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"Flatterers" OR The Shadow of the Future.

CHAPTER XXVII.
CONTAINS A TENDER REVIVAL.
"Oh! well enough," she answered, swallowing obtrusive gurgles of anything but mirth. "I can bear it; especially for you. You are quite right; I am an 'old' Jean; and your Jean; and only dear to you. And that's all I want to be. The past won't affect me the least. For I know well enough there is no such thing as marrying for me, any more than for you. No home for me except with you, any more than there's a home for you except with me. You won't object to my being kind to those poor little children? But don't be concerned for me, Gilbert. I can meet Mr. Babbington as indifferently as any lady should."

Spite of which declaration, Miss Hurst shed many tears at home over the miniature of a thin and interesting young divine, with wavy hair and beardless face, and a seraphic smile. The slimmest was gone, for the reverend gentleman was inclined to corpulence, and the wavy forelock was swelled up in advancing baldness. But Miss Jean's fidelity could stand the shock of such mere physical change. To her Horatius Babbington was idealized as the winner of her young affections. His smile was still seraphic; himself still more than other men, most interesting.

In time the now-come clergyman made his first call, behaving with soberest propriety, though Sydney secretly resented his inquisitive inspection of herself, and still more his bluntness of perception in dragging from Mr. Hurst every detail of first falling, and then fully lost, sight. That half-hour's visit stamped him on her mind as bland, opinionated, amiable domesticity, more widely selfish, theologically effusive—mentally beneath the

standard at which he rated himself; and her first impression was correct. But Miss Hurst saw in him no flaw. Through the visit she bore herself with great discretion, but a stray remark as the guest was leaving, "Surely that little table used to stand in the bay window of the still-to-be drawing-room?" threw her off her balance. That bay-window was a spot dear in the heyday of her hopes. Mr. Babbington must have been dull of comprehension if in her confusion he had not seen that old ties were fresh in her memory. Miss Jean's perturbation flattered him. He was not dull. He returned to his lodgings and his children, thoughtful and very satisfied.

Inevitably then the curate in charge grew intimate at Wynstone. Miss Hurst, by upbringing and nature, enjoyed regulating parish matters. Now her assistance was constantly claimed for them. At the outset Gilbert Hurst demurred at the weekly call, offered ostensibly to furnish him with masculine companionship. "Don't have Mr. Babbington on my account, Jean," he said, "it can't be pleasant to you, and we never knew each other much." But Miss Jean turned restive at this, replying, "I'm afraid, Gilbert, you would like him better if he were a college friend, or that tutor you used to make so much of. I know he is only an ordinary, hard-working man, but poor papa was much attached to him, and for that reason I should have thought you would not grudge him civility." And after that her brother could but make the best of their gentleman's society, even when it extended regularly over Thursday's dinner-hour.

Before long Mr. Babbington had communicated to Miss Hurst much of his personal career since they two parted, and Sydney—not Mr. Hurst, she noticed—was made further recipient of these particulars.
"He was so unselfish, poor man, after he left Stillcoats," Miss Jean said, evidently deeply gratified at the fact. "He tried two chaplaincies abroad, but then he felt that he must fling himself into something engaging, or—"
"So he went to Palestine. Of course, he overworked himself. He couldn't help it in the state he was. He had a wretched fever, and the consul's family took the greatest care of him. They had found out his value. One daughter, an excellent creature, no doubt, devoted herself to him. He was lonely, weak, always so impressionable to kindness. It was natural, indeed necessary, since the poor thing got so attached to him, for him to marry her. I should never blame him, never. But I scarcely think she was fit to be a clergyman's wife. He mourns for her, oh! most sincerely; but human grief is short-sighted. After all, it may be for the best that poor Mrs. Babbington, with her desire for English society and a larger income, was taken."

Apparently, poor Mr. Babbington grew to look on his bereavement in this light. A great unanimity of sentiment became more and more visible between him and the choice of his youth. His children, two plain, loquacious little maidens, and a small, shy boy, were perpetually trotting to Wynstone with messages—"Ought the deaf widow, named Wilkin, to have bread given her every week?" "Please, papa wanted to know, was there any one in the place who could knit little Harry some socks?" and so forth; and Miss Jean's word on these matters became law. Belle and Fanny would enter without knock or rite, so much at home they grew with their papa's kind friend. Henry soon learned to climb her knee, demanding cake at all hours. No matter when they came Miss Hurst found them no interruption, but ever turned their visit to some such charitable account as the mending of skirts, or stitching buttons on boots, or some neglected office of which the motherly Jean trio stood much in need. All which



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was well enough, and only diverted from her brother part of the lukewarm attention she had ever bestowed on his greatest pleasures. But another phase of Mr. Babbington's insistence took a less agreeable form. He himself had great fondness for probing Mr. Hurst's sentiments on subjects men are often chary of dragging into common conversation. Now Miss Hurst followed suit.

