

# THE YOUNG SQUIRE'S RETURN.

(Concluded.)

The gypsy was never required to appear; Wilfrid Burn was never again called upon to answer the charge, and the Longhill mystery was never cleared up, if the old woman's evidence has left any doubt in the matter. Ere the next Assizes were due, Roderick Warstone left England and returned no more. Even his father's death, which took place soon after—the trial broke the old Squire's heart, it was said—did not recall him; the estates were placed in the care of a steward, and his tenants never saw the Squire again; nor did Miss Matilda Jermyn. It was hardly likely that he could renew his attentions to that young lady, or she receive them; but those in the village who pretended to be well informed in the matter, said it was not the legal difficulty of his position which was a bar to Mr. Warstone, or prevented his renewing his suit; it was his fear of assassination. Be that as it might, he certainly never again appeared openly in England.

No obstacle now existed to the marriage between Wilfrid and Mabel, and directly it was evident that no further trouble would be incurred from the accusation, Mr. Rayford insisted upon its "coming off."

"When the lad has married thee, my girl," said the farmer, "I shall feel that thou art safe, and I shall feel safe too, but not till then. What wilt thou do, Squires, and gypsies, and the like, with shootings and murders, and so on, I cannot tell what may happen."

Mabel probably needed no urging to take this course, but if she did, it was supplied by old Hepzibah, who assured her solemnly that the stars gave warning against the postponement of her marriage.

So, as there was no reason for delay, the marriage took place at an early date.

Little was seen of the old Squire after the trial; indeed the villagers declared that "he never held up his head" from that time, for the revelations made therein were a fearful blow to his feelings and his pride; but, proud though he was, no man in the county had a higher sense of right than Squire Warstone, and he felt that some recompense was due to the man who had suffered from his family and from himself, for he was most earnest in pressing on the charge. Perhaps he did not like to see Wilfrid; perhaps he thought the latter would refuse compensation at his hands; at any rate, it was Mr. Rayford who received a lease, for a long term, of the valuable Mill Farm, at a peppercorn rent. The plain-dealing, straightforward old yeoman, seeing no reason why he should not allow his landlord to appease his conscience by doing the right thing, promptly accepted the lease, and the half-dozen of boys and girls who in time made the old rooms at the Mill Farm echo with their laughter became little heirs and heiresses thereby.

The gypsy-witness was not seen again in the village, but when old Hepzibah died, a dark, stern looking stranger came who produced some proof of his being her relative, and claimed her body for the purpose of burial in some distant cemetery where her tribe lay. It was said that he was joined, soon after he drove away, by two gypsy women—an old one, the very image of the witness on Wilfrid Burn's trial, and a younger and very handsome woman. It was whispered that this latter was Roderick Warstone's gypsy-wife. But if it were so, she was never more heard of in Longhill.

THE END.

## JUDGE NOT.

How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on e'er so high a throne,  
And hear him say to her—to her? that else he loveth none.

### CHAPTER I.—THE WOV.

The lights in the great bed-chamber, with its domed, painted ceiling, were turned low, and the hush of approaching death hung over all things; for on the bed Constance Deverell lay white and motionless, with closed eyes and low, irregular breathing. She had been a reigning beauty thirty years ago. She was handsome still, and her beauty was reflected in the face of the tall, slight man who stood by the bedside, watching and waiting. The son also had loved so little, yet who alone was with her in this terrible hour, while the younger, her darling from his cradle, was far away. The nurse, a Sister hastily summoned from the neighboring convent, sat on the opposite side of the bed; the doctor stood at the foot.

The hands of the clock over the mantelpiece pointed to midnight.

Three days had Constance Deverell lain unconscious, unless a low moaning at times was any sign of consciousness. The doctor could not account for the seizure which had prostrated her. He had been hastily summoned at nine o'clock in the morning by a mounted groom from the Court, and when he arrived he found Mrs. Deverell, who had not yet risen, insensible. Her son and her housekeeper with her.

"How did this happen?" he asked Max Deverell, whose face was as white as the face on the pillow; his handsome features were stern and set, they seemed wrought in marble.

Dr. Bland knew Mrs. Deverell to be a woman who was rarely ill; he could not understand this sudden attack.

"I only came down from London last night," Max answered, in a suppressed voice. "This morning, as I was passing my mother's room on the way from my own, I heard a piercing cry from within, I rushed into the room, and found her like this."

