

tempted to throw her arms round her aunt in a pitying embrace, and ask if she were not ill; but she was checked by seeing her draw herself stiffly erect, call up a stern look to her rigid face, walk stiffly across the room, take a seat at the window farthest from where her niece was, and look intently out on the grounds. Gertrude turned to the piano, as to an ever-sympathising friend, and began to play softly some simple melodies in a minor key; and as the twilight gathered, and her skilful fingers extemporised upon the keys, she lost herself in intricacies of thought as completely as did the thin, pale, grey woman, who sat immovable at the window, staring out on the lawn, and seeing nothing but the troubled visions that haunted her weary brain.

Both started suddenly to their feet in vague terror, as Allan, hastening into the room with the Scotch newspaper in his hand, said—

"Only think, True, such a strange thing has happened! The workmen at Glower O'er—but I must read it to you. Do ring for lights. How dark that trellis makes this room!"

"You noisy fellow! I declare you have quite frightened me," said Gertrude, ringing the bell as she spoke.

But her aunt, in a concentrated tone that sounded sepulchral in its enforced calmness, said—

"Speak, then, Allan, if you've read it; say at once what it is—this strange thing."

"Why, the excavators for the line were going through that district where that old kinsman of mamma's, Angus Dunoon, once sunk his shaft, when he took it into his head that there were mineral treasures there; and, lo and behold, there's some trinkets found there, that have been, on examination by some local authority, sent to my father, forthwith."

"What, family jewels, hid in the old troubled times?" said Gertrude.

"No, no, True; there have been no troubles in loyal Scotland since 1745, and this Angus Dunoon flourished until a year or more after our mother was born. I suppose he would have been forgotten long ago, but that his vagaries brought our grandfather to grief. A man may lose his money by being too clever, as well as by being too foolish."

"Yes, yes, every excess is bad," said Gertrude, impatiently; "but these trinkets, Allan, what are they, if not family jewels?"

"They are not family jewels; strangely enough, they are a child's ornaments, a necklace and coral, and there was with them—"

Candles were just then brought in, and the young man paused a moment, and ran his eye over the paragraph in the paper, till the servant left the room, and then resumed, seriously—

"There was with them a rather awful accompaniment."

"Awful, Allan! What?" said niece and aunt simultaneously.

"Why, a kind of old oak chest, or 'mistletoe bough' affair—"

"A skeleton? never! You're romancing, Allan," said Gertrude, turning pale as she tried to put off the idea.

"Yes! bones of a child—and a grown person." Miss Austwicke heaved a long sigh as of relief, and said, having recovered her usual tone of voice—

"Well, and how can that concern Basil—your father, Allan?"

"Why, the trinkets have the Austwicke crest and name on them."

He read the short paragraph in the paper which furnished the incidents he had related—

"SINGULAR DISCOVERY OF HUMAN REMAINS.—The workmen engaged in excavating for the new line of railway past Glower O'er, on Friday last, laid open an old shaft, sunk many years ago by the late Angus Dunoon, Esq., and came upon some bones, which on inspection proved to be those of a child and a grown person; by the size, the latter is judged to be a female skeleton. A child's coral and necklace, with a crest and the name of Gertrude Austwicke engraved on them, were with the bones. From the complete decomposition of clothing and flesh, it is conjectured that these extraordinary relics must have been many years in the place where they were found."

And concluded by saying—

"The remains await the investigation of the authorities, and the police have the trinkets in their possession, to take them for identification, to the learned

counsel, Basil Austwicke, Esq., brother-in-law of Lord Dunoon, and owner of the land."

"What is the date of the paper?"

"The seventeenth, and this is the twenty-second."

"The dreadful things have come then, I suppose, to papa," said Gertrude, her face pallid to the very lips.

"Well, the trinkets are not dreadful; and there's nothing to scare you, True. That they should be found in such ghastly companionship, is certainly very strange."

"Can my brother's sending for his wife, have anything to do with this? Why should he send for her?" said Miss Austwicke, speaking to herself.

Though the remark was not addressed to them, they both replied—

"She has, of course, to see the trinkets."

The paper passed from hand to hand, and was read over and over again. Gertrude, after a time, remarking—

"I heard mamma once tell Dr. Griesbach about her uncle, Angus Dunoon, who, she said, prevailed on grandpapa to mortgage his estate. Mamma added, that a learned experimentalist was quite as fatal to the Dunoon family as any spendthrift could have been. Mamma was warning the Doctor against letting his son live with some relative, who was, in some way, a devotee of science."

"Oh! Professor Griesbach she meant, said Allan. "Well, if people haven't acres to lose, they can't lose them; and I fancy the elder Griesbachs are not of the genus, 'learned fool.' Rupert, here, may be."

"I am sure, Allan," began Gertrude; but she stopped short; and if it was a defence she meant to volunteer of Rupert Griesbach, she stopped short in time to avert Allan's banter, if not her own self-condemnation.

One good arose from the turn given to the conversation: the colour had returned to her face.

Miss Austwicke still continued abstracted and uneasy, and soon after left them.