"I fear," she said one day to Sydney, with the semblance of much anxiety, "Gilbert, while he is after this book he fancies he can put together, never happens to speak of—of better things? Never talks about religion, Miss Grey?"

"No!" replied Sydney, startled.

"Ah!" his sister sighed, "it's a pity. But he never would. And people bound together—with a heavier sigh—"as we are, ought to be open as daylight on such an important point; ought to see through each other like glass! But I can't see through poor Gilbert. Mr. Babbington was saying, clever as he is, he is so reticent to be thoroughly satisfactory. Oh! if he would only talk, Miss Grey, and tell me exactly what he feels, how thankful I should be! For all he says, you know, he might be a—a—what is the word? One that reminds you of ash-stick or knobstick, though it's neither of them precisely."

"Agnostic!" cried Sydney, divided between laughter and indignation. "Miss Hurst, you would do well to be angry with any one who called your brother that!" (Only a little while before, wearied herself by one of Mr. Babbington's copious discourses, in momentary unguarded parlance she had wondered to Mr. Hurst why every service took him so regularly to the little church. "For the peace that always lies within its walls," he had answered, and she cherished the reply, though self-conviction charged it with unmeant rebuke. This was the man whose sister was trembling over his spiritual state!) "Indeed," she went on, hotly, "you cannot think what the word means, or never could you hint at Mr. Hurst's being that!"

"Ah! well, I only hope you might be right," returned Miss Jean, slightly abashed, but dragged two ways as clearly as ever weak woman was; "but still, abilities are a great snare" (a parrot lesson assuredly), "and we know poor Gilbert has abilities enough. And then so far from becoming anything evident that what had once been so good bread was developing into an accomplished fact."
"Some—not that, but—person had come between Miss Hurst and her brother, and Miss Hurst did not fulfill her threat. She did not hate this person!

CHAPTER XXVIII.
Thus a juncture was reached at Wynstone whereat standing still in impotence, for beset the garrulous little brook of Miss Jean's fluctuating fortunes, other currents were sweeping along, gathering silent force, that presently breaking loose were to stir two hearts to their utmost depths. Those fair spring months were to Gilbert Hurst a roof-house of unuttered pains; of pleasures more unutterable. To Sydney they brought labor over which, abandoning all thought of self, she laid out her every endowment, from highest to lowest, on behalf of those whom unworshipful honor called her creditors. Beyond the present she took no thought. That this present should ever turn and wound her sorely she never suspected. So if Miss Hurst, now absent-minded, now fussy, wanted her assistance over a dozen immaterial trifles daily, it was always ready. She could but give what was wanted. And if on Gilbert Hurst shone out the rarest, tenderest traits of her nature, why that was neither her fault nor theirs; only the outcome of his sad and her desire to pay him his due in some coin of her.

So, as April smiled over the earth, Sydney pictured to him who could not watch the season's gracious footsteps the lovely miracle of fresh-clothed woods, from red-brown buds and peeping crinkled leaflets, through May's coy bravery of out-spread green, to the superb youth of queeny June; or the exquisite growth of pink-tipped fire-crests, swaying, clustering, growing on dark-limbed parent boughs; or the frolics of a field of bleating lambs in the spring meadows, whose sunset sports began with craziest vagaries in the jumping line, and mostly ended with a wild stampede round their safe hurried quarters, and an importunate hurry-scurry to their mother's side.

Earth's rawkin had never had such and her desire to pay him his due in some coin of her.

At the office with Dad. Most fun that I ever had. Was good to busy me with Dad. And my father ever pleased me so. As when he'd smile an' say, "Let's go To the office, and maybe You can do some things for me." Then he'd always act as though I was his big help to go.

Met the janitor, and he Showed me't everything to me! Met the president, who said That his little boy was dead. And my father said he'd glad Still to have his little lad, And he signed and wiped his eye. Now I understand just why.

Now I'm old and wiser grown, With a youngster of my own, And at times the little lad Began to go to work with Dad; Likes to occupy a chair In the downtown office, where Everything seems strange and new, And there's such a lot to do.

So I take him now an' then Down among to busy me. And the boy that is with me Brings back one who used to be. With the bright smile and glow In the eyes of long ago. When I was a little lad Got in down to work with Dad.

Demons of the Air.

THE SAVAGE AND MERCILESS DRAGON-FLY.

