave me to decide?" "If you insist on it."

Horace considered for a moment—the subject being the law of marriage. "We may be married by licence in a fortnight," he said. "I fix this day fortnight."

She held up her hands in protest. "Why not? My lawyer is ready. There are no preparations to make. You said when you accepted me that it was to be a private marriage."

Mercy was obliged to own that she had certainly said that.

"We might be married at once—if the law would only let us. This day fortnight! Say—yes!" He drew her closer to him. There was a pause. The mask of coquetry—badly worn from the first—dropped from her. Her sad grey eyes rested compassionately on his eager face. "Don't look so serious!" he said. "Only one little word, Grace! Only Yes."

She sighed, and said it. He kissed her passionately. It was only by a resolute effort that she released herself. "Leave me!" she said, faintly. "Pray leave me by myself!"

She was in earnest—strangely in earnest. She was trembling from head to foot. Horace rose to leave her. "I will find Lady Janet," he said; "I long to show the dear old lady that I have recovered my spirits, and to tell her why." He turned round at the library door. "You won't go away? You will let me see you again when you are more composed?"

"I will wait here," said Mercy.

Satisfied with that reply, he left the room. Her hands dropped on her lap; her head sank back wearily on the cushions at the head of the sofa. There was a dazed sensation in her: her mind felt stunned. She wondered vacantly whether she was awake or

dreaming. Had she really said the word which pledged her to marry Horace Holmercroft in a fortnight? A fortnight! Something might happen in that time to prevent it: she might find her way in a fortnight out of the terrible position in which she stood. Anyway, come what might of it, she had chosen the preferable alternative to a private interview with Julian Gray. She raised herself from her recumbent position with a start, as the idea of the interview—dismissed for the last few minutes—possessed itself again of her mind. Her excited imagination figured Julian Gray as present in the room at that moment, speaking to her as Horace had proposed. She saw him seated close at her side—this man who had shaken her to the soul when he was in the pulpit, and when she was listening to him (unseen) at the other end of the chapel—she saw him close by her, looking her searchingly in the face; seeing her shameful secret in her eyes; hearing it in her voice; feeling it in her trembling hands; forcing it out of her word by word, till she fell prostrate at his feet with the confession of the fraud. Her head dropped again on the cushions; she hid her face in horror of the scene which her excited fancy had conjured up. Even now, when she had made that dreaded interview needless, could she feel sure (meeting him on the most distant terms) of not betraying herself? She could not feel sure. Something in her shuddered and shrank at the bare idea of finding herself in the same room with him. She felt it, she knew it: her guilty conscience owned and feared its master in Julian Gray!

The minutes passed. The violence of her agitation began to tell physically on her weakened frame.

She found herself crying silently without knowing why. A weight was on her head, a weariness was in all her limbs. She sank lower on the cushions—her eyes closed—the monotonous ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece grew drowsily fainter and fainter on her ear. Little by little she dropped into slumber; slumber so light that she started when a morsel of coal fell into the grate, or when the birds chirped and twittered in their aviary in the winter-garden.

Lady Janet and Horace came in. She was faintly conscious of persons in the room. After an interval, she opened her eyes, and half rose to speak to them. The room was empty again. They had stolen out softly, and left her to repose. Her eyes closed once more. She dropped back into slumber, and from slumber, in the favouring warmth and quiet of the place, into deep and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAN APPEARS.

AFTER AN interval of rest, Mercy was aroused by the shutting of a glass door at the far end of the conservatory. This door, leading into the garden, was used only by the inmates of the house, or by old friends privileged to enter the reception-rooms by that way. Assuming that either Horace or Lady Janet were returning to the dining-room, Mercy raised herself a little on the sofa and listened.

The voice of one of the men servants caught her ear. It was answered by another voice, which instantly set her trembling in every limb.

She started up, and listened again in speechless terror. Yes! there was no mistaking it. The voice that was answering the servant was the unforgotten voice which she had heard at the Refuge. The visitor who had come in by the glass door was—Julian Gray!

His rapid footsteps advanced nearer and nearer to the dining-room. She recovered herself sufficiently to hurry to the library door. Her hand shook so that she failed at first to open it. She had just succeeded when she heard him again—speaking to her.

"Pray don't run away! I am nothing very formidable. Only Lady Janet's nephew—Julian Gray."

She turned slowly, spell-bound by his voice, and confronted him in silence.

