

THE BATTLE WON.

CHAPTER XLIV.

NESSA'S CRIME.

That night Nessa burnt her certificate of marriage with Richard Anderson. As she looked at the piece of paper before putting it in the flames, she said to herself that virtually she was still free to marry Sweyn—that the mere signing of her name could not make her the wife of that other man; and, to silence the objections of her whispering conscience, she repeated again and again Sweyn's unconsidered words, "Which is the wrong—to break man's law, or God's?"

If one must be broken, surely it is not the law of God, by which one heart is bound to another? At another time she might have seen that she was doing wrong, but she was incapable of reasoning clearly at this time, being wholly carried away by the force of passion. With that reckless disregard of consequences which distinguishes the love of women, she would give herself to Sweyn, no matter what might follow. If the worst that could happen came, she would take the punishment, and count herself a gainer by having the love of such a man as Sweyn. She believed that, if she offended against the law, only she would have to suffer, not realizing that others must be involved with her. And yet she was conscious of doing wrong, or she would not have burnt the certificate of her marriage—would not have perceived that this act in her life she must keep forever secret from Sweyn.

The danger of discovery, remote as it was, already began to weigh upon her mind; and even the dear joy of meeting Sweyn the next evening could not quite remove it. She felt it there at the bottom of her heart—something she wished away something which prevented her feeling the complete happiness of knowing that nothing now stood between her and him.

"Have you settled where you should like to live when we're married?" Sweyn asked, as they were going through the grounds the next evening.

"No; anywhere dear. I don't care," Nessa replied, pressing his arm, and with a voice full of happy indifference.

"Anywhere in London, I suppose you mean," he suggested, smiling.

"I mean anywhere that pleases you. Where you are will be the happiest place in the world to me."

"If you say such sweet things as that, you dear one, I shan't be able to talk business."

"Is it business?" asked Nessa, seriously; "I didn't know that."

"Yes, it is business. The fact is, sweetheart, I've been trying for years to make a practice in London, and I've failed. My connection consist chiefly of those who need advice gratis, and physic on the same terms. While I only wanted tobacco, the practice did not cost more than I could afford out of my little income; but now I want a wife, the case is different, and should like to get something in addition to my dividends."

"I am not extravagant now, dear; I have learnt to live economically, and, unless you object to it, I could still keep my engagement, and so we could wait for better times."

"You will talk in that strain, will you?" he said, and then, glancing round to assure himself that no one was near, he took her in his arms and hugged her to him.

"I did not mean what I said, dear," Nessa protested, when that lovely embrace was over and she had composed her mind to serious considerations.

"So did I. Well, now to business again. How should you like Buenos Ayres for a dwelling place?"

"Buenos Ayres! why, that's in South America!" she exclaimed in astonishment, for she had thought of the suburbs of London as the limit of their removal.

"Yes, it's very much in South America, and it's a hot place; though I daresay the heat would not be more intolerable than the fogs of London in winter; and it's a long way from Regent Street and the theatres."

"Oh, if you know how little I care for them!"

"The flowers and fruit must be lovely, but except half a dozen resident merchants and their families, you wouldn't see another Englishman in ten years, perhaps."

"I don't want to see any other Englishman in the world but you—never."

"Oh, sweetheart, I wish I could say such lovely things to you. I can only feel them here," he said, pressing her hand to his heart.

"Tell me about Buenos Ayres," she said, in serious earnest.

"Well, then, in serious earnest, I had an official appointment in Buenos Ayres offered me this morning. It's better than anything I could hope to get in England, and I think we might put by enough in a dozen years to come back and give advice on the old terms in London. It is so good an offer that I postponed giving a decisive answer until I had asked you about it. Now tell me, wife, what answer you would like me to give."

"Oh, let us go there. It will make me happy beyond anything you can think of."

She said no more than she felt. It was an intense relief to think that she would be beyond the probability of almost the possibility of meeting that man Anderson. Her eager acceptance to his proposal surprised Sweyn.

"If we go it must be directly. I doubt if we should have more than a week to prepare."

"We can get everything ready in that time."

"I suppose we could be married by special license."

"If not, we could be married there."