That drowsy lull, which we have come to associate with an English summer, was upon the countryside. For it was mid-July, and the sun blazed down hotly upon the sequenced glade in the woods where a myriad diverse creatures bustled about the serious business of life. A lunging trout stream bubbled and tumbled merrily through the woods on its tortuous journey to the sea.

There were no human beings about; perhaps it was too hot, or maybe the woodland glade was a haunt too far removed from the abode of mankind. Sweet aromatic flowers and cool grasses hugged the banks of the stream. Gnats and other minute flies danced in the sunshine, and occasionally a light-hued butterfly moved erratically across the glade. The somnolent drone of a honey-gathering bee and the distant call of the cuckoo added to the hushed harmony of the wild.

Monarch of His Territory.

But for all its apparent peace and quietude the glade was nevertheless, the scene of violent death, speedy revenge, hate, and cunning. Tragedy, grim, unexpected, and relentless stalked in the silences, while love bravely tried to play its part.

After the ago-worn instincts of his kind the little dragon of the air darted across the glade, wheeled with circuitous dexterity at an extensive patch of dock leaves, and recrossed his domain to where a stunted oak leaned perilously over the stream. He was the undisputed landlord over that particular area of the countryside—so far as the insect world was concerned.

There were others, of course, who thought differently; or, rather, who



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Do you know that by far the larger number of the common ailments of women are not surgical ones; that they are not caused by any serious displacement, tumor, growth, or other marked change?

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acted as if they thought differently. There was more than one dragon-fly engaged in that sector, however, and as they passed and repassed, lucently flashing on long-veined wings so transparent and fairy-like, an observer would have noticed that their flights were not aimless aerodynamic exhibitions. They were engaged in the most essential occupation of all the wild kindred; they were hunting. And heavy was the toll of winged life they levied.

The Terror-Child of Nature.

In spite of the voracious appetite of these flashing gems of the air they, seemingly, made no impression on the careless winged life which innocently pursued such intricate lines of flight over the water. Though so iridescent a beauty, and classified as an insect, there was no creature of the wild, in any shape or form, one wit so savage, merciless, and insadable as the little winged dragon.

For its size the dragon-fly was possessed of prodigious courage—in the same measure as its impenetrable ferocity and incredible strength, which qualities had won for it, and not without reason, the name of dragon.

Such small prey as gnats were devoured in countless numbers, but the

female dragon of the air—for there were both sexes represented in the glade—spied a quiet, stagnant pool a little to one side of the ceaseless murmuring stream, and presently she alighted on a floating branch and rested for a while. Then her wings quivered faintly, and she backed down to the surface of the pool, thrust her pointed abdomen below the surface, and laid eggs in a row on the underside of the branch, where there was least danger of the water leaving them high and dry. At some future date these eggs would develop into hideous masked marauders of pond and stream—the dragon-fly larva.

A pair of cold goggle eyes had watched the process of egg-laying for perhaps half a minute, and then, dramatically, swiftly, and undetected, a huge green frog rose to the surface below her. As he broke the surface with an almost effortless spring a weird cleft tongue shot out and dragged away the dragon-fly.

There could be no struggle; it was just the inevitable remorseless ordination of Nature, to regulate her varied population. Not to-day but tomorrow, perhaps, the frog in his turn would provide a meal for some other inhabitant of the wild.

USE YOUR HEAD.

A woodpecker pecks Out a great many specks Of sawdust When building a hut. He works like a nigger To make the hole bigger—He's sore if His cutter won't cut.

He don't bother with plans Of cheap artisans. But there's one thing Can't be said.

The whole excavation Has this explanation He builds it.

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Fashions and Fads.

Overhanging tulle breathes drooped low give length to a satin skirt. A suit of velvet features peplum hips, bishop sleeves and a high collar. A black crepe cape is studded with beads and collared with Koftany. A black crepe cape has an ermine collar and is worn with a black tulle hat.

Bands of fur alternating with bands of embroidery trim a velvet suit. Many of the new coats are merely lengthened versions of the short box coat. Red is favored especially for trappings, embroideries and millinery.

Fashion Plates

A PLEASING MODEL FOR HOME BUSINESS WEAR.

In this style, Shirt Waist 35M and Skirt 3700 are combined. The Skirt new seven gore model, is cut in 4 Sizes: 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34 and inches waist measure. The Waist 7 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and inches bust measure. The Waist requires 3 yards of 27 inch material. The Skirt requires 3 1/2 yards of 44 inch material if without nap, and 3 yards of 44 inch material with nap. The width of the skirt at the top is 2 3/4 yards.

Crepe, linen, satin, taffeta, organdy, de chine, flannel and madras are attractive for the waist. The material may be of washable materials, organdy, satin, broadcloth, serge and velours.

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