He was standing, hat in hand, at the entrance to the conservatory, dressed in black, and wearing a white cravat—but with a studious avoidance of anything specially clerical in the make and form of his clothes. Young as he was, there were marks of care already on his face, and the hair was prematurely thin and scanty over his forehead. His slight active figure was of no more than the middle height. His complexion was pale. The lower part of his face, without beard or whiskers, was in no way remarkable. An average observer would have passed him by without notice—but for his eyes. These alone made a marked man of him. The unusual size of the orbits in which they were set was enough of itself to attract attention; it gave a grandeur to his head, which the head, broad and firm as it was, did not possess. As to the eyes themselves, the soft lustrous brightness of them defied analysis. No two people could agree about their colour; divided opinion declaring alternately that they were dark grey or black. Painters had tried to reproduce them, and had given up the effort, in despair of seizing any one expression in the bewildering variety of expressions which they presented to view. They were eyes that could charm

at one moment, and terrify at another; eyes that could set people laughing or crying almost at will. In action and in repose they were irresistible alike. When they first descried Mercy running to the door, they brightened gaily with the merriment of a child. When she turned and faced him, they changed instantly, softening and glowing as they mutually owned the interest and the admiration which the first sight of her had roused in him. His tone and manner altered at the same time. He addressed her with the deepest respect when he spoke his next words.

"Let me entreat you to favour me by resuming your seat," he said. "And let me ask your pardon if I have thoughtlessly intruded on you."

He paused, waiting for her reply before he advanced into the room. Still spell-bound by his voice, she recovered self-control enough to bow to him and to resume her place on the sofa. It was impossible to leave him now. After looking at her for a moment, he entered the room without speaking to her again. She was beginning to perplex as well as to interest him. "No common sorrow," he thought, "has set its mark on that woman's face; no common heart beats in that woman's breast. Who can she be?"

Mercy rallied her courage, and forced herself to speak to him.

"Lady Janet is in the library, I believe," she said timidly. "Shall I tell her you are here?"

"Don't disturb Lady Janet, and don't disturb yourself." With that answer he approached the luncheon-table, delicately giving her time to feel more at ease. He took up what Horace had left of the bottle of claret, and poured it into a glass. "My aunt's claret shall represent my aunt for the present," he said, smiling, as he turned towards her once more. "I have had a long walk, and I may venture to help myself in this house without invitation. Is it useless to offer you anything?"

Mercy made the necessary reply. She was beginning already, after her remarkable experience of him, to wonder at his easy manners and his light way of talking.

He emptied his glass with the air of a man who thoroughly understood and enjoyed good wine. "My aunt's claret is worthy of my aunt," he said, with comic gravity, as he set down the glass. "Both are the genuine products of Nature." He seated himself at the table, and looked critically at the different dishes left on it. One dish especially attracted his attention. "What is this?" he went on. "A French pie! It seems grossly unfair to taste French wine, and to pass over French pie without notice." He took up a knife and fork, and enjoyed the pie as critically as he had enjoyed the wine. "Worthy of the Great Nation!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "Vive la France!"

Mercy listened and looked, in inexpressible astonishment. He was utterly unlike the picture which her fancy had drawn of him in everyday life. Take off his white cravat, and nobody would have discovered that this famous preacher was a clergyman!

He helped himself to another plateful of the pie, and spoke more directly to Mercy, alternately eating and talking as composedly and pleasantly as if they had known each other for years.

"I came here by way of Kensington Gardens," he said. "For some time past I have been living in a flat, ugly, barren agricultural district. You can't think how pleasant I found the picture presented by the Gardens, as a contrast. The boys in their rich winter dresses, the smart nursery maids, the lovely children, the ever-moving crowd skating on the ice of the Round Pond; it was all so exhilarating after what I have been used to, that I actually caught myself whistling as I walked through the brilliant scene! (In my time boys used always to whistle when they were in good spirits, and I have not got over the habit yet.) Who do you think I met when I was in full song?"

As well as her amazement would let her, Mercy excused herself from guessing. She had never in all her life before spoken to any living being so confusedly and so unintelligently as she now spoke to Julian Gray!

He went on more gaily than ever, without appearing to notice the effect that he had produced on her.

"Whom did I meet," he repeated, "when I was in full song? My bishop! If I had been whistling a sacred melody, his lordship might perhaps have excused my vulgarity out of consideration for my music. Unfortunately, the composition I was executing at the moment (I am one of the loudest of living whistlers) was by Verdi—'La Donna Mobile'—familiar, no doubt, to his lordship on the street organs. He recognised the tune, poor man, and when I took off my hat to him he looked the other way. Strange, in a world that is bursting with sin and sorrow, to treat such a trifle seriously as a cheerful clergyman whistling a tune!" He pushed away his plate as he said the last words, and went on simply and earnestly in an altered tone. "I have never been able," he said, "to see why we should assert ourselves among other men as belonging to a particular caste, and as being forbidden, in any harmless thing, to do as other people do. The disciples

of old set us no such example; they were wiser and better than we are. I venture to say, that one of the worst obstacles in the way of our doing good among our fellow creatures is raised by the mere assumption of the clerical manner and the clerical voice. For my part, I set up no claim to be more sacred and more reverend than any other Christian man who does what good he can." He glanced brightly at Mercy, looking at him in helpless perplexity. The spirit of fun took possession of him again. "Are you a Radical?" he asked, with a humorous twinkle in his large lustrous eyes. "I am!"