CHAPTER XLVI. DREAMLAND AND DAYLIGHT.

"A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only,
As the mist resembles rain." LONGFELLOW.

With the aid of books and music, the brother and sister passed the evening, without any further reference to the subject, though it had taken possession of the thoughts of both—Gertrude, especially. On retiring to her room, she resorted to that infallible balm for troubled minds, the Book of books, and read over, more than once, the ninety-first Psalm, before bending her knees and offering her evening prayer; yet this did not wholly succeed in tranquillising her mind.

She lay awake many hours; indeed, it was not until the morning sun came brightly into her room that she fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed that she was in a spacious apartment, standing between her father and brother; and that her mother walked up the whole length of the shadowy hall, with her face convulsed with either grief or anger: that she was shrinking back, to avoid her mother's approach, when the floor under her feet opened, and she fell down a black and yawning gulf, an immense depth, and, trying to rise, was held down in the grisly arms of a skeleton. Her struggles to free herself woke her. She started up in bed with a cry, and as consciousness returned, saw Ruth standing at her bed-side, dressed in her bonnet and shawl.

"Thank goodness, it was but a dream!" she cried adding, "what folly to remember." And then, in a cheery voice, as the golden beams of the morning made the room pleasant, and chased away the ugly vision, she added, "What, going so soon, Ruth?"

"It's not very soon, miss. You've overslept yourself. I'd a mind to waken you, for you looked so troubled—and I must be going by the nine o'clock train, and it's a long walk to the station."

"Yes, yes, go, good Ruth, and mind be back punctually, for mamma and papa come to-night;

and you had better ask my aunt, in future, when you want to go out."

Ruth curtsied, and left her, and as Gertrude was not one of those young ladies who allow themselves to become dependent on a waiting-woman, she was soon dressed, and out over the lawn, into the shrubbery, and ready, as far as she herself was concerned, to laugh at her dream. But still there was quite enough in the reality made known to her of this mysterious discovery in Scotland to check any exuberance of spirits. So she spent a quiet day over her books with Marian.

Allan, directly luncheon was over, went to the parsonage, to take a ramble with Rupert Griesbach.

Dinner was ordered at six o'clock. An hour before that time, the house was in all the bustle of an arrival, which, however was much more quiet than had been expected, for the two younger sons had not come. They were still at Scarborough, with friends of Mr. Austwicke's. That lady and her husband both looked excited, worn, and troubled. Fatigue, merely, was it?—so Gertrude hoped.

It was characteristic of both parents that, as their children came out on the steps of the great porch to meet them, Mrs. Austwicke should rush into Allan's arms, while Gertrude was folded to her father's breast. He held her there, as it seemed to her, with even more affection than usual. Then he released her, and handed her to her mother, who stooped forward and kissed her cheek, saying, in a constrained way—

"You are looking well, Gertrude." Then, turning to Martin, who was curtsying in the hall, she exclaimed, "I'm wearied to death, Martin!"

"And no wonder; whirled along those horrible railroads," said Miss Austwicke, who walked out of the shadowy side of the Hall, to shake hands stiffly with her sister-in-law, and rather more cordially to welcome her brother. "You, Basil, I suppose, are used to it; but it tries even you—I see it does."

The greeting on each side was soon over, but it rather startled Gertrude, as she and her aunt were leaving Mr. Austwicke, to be conducted by old Gubbins—now tottering with age, but tenacious of his privileges—to his room, that, instead of accompanying the ancient butler, Mr. Austwicke should turn back in the hall and come up again to his daughter, fold her in his arms and kiss her; then, holding her at arm's length, should say, appealing to his sister—

"Who is she like, Honor?"

"Well, I don't deny, Basil, that she has the Austwicke eyes and brow; you may see them repeated over and over for two hundred years in the corridor pictures; but she's more of a blonde than we Austwicks are, and smaller, though, fortunately, not quite a pigmy. That's the Dunoon hair and complexion."

"Of course it is—of course!" cried Mr. Austwicke, in a triumphant tone, that sounded strangely excited. "If I wanted to make my darling vain, I should say she blends what's best in both houses; but, there's no doubt that little head has nonsense enough in it."

"Well, yes—and some sense too," said Miss Austwicke, with unwonted kindness.

"Perhaps a little of that goes a great way," laughed Gertrude.

"With young ladies, doubtless," rejoined Mr. Austwicke, laughing in concert with Allan, who was an amused spectator of the little scene, and speaking more like himself than he had yet done.

They all separated to dress for dinner, and when they met at table the topic that had been so much in Gertrude's mind, and it may be also in that of her aunt and brother, through the day, was not alluded to. Mr. Austwicke chatted pleasantly; his looks dwelling, evidently with great complacency, on his daughter, who, in honour of the occasion, had dressed herself very prettily in a pale pink silk, trimmed with filmy, white lace; her abundant curls of the very palest gold falling round her snowy neck. A little pearl locket, suspended from a delicate gold necklet, was the only ornament in the way of jewellery; but what need of more, with that resplendent hair, softly-tinted cheeks, and beam-