

ished, his attitude at once easy and commanding. Miss Judith, regarding him beneath her bent brow, thought so; Juliet, whose yellow-crowned head was held a trifle higher, thought so too, with a sore bitterness at her heart.

Philip took up his position beside his wife. "I want to beg your attention for a few minutes," he said, easily, "for I have a little matter to explain before leaving you. Miss Tredegar, I have been acting under false colors; I have led you to believe that I am a friendless and penniless wanderer. That I am friendless, as far as ties of kindred are concerned, is really true; but I am penniless is not. But, though I am wealthy, it is not due to my success abroad. I owe my wealth to the death of my father's elder brother, Sir Geoffrey Bayard. As my uncle has outlived his children, as my own father is dead, I find myself heir to the title and estates. I learned my good fortune quite by accident. Happening to take up a newspaper in a eating-house in New York, I found an advertisement headed by my own name, in which the advertiser requested my immediate return to England on matters of business. Finding the name of the family lawyer appended to the advertisement, I returned, and am happy to say that I found the inquiry was genuine. I owe this explanation to you, Miss Tredegar, and I apologise for keeping you in wilful ignorance, but—there was a long pause, and then Philip continued, in lower tones, "I wished to win my wife for myself alone. Audrey, my darling"—he bent over the white veiled figure as he spoke—"it is to no lowly home—to no bitter struggle for daily bread—that I am taking you, though, thank Heaven, if it had been so, you were willing to share it with me. Audrey, my sweetest wife, look up. Let me be the first to call you by the name you are to bear from this glad and happy day—Lady Bayard."

"Audrey," said Philip, his eyes dancing with irrepressible mirth as he leaned back in a first class carriage opposite his wife on their way to the beautiful Cumberland home that was his and hers now—"Audrey, how little I once thought I should ever play the 'Lord of Burleigh,' and Audrey, whatever would my feelings be if you took it into your head to enact the 'Lady of Burleigh'?"

"I never should," was the demure reply, "because, Philip, if I ever found the burden of my honor too heavy, I should shift it on to your shoulders."

On the library couch lay Lenore. Miss Judith had found her there after the guests were gone, in a fainting fit. She was better now, but her dress was scarcely whiter than her face.

"She must have a change," said the doctor to Miss Judith. "Take her to the Isle of Wight. She is suffering from debility, and needs tone."

When he was gone Miss Tredegar went to Juliet's room and repeated his words to her niece. Juliet heard in silence, and then, lifting her eyes looked full in her aunt's face—

"Aunt Judith," she said, steadily—and something in the sad white face riveted Miss Judith's attention—"that will not cure my sister. You and I know what has robbed her young life of its sunshine and made her what she is to-night. It is I who am to blame, for I urged her—a weak, confiding child—to be false to her own heart. But oh, I have done very wrong all through; yet, if it were only myself who had to suffer, I would not complain."

She covered her eyes, and a convulsive sob shook her frame.

"I can see now," she went on, sadly, "how wrong I have been. Let Lenore marry the man she loves, and, if the years bring trouble for them, let them bear it together; it will be light enough with love to bear them up. There was trouble enough in our home—sickness, poverty, debt; yet in the darkest days I never saw a look on my mother's face like that which Lenore's has worn lately. And"—the girl's voice was full of unutterable woe—"amid all I had to suffer in those days, my heart never knew a pain so bitter as that which filled it when I stood by to-day and saw the man I love, and who once loved me, married to another."

She spoke truly—the pride was crushed at last. She stood, a sorrowful, suffering woman, but nobler in this hour than she had ever been before.

Miss Tredegar knew it. Juliet's words in their bare, pathetic truth, touched a chord in the stern heart that for so long had been petrified. Something of this she had felt when Audrey had said, "I would rather be poor with Philip than rich without him." The floodgates of her tears were unlocked. After long years once more the stern woman wept.

"Child, child, you are right! Heaven forgive me if I have spoilt your life too!"

"I alone am to blame, aunt Judith. I valued riches and position more than truth and honesty," said Juliet, with a sad smile. "But, thank Heaven, it is not too late to save Lenore from such a fate. It was I who came between her and Austin Kinglake; it shall be my task to repair the wrong."

She kept her word. It was Juliet's delicate tact that brought the young curate back to Lenore's side; it was Juliet's tender care and devotion that helped to restore the glowing color to the childish face, and the light of happiness to the young eyes.