Mercy tried hard to understand him, and tried in vain. Could this be the preacher whose words had charmed, purified, ennobled her? Was this the man whose sermon had drawn tears from women about her whom she knew to be shameless and hardened in crime? Yes! The eyes that now rested on her humorously were the beautiful eyes which had once looked into her soul. The voice that had just addressed a jesting question to her, was the deep and mellow voice which had once thrilled her to the heart. In the pulpit, he was an angel of mercy; out of the pulpit, he was a boy let loose from school.

"Don't let me startle you!" he said, good-naturedly, noticing her confusion. "Public opinion has called me by harder names than the name of 'Radical.' I have been spending my time lately—as I told you just now—in an agricultural district. My business there was to perform the duty for the rector of the place, who wanted a holiday. How do you think the experiment has ended? The Squire of the parish calls me a Communist; the farmers denounce me as an incendiary; my friend the rector has been recalled in a hurry, and I have now the honour of speaking to you in the character of a banished man, who has made a respectable neighbourhood too hot to hold him."

(To be continued.)

Chess.

Solutions to problems sent in by Correspondents will be duly acknowledged.

New Chess Club.—A meeting of the St. John's Chess Club was held in the room of the Irish Friendly Society, at nine o'clock last evening, Thursday, Oct. 23. The attendance was good, and much interest manifested. Feeling that their organization was hardly adapted to the wants of the chess-playing community in that city, the members decided to re-band and reorganize. A new association was therefore formed, to be known as the "St. John's Chess Club," and the following officers were elected for the ensuing term:—

Dr. A. M. Ring, President; S. Kerr, Vice-President; J. H. Graham, Corresponding Secretary; E. G. Nelson, Secretary-Treasurer.

The Club at present embraces considerable chess talent, and it is hoped will in a short time include all our leading players. It will meet in the room of the Irish Friendly Society every Thursday evening at 8 o'clock, when players desirous of joining are invited to attend.

We have been favoured by correspondents in Hamilton and Belleville with the two following short games, which, although more skilful than, will be interesting as furnishing specimens of the play in their respective clubs.

CHESSES IN HAMILTON, EVANS' GAMBIT.

White, Mr. H. Stephens. Black, Dr. I. Ryall. 1. P. to K. 4th. P. to K. 4th. 2. K. Kt. to B. 3rd. Q. Kt. to B. 3rd. 3. B. to Q. B. 4th. B. to Q. B. 4th. 4. P. to Q. Kt. 4th. B. takes P. 5. P. to Q. B. 3rd. B. to R. 4th. 6. Castles. (a) P. to Q. 3rd. (b) P. takes P. 7. P. to Q. 4th. B. to Q. Kt. 3rd. 8. K. takes P. Kt. to Q. B. 4th. 9. B. to Kt. 2nd. Kt. to K. 2nd. 10. P. to Q. 5th. B. to K. Kt. 3th. 11. B. takes K. Rt. P. (c) G. to Kt. 12. B. to Kt. 2nd. Kt. to K. R. 6th. 13. B. to Kt. 2nd. Q. to K. R. 6th. 14. Kt. to K. R. 4th. Q. takes Kt. 15. K. to R. Q. takes Kt. 16. P. takes B. K. takes P. 17. B. takes Kt. K. takes R. ch. 18. Q. takes R. Q. takes B. 19. Q. ch. and draws by perp. ch. (a) P. to Q. 4th is generally played first. (b) K. Kt. to B. 3rd might also have been played here. (c) Impetuous, as it opens the Rook's file. (d) B. to B. 6th seems better. (e) The commencement of a strong counter-attack. (f) Kt. takes Q. P. would have led to many lively variations, and apparently gives a more decisive superiority to Black.

CHESSES IN BELLEVILLE, CUNNINGHAM GAMBIT.

White, Rev. H. C. Black, Mr. D. J. W. 1. P. to K. 4th. P. to K. 4th. 2. P. to K. B. 4th. P. takes P. 3. B. to Q. B. 4th. B. to K. 2nd. 4. Kt. to K. B. 3rd. B. to R. 5th, ch. 5. P. to K. Kt. 3rd. P. takes P. 6. Castles. P. takes P. ch. 7. K. to R. P. to Q. 3rd. (a) 8. Kt. takes B. (b) Q. takes Kt. 9. B. takes K. B. P. ch. K. to K. 2nd. 10. Q. Kt. to B. 3rd. K. Kt. to B. 3rd. 11. B. to Q. 3th. (c) P. to Q. B. 3rd. 12. B. to Q. Kt. 3rd. P. to K. R. 6th. (d) 13. R. to K. Kt. to Q. 2nd. 14. P. to Q. 4th. Q. to K. B. 7th. 15. B. to K. 2nd. B. to K. Kt. 7th, ch. 16. K. takes P. Kt. to Kt. 5th mate. (a) The authorities give B. to B. 3rd as best for the defence here. (b) This releases the adverse Queen; better have played B. takes P. ch., &c. (c) We should have preferred leaving the bishop to its fate, and playing P. to Q. 4th. (d) Black now wins in a few moves, owing to the time lost by White in the opening and the consequent undeveloped state of his game.