"Oh, we'll be married here, if possible. It will look more genteel, and I shall have to be particularly genteel in such a position. Besides, I intend to marry you before all the world. My vanity demands that."

Nessa, hearing this, trembled to think of what might have happened after being publicly married if she had stayed in England, now partly realizing for the first time the peril to which she has wilfully blinded herself.

"So I am to accept the offer, eh, sweetheart?" he asked, presently.

"Yes, oh, yes," she answered, eagerly; "unless," she added, observing reluctance in his voice and manner—"unless you think you cannot be happy there."

"Oh, I shall be happy enough," he replied, with a laugh; "a lotus-eater's existence will agree with me, I'll be bound. We shall lie in hammocks and smoke cigarettes and dream

away the years. But it's a kind of exile, and my wife is too good for that. That is, chiefly why I would have stayed in England, had it been possible."

"But you don't think it is possible," she said, anxiously.

"There are too many of us here for all to make fortunes," he said, shaking his head; "and if my wife cannot take a position here that she deserves, it is better for us to go away. We shall still be young when we come back in ten years."

"In ten years," said Nessa to herself, "I may come back with safety."

When Nessa heard the next evening that the arrangement was made, and that they were to sail for Buenos Ayres in seven days, she could hardly contain her delight, and her subsequent gaiety was almost painful to Sweyn, suggesting, as it did, a form of hysteria.

There was much to do in preparing for this sudden departure. Mr. Malloch put one of his assistants in the Palace in order to free Nessa at once, and she spent nearly all her time with Sweyn in these preparations. They were days full of joy to both, tempered only by some moments of anxiety to Sweyn in perceiving at times an expression of intense pain passing like a cloud over Nessa's face. He attributed it to the natural reaction from feverish excitement. Such a reaction came one evening after he had been telling her about his past life and family relations. He seemed to be inviting her confidence, and she would tell him nothing. Oh, if she could only relieve her heart, and tell him all! But how was that possible, when the proceedings he would inevitably institute to secure her estate would involve the disclosure that she Vanessa Grahame, was married to Anderson?

Her reticence about her antecedents did not astonish him. Without having reason to fear inquiry into her own life, a girl might well recoil from making known certain facts with regard to her parentage from simple delicacy.

"She will tell me all one of these days," he said to himself; "she is not yet my wife."

One day he told her that, to get the special license, his solicitor wanted to know the date and place of her birth. She looked at him aghast.

"I cannot tell you," she gasped.

"Don't let that frighten your love," he said; "I daresay his Grace the Archbishop will dispense with that formality if he only gets his fees."

He himself was doubtful whether he had been born in Kent or Surrey.

Another "reaction" appeared in her face on opening the license which he had obtained and she had taken from his hand with hysterical birth. She saw herself named there Viola Dancaster. She was to be married to the man she loved under a false name—she was to cheat the one she worshipped as her god.

At last all was settled, and three days before they were to sail they went to the north to be married from the house of Sweyn's brother. She won the hearts of Robert Meredith and his wife and all the household by her beauty and grace, her sweetness and warmth.

On the morning of the wedding, Nessa came down-stairs as white as a ghost. She had been fighting all night with her conscience and had come out of the struggle exhausted but victorious. She had trampled every scruple under foot for the love of this man; but she could not rejoice.

Before they started for the church Sweyn's brother put an envelope in her hand.

"My dear," he said, "this is my wedding present—to be opened when you are my brother's wife, not before."

Nessa dared not look to the right or the left as she went up the aisle. She knew that the church was full of people. She dared not look for fear of meeting those wild, bloodshot eyes of her husband. When the vicar commanded any one who knew of any just reason why she and Sweyn should not be united, her heart stood still, and she expected to here a voice break the silence, and tell that she was married to Anderson.

But the silence was unbroken, and the marriage was made.

"Now indeed, love, you are my wife," said Sweyn, kissing her.

She returned his kiss passionately; but a voice within her said, "You are not his wife. You have not made him your husband by this crime."

"What matters it what I am?" she retorted, wildly; "my love is mine, and down in that sunny land no one will come between us, and we will eat lotus together."