There came a day at last when Lenore, restored now to perfect health, went out from Miss Tredegar's house a happy bride; and not even Juliet or Audrey—who had come from Cumberland with Philip to be present at the wedding—

kissed the sweet face of the girl-bride more lovingly than did aunt Judith.

At Mellicote House now Miss Judith lives with her niece, Juliet Woodville; but very often—especially in the summer—the old corridors and glades echo to the voices of happy children—Audrey's children and Lenore's.

Both of the married sisters live in Cumberland, for Sir Philip Bayard has presented Austin Kinglake with a lucrative living, which he owns near his own estate; but every year the children of both houses pay a long summer visit to aunt Judith, whom they dearly love, while they perfectly adore their younger aunt, Juliet, whose praises they never weary of singing.

THE OPICLEIDE PLAYER.

CHAPTER I.

Pacing the little jetty of the Suffolk fishing village of Seaborne were two persons deeply engaged in conversation.

The evening was calm and cool, the sea still as a pond, with scarcely a ripple on its surface. The men, who were walking on the pier were brothers. The elder, Reuben Twyford, was a tall, thin man of about thirty, dressed in a suit of black which had about it something of a clerical appearance. Benjamin Twyford, the younger, was about the middle height, broadly built, with a large, open, bronzed countenance that beamed with good humor. He was attired in the usual style of the better class of fishermen; and as he strode along, his hands thrust into his pockets, the roll in his walk told he was more used to the sea than the land.

"I tell you, Ben," said the elder, "you are wrong to remain a fisherman. Think what our father would have said to it? Although your education is not so good as I could wish, it is far above that of the men with whom you mix."

"Look here, Reub," replied Ben; "there is a great difference between you and me. I was not made for books; I don't like them. You might send me to college, but you'd never make me learn. You can—you take after father."

"Yes," said Reub, somewhat bitterly; "I do take after father; he was a gentleman."

For a moment, Ben stood still, and gazed into Reuben's face as if overcome with astonishment; then placing his hand gently on his brother's arm, he said, in a kindly, but reproachful, voice, "Yes, Reub. You take after father; I after our mother. Don't forget that, Reub."

"No, no; of course not," said Reuben hurriedly. "But, still, you know that our father was a gentleman, and—"

"Our mother was the daughter of a fisherman: that's what you mean, Reub; so say it out, like a man. It's true, our grandfather had several smacks; still, he was only a fisherman. I know you are more clever than I am. You've not only taken after father, but have got his place as schoolmaster. I say, Reub, it must be a grand thing to have all the boys touch their hats as you pass, eh?"

"I see you will not speak in earnest," said Reub, "and, therefore, I will not press the matter now. And so, good night; unless you are coming up town."

"Not yet," replied Ben; "I must go down to the boat first; and after that, I shall have to play with the band by the parsonage."

"The idea of wasting your time and breath blowing on that wretched opicleide!" urged Reub, with contempt. "Come with me; I'm going to uncle's to give Jenny her lessons, and you had better join us."

"No; I must keep my word with the lads, for they can't get on without me. Much as you may jeer at my opicleide, the ladies and gentlemen from London, who were staying at the parson's last summer, said I was the best player they had ever heard."

"No doubt you are. But what pleasure can the harmony of empty sounds give when contrasted with the beauty of language, wherein sound and sense are combined? In literature, man's busy life, his manifold actions, his good and evil passions, are illustrated, and, therefore, grand lessons are thought by it; but what good does music do?"

"Perhaps you are right," sighed Ben, as he leaned over the side of the pier, and gazed into the water. "I don't understand these things; still, when I take up my dear old opicleide, I seem a different man. A hundred little voices whisper to me what the music is describing. My brother, sometimes, when I have been playing a melancholy piece, the composer's meaning seem to have been borne in upon me so strongly, that I have cried like a child."

Reuben Twyford gazed in astonishment at his brother, but remained silent.

"You see, Reub," continued Ben, after a pause, "I am nought but a fool, with strange fancies; you are a genius; and when your great book comes out in London, you will most likely make your fortune, and will leave Seaborne; while I shall remain here, a poor fisherman, truly, but a contented, happy man."

"If ever I succeed as an author, and a few days must show, trust me, Ben, I will never forget you."