"She must have received some great mental shock, Mr. Deverell. Do

you know, or can you conjecture its nature?"

A slight flush crossed the man's marble face. He said, after a moment's hesitation:

"I think I can conjecture."

"And—pardon me, I speak only in the interest of my patient—can that cause be removed?"

"No," Max said, looking straight before him; "there is nothing to be done, nothing!"

The good doctor stifled a sigh, but said no more.

He knew what all the village knew—such things cannot be hidden—that Max, the eldest born, was not his mother's favourite, and for this reason he was rarely at the Court, while for Clinton, the younger, always a ne'er-do-well from his boyhood upwards, she had the extravagant affection which women sometimes lavish on their unworthy children.

Some people said that part at least of the reason of this preference was Clinton's likeness to the young soldier Constance Bedingfold had loved, but had thrown over, because of his poverty, to marry rich Mr. Deverell, and the soldier had died in battle within a month of her marriage.

Certainly Clinton was not like the Deverells, who had the dark oval faces and clear cut handsome features that distinguished Max. And Mrs. Deverell, though she was a dutiful wife, had never loved her husband.

"Perhaps," thought the doctor, "Clinton had lost more than usual on the turf, or at cards, or had married a barmaid or a circus rider; and Max either did not know the actual truth, or did not choose to admit his knowledge."

He was an extremely proud, reserved man; and if Clinton had done anything discreditable to the family name, Max would, at any cost, hide the wound from the public gaze.

A skilled nurse was sent for; the doctor gave directions, and called constantly to see how the patient progressed; and now the third night had come, and the doctor, when he came an hour ago, had given his fiat.

"There is nothing to be done. She is sinking, Mr. Deverell; it is only a question of time."

And Max's white lips moved with the unuttered words:

"Better so. Oh, merciful father! better so."

A little before one o'clock Dr. Bland left; he was perfectly helpless, and the Sister was quite able to do anything that was needed; the doctor's house, besides, was not far off, and a horse was ready-saddled in the stables, and one of the grooms sat up, in case of emergency.

Then Max urged the nurse to go and lie down in the adjoining dressing room.

"I can call you in an instant," he said. "Pray take some rest."

"You need it more than I do," she answered.

"You have had no sleep since your mother was seized."

But Max shook his head.

"I cannot rest," he said; "I must be with her."

So Sister Agnes went into the dressing room and lay down, and Max still watched by the dying bed.

There was no rest for him; no sleep in the dark eyes so full of passionate pain.

And if she lay for a week like this he must never leave her side; he must be with her to the end.

It was about two o'clock when he saw a change in the livid face, a quiver of lips and eyelids; then her hand stirred feebly on the coverlet.

He rose and bent over her.

"Mother!" he whispered.

Her lips moved; she was trying, he knew, to speak his brother's name, but after a moment she opened her eyes, and fixed them with a strangely clear gaze on her son's face; she tried to speak, but failed.

Max brought the brandy which stood ready mixed for use, and gently raising her, made her drink a little. It gave her some strength; her eyes went to his face again, then to the crucifix that hung at the foot of the bed.

The Deverells were of the extreme High Church, as it is called, though they would have said simply of the Church, and the symbol of Christianity was not, in their creed, for the altar only.

The dying woman made a feeble sign with her finger, and Max detached the crucifix and brought it to her; but she signed to him to keep it in his hands.

"Swear," she whispered, with a strange agony in her eyes, "never to—to—" Her breath failed her; she made a supreme effort. "Swear," she said, "on that symbol never to—to reveal the truth to living soul!"

Max knelt down, and bowing his face over the crucifix, kissed it reverently.

"I swear," he said slowly, "never to reveal the truth to living soul!"

There was a faint murmur from his mother's lips. He lifted his head and saw that her eyes were closed; a grey shadow swept over her face.

He rose to his feet and called the Sister, and in two seconds, she, too, was bending over the dying woman.

No need for question and answer. Max knew that it was only moments now.

He quietly wiped the dew from the rigid brow. A faint quiver passed over her features; her lips babbled, trying to force the name that was always in her heart, "Cl—li—li—"

And then the last breath rippled out, and the troubled, erring life was over.

Even in death she was unjust. On Max she had laid a burden grievous to be borne. Her last thought was for Clinton; her last effort the attempt to repeat his name.

Deep in his heart Max must have felt the bitterness of the injustice that had robbed his childhood and youth of love, and had been crowned on a death-bed; but he gave no sign.