With that she pressed Sweyn's arm to her bosom, and the color came back to her face.

"How do you like my present?" asked Robert Meredith in the vestry.

She opened the envelope, smiling, read the enclosure, and then like one struck with the pain of death, let it slip from her falling hand.

It was a receipt from the trustees of a late eminent physician in Ormond Street for a check paid by Robert Meredith for the transfer to his brother Sweyn of the practice, together with the house and furniture, in Ormond Street.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES.

Nessa felt that a sword was hanging over her head which sooner or later must fall. She could not blind herself to contemplation of the future. It was too terrible for that. There was a fascination in it which she could not resist.

The opening for an active and useful career offered to Sweyn was not to be refused. He was not by nature indolent or self-indulgent—not a lotus eater; his acquirements and talent fitted him for the position he was to take among eminent men of his profession; and Nessa was at once too loving and too proud of her husband to persuade him from the path to greatness, even if she had found the pretext.

She foresaw that as his wife she must be peculiarly exposed to the observation and criticism of London society, and it was hopeless to suppose that the secret of her life could long remain undiscovered. The result of that discovery was no less evident. Despite his broad views and passionate love for her, Sweyn would refuse to live with the wife of another man, and though he might share her misery he would not participate

in her crime. Now, too late, she perceived that the consequences of her act would not be for her to bear alone; the man she loved must be involved in her own shame and tribulation, and their fall must be the greater for the prominent height to which they were now raised.

If she had been a strong-minded woman she would have confessed all to her husband in this the eleventh hour. But she was not that. She was weak in many things. She was dominated by love, and that would not permit her to say the word which must put an end forever to the one joy of her life.

Yet she yearned to tell him all—to have no secret from him; and the result of this yearning was that when they came to London she unbundled her mind in fugitive notes, which she put together in a box, with the presentiment that Sweyn would read them when she was banished from his roof.

Here are a few of these notes:

"This afternoon we took possession of our grand house in Ormond Street. When we had been through all the rooms, from the kitchen to the garret, and were come down again into the splendid drawing-room, my beloved Sweyn said, 'Yes, this is a very fine house, dear wife, but we must knock it about and make a comfortable home of it.' Then having no thought but of my great happiness (for his arm was round my neck, and I held his dear hand against my cheek), we settled, laughing, that we should change the distribution of everything in the room, rehanging the pictures in better lights, and make it gay with flowers; and going thence into the drawing room, we agreed to leave that as it was, and only dine there when we were obliged to, i. e., when we have to entertain a large company, the room downstairs being much lighter, cosier, and more suitable for two to dine in, with room besides at the table for one or two friends."

"Then we went into the study, which is also a fine room, but very severe and proper. I proposed that we should have the Japanese screen up from the morning room to shut off the anatomical studies, place the big arm chair with a nice soft rug, before the fireplace, and turn out the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from the little case for Sweyn's old books, keeping a shelf at the bottom for all his pipes, so that it would be snug and cheerful for him when he wants to sit alone and smoke and read his favorite authors. 'That will be famous,' said he; 'you shall arrange it after your own heart and make it perfect. But the happiest hours I shall spend here will be those when my dear wife comes to my knee, and makes me forget my favorite author in a good long chat about nothing in particular.' 'Till then I had been as full of fun as he, but at those words my heart string seemed to snap, and you could not tell what had suddenly put out my mirth, my darling. I could not tell you, dear love, what I am writing now. The thought flashed upon me that the day must come when I may not come to your knee, when you will sit alone in the room I am preparing for you. Oh, for the skill to make it so charming that you may forget my sorrow and shame, and find comfort there!"

"We kept three maid servants and a man who drives the brougham. They are good servants, and so no great art is required in managing them. Indeed, it requires more study to correct my own faults than theirs; but I am doing my best to be punctual and neat and correct, and these efforts are more than rewarded by the evident satisfaction of my dear Sweyn. Everything goes like clockwork under your management," he said this evening; "these little details are simply delightful. You must have had a lot of experience with servants, love."