"I do trust you, Reub, and would do anything to please you; even learn if I could, but I can't."

"You must try. Have you any message for Jenny?"

"No; I may call there later on; so good-bye for the present."

The brothers shook hands, and Reub walked in the direction of the village, Ben gazing after him.

"There goes one of the cleverest lads alive," he said. "His book is a wonder; but he's paid a pretty penny to get it published, and says it will make his fortune, so that's all right. Yet I wish he didn't seem so fond of Jenny. It would break my heart to see that girl marry any one but myself. Perhaps he only fancies her as a cousin should."

Consoling himself with these thoughts Benjamin Twyford bent his steps towards the village, where, with some of his companions, he intended practising his music.

CHAPTER II.

Reuben Twyford soon arrived at his uncle's cottage, and finding Jenny alone, asked her to commence her lessons for, like a true schoolmaster, he loved to be teaching.

Jenny Shelton, a plump, merry girl of about eighteen, was one of those strange mixtures of wisdom and frivolity seldom found except in only daughters, who at an early age have had the charge of the house in consequence of their mother's death. In all domestic matters Jenny was as sage as any matron; but she was as ready for an innocent flirtation or quiet piece of mischief as any girl in the village.

Demurely she got her books, and sat herself down by her cousin, listening to his explanation with seeming, if not real, attention. Now and then her pretty little hand would wander up to her rosy lips to hide a yawn; which, when noticed by Reuben, caused him to close his book pettishly, saying, "I see you are tired, Jenny, so I will not proceed. I can't tell how one can wish to be ignorant."

"I am sure I try to learn, Reuben," said Jenny, timidly.

"You could if you liked; but you let your mind wander too much. Only the other day when I was showing you how to conjugate a verb, you confessed to thinking about the bread in the oven."

"Well, the verb could not spoil, but the bread could," answered the pupil, archly.

"I fear you will never be the scholar I wish."

"No!" replied Jenny, with a faint sigh. Then added, with a malicious smile, "Why don't you teach Ben?"

"He won't learn, as he has that wretched opicleide to play."

"Ah, but how beautiful he manages it!" cried Jenny, clapping her hands.

"Yes, and what good is it when all is done?" "I don't know yet; I hate lessons," said Jenny, petulantly.

"I must speak to you seriously. I feel that it is my duty to read you a lecture."

"Bother lectures, and books, too—I detest them! I have tried to learn your stupid, dry, old stuff, but find a good love-story worth all your useful knowledge put together! I hate people who are a head and no heart!"

As she concluded, Jenny rose abruptly from her seat, and opening the front door, stepped into the little garden, where leaning against the wall, she gazed at the rising moon, in pretty sulkiness.

Reuben looked after his cousin in a half-startled manner, for he had never seen her so cross before. He slowly placed the books together, then walked out and stood by her side.

"Jenny," he said in a grave voice, "I am sorry to see this temper."

"It is enough to make any one cross to be talked to as I am!" answered Jenny pouting.

"But it is the only way you can be taught."

"I don't want to be taught! I am no longer a child, to be treated in this manner!"

"Your conduct to-night is excessively childish!"

"If you do not like it, you can go!" replied Jenny, who was really getting cross.

Reuben remained silent for a moment, and in the stillness of the night the band could be heard distinctly.

"I suppose you are listening to the music?" he said, contemptuously.

"Yes, I am; and wish I were close to it."

"I will take you there, if you like."

"And lecture me the whole way. No I would sooner be alone!"

"It strikes me you do not know what you want!" said Reub, angrily; "so I will leave you until are in a better temper."

Reuben Twyford bowed coldly to his cousin, and then strode rapidly away in the contrary direction to that from which the strains came.

Jenny watched him as he passed down the street, and her heart smote her for having been unkind. She knew, with all his faults, he was thoroughly good-hearted, and would do anything for her; so she stood sorrowfully gazing at him until a turn of the road hid him from her view.

While she was looking after Reuben, her cousin Ben approached unperceived in the opposite direction, and touching her lightly on the shoulder, exclaimed, "A penny for your thoughts, Jenny!"

The young girl started, and turned round in anger; but his merry face made her smile, in spite of herself.

"They're not worth the money, Ben," she laughed, "because they were about you."

"Indeed!—and what have I done to merit such consideration?"