"I told him I had a dresser all to myself in the latter part of my engagement at the International. 'But before that?' he asked. 'I told him I was at school before that. 'But at home—for you went home sometimes, I suppose.' 'No dear,' I answered; 'I had no home. When I left school I went after a very little while to the International.' 'Tell me all about it,' he said, drawing me to him and taking me in his great strong, tender arms."

"You wondered at my silence; you wondered why I trembled in your arms at such a slight request. I knew that if I told you any more I must tell you all. I could not feel your heart beating against mine and tell you a lie. I felt that if you pressed me to speak I must obey whatever followed. But you silenced me with a kiss and a few gentle words, saying; it was too soon to think of anything but the present. Oh my darling, it must ever be too soon to part from you."

"Sweyn took me with him in the brougham this morning, leaving me in the carriage while he visited his patients. The day was beautiful and warm, and it is a lovely little box, with just room for us two, and a little case in front for books. Sweyn was very gay, and gave me most amusing descriptions of his patients, who, he told me, were all suffering from the same complaint—nothing to do. He told me I had not looked so bright and well since our marriage, and I think that is why he was so full of spirits. Indeed, I have felt all day happy, for we have had a most successful day. For though our marriage was celebrated in two or three of the daily papers, it is scarcely likely that my enemies would look there for me. Nevertheless, while the brougham was standing in the crowded streets, I could not fix my attention on the book in my hands for thinking that among the many curious people who glanced into the carriage on might recognize me."

"After writing last night, I had a shock which threw down all the hopes I had built. The housemaid asked if she might go home to see her mother, who was ill—promising to be in by half-past ten at the latest, as her home, she said, was only in Eaton Street, Chelsea. I consented, though I fear not without betraying my terrible fear. I was overcome with the very house in which my husband had lodged, and it is scarcely probable that any one in Eaton Street should have failed to hear about my marriage from the registrar, who told me he had pursued inquiries there. The girl did not return until past eleven, and then her manner almost confirmed my fears. For though usually well behaved and exact, she did not attempt to make any excuse for being late, but looked at me impudently as if she knew that she had met at her mercy. And this, indeed, may be so. Sweyn was called out before the girl asked to go, and did not return until nearly twelve, so he knew nothing of this affair, yet the moment he came in he detected a change in me, and could hardly believe that I did not feel unwell. 'I can't understand it,' he said. 'You never looked

better, at any rate recently, than you looked this afternoon; and now—' he paused and looked in my face anxiously as he laid his fingers on my wrist, 'there is something wrong here that my art cannot fathom.' Oh, medical science to fathom my disease—even if it were to find that within a few weeks my life must end! Oh, my darling love, that I might die in your arms with my shame undiscovered, that you might look back without reproach upon this little space of joy!"

"I am ashamed of my cowardice when I think of the trifles that have alarmed me, and how gravely I distress my watchful, loving Sweyn by foolishly frightening myself. Eliza (the housemaid) goes about her work precisely the same as before going to Eaton Street the other night, and there is nothing in her manner to indicate even suspicion of my secret. She is a good-looking girl, and possibly did not go to Eaton Street at all—only making her way to her mother's illness an excuse in returning, and possibly had made up her mind to give me warning if I scolded her; that would account for the impudent expression in her face, if it really existed; but that may all have been the creation of my guilty fear. I must be bold, if only for his sake."

"Let me put it at the worst and face the situation. Discovery will come; an end to these days of happiness snatched from Fate is inevitable; well, and what then? Is the fear of death to destroy the delight of living? If these dear days are to be brief, shall I not devote every moment to enjoyment, and leave care for the night when there is no more joy to have?"

"I have been happier, and Sweyn has been happier, since I took my resolution to face my danger boldly, and live for the present, without thinking of the past or future. Yet I would not like to grow wickedly indifferent to my fault, for that might lead me to commit others. But how can I grow hard or wicked with Sweyn's love to warm and soften my heart—such an example as his life to sustain a reverence for our first visit—the wife and daughters of Dr.—calling upon us. I made up my mind to like them before I went into the drawing-room, and so I think won them over to liking me. When they were gone, Sweyn kissed my hand, and told me, my darling! If I went through this ordeal well and came out triumphant, it behaved like a lady, it was through thinking that the finest gentleman in the whole world is my husband. For you are my husband, my darling Sweyn; not by law of man, but by the law of God—by every sentiment and feeling that can sanctify and make marriage holy, and you alone are my husband."

"To-day, on going to the press for a dust-er, I found a number of *Diogenes* lying underneath the pile. It seemed most unlikely that Eliza or any of the servants would buy a paper of that kind, and I took it up, thinking that possibly it had been brought from Sweyn's office. It was open at the column of 'Passing Glances,' devoted to the movements of society people, and the first name that met my eye was my husband's. With anxious interest I read the paragraph. It told how the practice of the late Dr.—had been taken up by Dr. Sweyn Meredith, and concluded with a brief, well-deserved encomium to Sweyn's professional ability and personal excellence."

The next paragraph ran thus:—

"To the general public, however, Dr. Meredith is chiefly interesting as having lately married Miss Viola Dancaster, the charming lady who astonished all London a few months since by her beauty and daring. Dr. Meredith was present at the International at the time of the accident, which but for his skill, would have proved fatal to the young equestrienne. She owed him her life; she has given it to him. There are feelings even in Ormond Street. My first feeling on reading this paragraph was one of terror; my first impulse to take away the paper belonged to her—she usually arranging the house linen. My marriage was announced in a way to attract attention to direct the pursuit of enemies. But this feeling gave place to exultation when I discovered that the paper was more than a month old, for reflecting that these periodicals are never bought and scarcely ever looked at later than the week they are issued I may reasonably conclude that all danger is past. And this again shows the folly of giving way to alarm. If I had known of this public announcement when it appeared I should have had scarcely a day's peace of mind since."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Why Plain Girls Marry.

A lady who had seen much of the world was asked on one occasion why plain girls often get married sooner than handsome ones, to which she replied that it was owing mainly to the tact of the plain girls and the vanity and want of tact on the part of men.

"How do you make that out?" asked a gentleman. "In this way," answered the lady: "The plain girls while the men and so please their vanity while the handsome ones wait to be flattered by the men, who haven't the tact to do it. There have been cases, however, in which the situation has been reversed, and even ugly men have succeeded in making themselves so agreeable to young ladies as to become their accepted suitors. Here is a case in point: When Sheridan first met his second wife, who was then a Miss Ogle, years of dissipation had sadly disfigured his once handsome features, and only his brilliant eyes were left to redeem a nose and cheeks too purple in hue for beauty. 'What a fright!' exclaimed Miss Ogle, loud enough for him to hear. Instead of being annoyed by the remark, Sheridan at once engaged her in conversation, and resolved to make her not only reverse her opinion, but actually fall in love with him. At their second meeting she thought him ugly, but certainly fascinating. A week or two afterward he had so far succeeded in his design that she declared she could not live without him. Her father refused his consent unless Sheridan could settle £15,000 upon her, and in his usual miraculous way he found the money."

A minister, in visiting the house of a man who was somewhat of a tippler, cautioned him about drink. All the answer the man gave was that the doctor allowed it to him.

"Well," said the minister, "has it done you any good?" "I fancy it has," answered the man, "for I got a keg of it a week ago and I could hardly lift it, and now I can carry it round the room."

Von Moltke's Birthday.