"I was thinking how silly you are to waste your time blowing that foolish old opicleide."

"Come, come, Jenny," interrupted Ben; "I see you and Reub have been talking about me. But you don't dislike my playing, do you?"

"No, Ben; I think all innocent amusements good and right; and you don't bother people with you?"

"I suppose you mean that rub for Reub?" laughed Ben. "He's been giving you a lesson, eh?"

"Yes. Have you come to do the same thing?"

"Not to-night, Jenny," replied Ben, gaily. Then, suddenly changing his manner to one of eager earnestness, he added, "And yet there is one thing I should like to teach you, or learn myself."

"Gracious me! What a puzzle, Ben! You must have learned that from Reuben; it can't be your own!"

"I learned it from my heart, Jenny," replied Ben. "I should like to teach you to love me more, or learn to love you less. If you knew how a smile from you has made me happy for days—how I have dreamed of you whilst at sea, and prayed for you both night and day, I do think you would have pity on me."

"Why, Ben, you have become quite a poet!" laughed Jenny. "You will be writing a book, like Reub, soon."

"Not much chance of that, Jenny. But I would not care what I did, so that you were by me. I'll do anything if you will only love me."

Jenny gazed into her cousin's face, and saw poor Ben was in terrible earnest.

"Why, Ben, what is the cause of this sudden change?" she asked.

"You see, Jenny, I—I'm going away," said Ben, in a low voice. "It isn't for long; but the shortest hour seems a month to me when I'm not by you. So how I shall pass a week or two at a distance, I don't know."

"Why, where are you going?" she asked, showing more anxiety than she intended. "Surely you have not been foolish enough to take old Robertson's offer to command his collier?"

"Do you think I would do that when you told me not to?" was the reproachful reply. "No, Jenny; I have only to go as far as London. You see, we want some new instruments for our band, and the parson and one or two more gentlemen have subscribed for them. Some one must go to buy them, and the choice has fallen on me. They say I play better, and know more of music, than any of them. I'm to start by the first train from Lowestoft to-morrow. I must away to-night, to get over there in time; but I wouldn't leave without saying good-bye to you and endeavoring to learn my fate."

"Learn your fate?" she mused, turning the sand with her foot, and looking down. "I don't understand you."

"Not understand me, Jenny? I mean I can't go until I know if you love me. I know I'm only a rough fellow, without fine words; but I love you with all my heart and soul; and if you'll give me your hand, I will make you a faithful, fond, tender husband."

As he spoke, he held out his large brown hand to Jenny, who still, with looks cast down and flushed face, stood silently before him.

For a moment, the strong man trembled, as he stood, with outstretched palm, waiting for her decision; but the next minute, she slipped her pretty fingers into his hand. He grasped them, and drew her to his breast.

Who can describe the first hour of transport that all feel when they love, and know they are beloved?

So, when Ben recovered from his excess of joy, and was about to part from Jenny, he found it was so late he would only have time to pack up a few things, and start at once. He therefore asked his cousin to inform his brother of the commission he had to execute in London and was rather pleased than otherwise at having an excuse for not seeing him, since he was pretty certain to inveigh against a journey taken for such an object.

Having completed these arrangements, he kissed Jenny, and, with a light heart, hastened towards his own cottage.

CHAPTER III.

A month passed away, and still Ben remained in London. He wrote one or two short letters to Jenny and Reub, telling them he was engaged to play at several concerts, and hinting at some wondrous good fortune which had happened to him.

At length, Jenny received a very short note, informing her of Ben's immediate return, and his intention of calling on her directly.

With beating heart, she awaited in the little garden the coming of her lover.

But so absorbed was Jenny in the beauty of the scene, over which the moon cast its calm, silvery light, and her own thoughts, that she was not aware of Ben's approach until he stood before her.

"Lor, Ben, how you did frighten me, she exclaimed, with a start.

"Frighten you! I am so ugly, then I thought you would have been waiting to me."

"And whom else do you think I was waiting to meet?" demanded Jenny, with a sly smile.

"Bless you, darling!" Ben snatched a kiss, and then sat quickly. "How is my brother?"

He never wrote to me."

A slight shade of sorrow passed over Jenny's face as she replied.

"I don't know how to answer you, Ben! Reub seems changed since you left. A few days ago he came as usual in the evening, and sat down by my side, but never spoke. I asked him if he