During the latter part of the late Emperor William's reign, Bismarck's glory made the figure of Germany's greatest military genius a little dim. But Hellmuth von Moltke is a modest man. He has cared more for action than for the rewards of action. Very likely he never troubled himself to wonder if the Chancellor were standing in his light. Now that Bismarck is in the background, his quieter companion must realize, perhaps for the first time, how firm a hold he has on the hearts of the German people. His young "Master," as these old heroes delight in calling their Emperor, is willing to be taught by the old Field Marshal, and that is the greatest honor this Kaiser, who believes he can get along with out Bismarck, knows how to bestow. He has patterned himself after Moltke, and does not forget to acknowledge his debt, as Sunday's celebration of that warrior's ninetieth birthday shows. Germans all over the world on that day could to mind the services to the Fatherland of the greatest strategist of the age. In the war with Denmark in 1863 and '64, with Austria in 1866, and with France in 1870 and '71, he was the brain of the Prussian army. To him more than to any other man Germany owes her victories. His genius for war was as great as Napoleon's, but with him war was more of a science, more of a business, than of a game, as with Napoleon. Moltke loved war. Just before the struggle with France Bismarck remarked the General's improved appearance and said of him: "I remember when the Spanish was the burning question, that I looked at once ten years younger. When I told him the Hohenzollern Prince had given the thing up he became all at once quite old and worn-looking; but when the French made difficulties, Moltke was fresh and young again immediately." When he demanded, after the battle of Sedan, the surrender of the entire French army as prisoners of war, he did it with a cool firmness which almost seemed to betoken his hope that the terms would be refused in order that he might get another chance at the enemy. Moltke might have been a statesman if he had chosen, but great statesman can be made while great general are born. His capacity for statecraft was shown by this prophecy, made long before the German states were united and at a time when it looked as if they never could be: "The only possible means of converting the enormous wealth spent in the service of war to the interests of peace was the formation in the heart of Europe of a Power which, unambitious of conquest itself, would yet be strong enough to forbid its neighbors from waging war. If such a blessing ever be conferred on humanity, it will be through Germany when she is strong enough—that is, Germany united." Bismarck could not have shown greater penetration than this. General von Moltke cares little for pomp and vanities. He is extremely modest and simple, and, unlike Bismarck, little given to talk. The stern old soldier must have been touched, however, by the enthusiastic devotion and admiration manifested in the demonstrations by his countrymen on Sunday last, his ninetieth birthday.

In Darkest England.

Believing that in order to save the souls of men, especially of the outcast and helpless something must be done to ameliorate their temporal and social condition, that indeed little can be accomplished in the direction of moral reform while food and shelter are lacking, General Booth, of the Salvation Army, has announced his intention of undertaking to solve the problem of England's outcast and destitute. The scheme is outlined in his book, "Out of Darkest England," which has just come from the press, and in which he estimates, after a careful study of England's destitute, that there are three million persons "who in a month would all be dead from sheer starvation were they exclusively dependent upon the money they exclusively depend upon their own work, or which they receive as interest or profit upon their capital or the property; and who by their utmost exertions are unable to attain the minimum allowance of food which the law prescribes as indispensable even for the worst criminals in our goals. As to his method of deliverance, broadly stated, it aims at giving to every destitute person food, shelter and work, and at forming them into self-helping and self-sustaining communities, each being a kind of co-operative society or patriarchal family governed and disciplined on the principles which have already proved so effective in the Salvation Army. That this gigantic undertaking will involve an enormous outlay will readily be seen. The General himself says it may cost millions, and that he cannot tie himself down to any definite sum. He promises, however, that as soon as the public subscribes £100,000 the scheme will be set afloat. That he will secure the necessary one hundred thousand pounds is more than likely, for already he has received several very handsome promises of aid toward the realization of the proposed objects, while the fact that his new book was sold out three hours after it was issued shows how keenly alive the public is to this overshadowing problem. He will not proceed without opposition, however, especially of that kind which comes from prediction of failure. Indeed, some of the leading London papers, notably the *Times*, has denounced the scheme as impracticable and especially to be condemned because of the fact that it is pivoted upon a single individual. But whatever may be said about the feasibility of this particular scheme it is plain that the General is working along the right line, and that the social problem will never be satisfactorily solved until some method is devised by which help can be given to those submerged classes of society who are daily famished with hunger, cold and want.

The New York Pasteur Institute for the preventive treatment of hydrophobia, reports that during the eight months of its existence, 610 patients have applied for treatment. For 480 of these persons it was demonstrated that the animals which attacked them were not mad. They were consequently treated accordingly. In the remaining 130 cases the antihydrophobic treatment was applied, hydrophobia having been demonstrated by veterinary examination of the animals which inflicted bites or by the inoculation in the laboratory, and in many cases by the death of some other persons or animals bitten by the same dogs. The results are most gratifying; every patient to-day enjoys good health. One regulation of the Institute, which is evidently founded on a philanthropic basis, is, that persons who cannot afford to pay are treated gratis.