

THE RATTLE WON

CHAPTER XXXIV.—BROUGHT TO BOOK.

"Myrtle Cottage" was the old-fashioned name of Mrs. Blount's old-fashioned home in Brixton—a detached eight-roomed house with French windows and a veranda, a half-glazed door in the middle for visitors, a side door for servants, a flower-bed in front, a lawn behind with a mulberry tree, and beyond that a strip of kitchen garden, ending in a run for fowls. The house was as bright as green and white paint, hearth-stoned tops, polished windows, and a burnished brass knocker, bellpull, and door handle could make it; and there was not the ghost of a weed, or a stone out of its place, within the walls that surrounded the freehold property. Altogether it was a model of gentility for all Brixton to admire and in the summer time a perfect oasis in the midst of that desert of bricks and mortar.

Mrs. Blount had sent for a four-wheeled cab the moment it was decided that Nessa might be removed, and getting home quite two hours before her new visitor's arrival, had satisfactorily completed all arrangements for her reception. The maid was in her afternoon cap and white starched apron, with a face as shiny as the door handle; in the sitting-room, the dining-room, and Nessa's bedroom fires were burning brightly, with not an unswept cinder on the hearth; tea-things, with all sorts of delicacies, were laid on a spotless white cloth; the best copper kettle was steaming vigorously on the hob; the canary was shrieking his shrillest; and Mrs. Blount beamed over all with satisfaction and kindness. Swewn had brought Nessa in a hansom; he dismissed the cab and stopped there. His presence relieved Nessa from the sense of constraint she dreaded in being left alone with Mrs. Blount, for in her weakness she was painfully conscious of a feeling of banishment which she had unwittingly brought upon herself. She had burst into tears, she knew not why, in parting with Grace. "I'm always crying now; I never used to," she said to herself.

When she was seated in the cab she said to Swewn, "I am afraid you will find me very dull."

"I can't expect you to be talkative," he replied, quietly. "Coming into the fresh air after such a long period of confinement must have the effect of liberty upon a prisoner. I will do all the talking; don't trouble yourself even to think." And he had chatted the whole way so pleasantly that she had forgotten herself and her troubles under the charm of listening to his voice. He rattled on at a tone full of boyish fun and playful humor, so that no one could entertain a serious thought while he was there.

"I do like to hear a man laugh heartily, don't you, my dear?" said Mrs. Blount, returning to the room after closing the front door upon Swewn. "There's something so honest and wholesome about it; it's a good sign, ducky, and something more than most signs, for surely no one could do an unkindness thing and keep a light heart."

She had the good sense, to make no further reference to Swewn; but long after Nessa had gone to bed the good old lady sat with her knitting in her lap, congratulating herself on the step she had taken, and flattering herself with the reflection that she was not yet too old to guide these young people into the path of true happiness.

It was natural that Swewn should come the next day to make sure that Nessa was going on favorably under the new conditions, and Mrs. Blount was far too reasonable to object to his visiting frequently while the matter of compensation was in discussion, for business will justify all sorts of things which were otherwise unwarrantable, but when the affair was quite concluded and Swewn continued to drop in with unmarked frequency, she felt that it was time for her to speak out and let him know exactly what she thought about his behaviour. It happened, providentially as it seemed to her, that on the day she came to this decision she was alone in the house when Swewn knocked at the door. She received him with such unusual severity in her look and manner that he took alarm at once.

"Nothing has happened—she isn't worse?" he asked in an anxious undertone.

"Miss Dancaester has gone out for a little walk with Betsy. She is well enough for that. Come in here, Mr. Swewn; I have something very serious to talk to you about."

Swewn followed her into the sitting-room cheerfully.

"Have those little vagabonds been chalking the gate again?" he asked.

"It's a more serious matter than that on my mind, and one that concerns your happiness quite as much as mine, so you must not mind if I speak very plainly; and you must be more angry with me than you can help if I say what may be very unpleasant for you to hear."

He had been lectured so often in that tone on the necessity of wearing flannel and taking care of himself generally that this preamble gave him no anxiety except to keep a grave face.

"Now, first I must speak about Miss Dancaester—a young woman whom I respect very much—far more than ever I thought I could respect a circus rider."

"I can, Mr. Swewn," said the old lady, bringing her hand down flat on the table. "I saw the beginning of this trouble before you did. It began the night before she left Kensington. I daresay you don't know why she came here."

"It was some notion of independence, I believe."

"It was nothing of the kind. She had no narrow motives of the sort, but a generous feeling that does her the greatest credit. She asked me to take her away from there for the sake of our dear Grace—asked me to help her because, poor thing, she couldn't help herself. She's an innocent, sweet, noble young creature; that's what she is."

Swewn's face flushed, as if this tribute had been made to himself.

"She was as unconscious as you are of the harm she was doing to Grace, and that's why she was happy and blithe, dear soul! Her unhappiness began when she learnt the truth."

"Harming Grace! What do you mean?" asked Swewn in bewilderment.

"I mean this, Mr. Swewn: she learnt that she—unconsciously I am sure—had been winning your love away from Grace."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Swewn, starting as if he had been struck; "who told her that?"

"Not Grace, you may be sure, though she knew it, dear creature—as you might have seen if you'd had an old woman's eyes in your head—as you will see it plain enough now that you know the truth."

"Who told her that?" Swewn repeated, sternly.

"I told her," said Mrs. Blount, with pride in her own courage.

"Then you did a great wrong. A cruel wrong," said he, fiercely, and white with suppressed anger. Mrs. Blount was dismayed. The accuser suddenly found herself the accused. "You have done a cruel thing," he repeated harshly, as he paced impatiently across the room.

"It is the first time you ever accused me of being cruel," whimpered the old lady, her pride, courage, and resolution all giving way under this terrible verdict.

"You have been cruel to this poor girl from a mistaken feeling of kindness to me. You have made her suffer in order to spare me. You believed I was wantonly amusing myself; that my feeling for Miss Dancaester was an idle fancy which I should forget when I ceased to see her; and you chose to expose her rather than me to the unhappiness of this knowledge." He paused a moment, then, turning upon her, continued: "If this is a fact that Grace has suffered neglect by my interest in Miss Dancaester, and I have been blind enough not to see it in my thoughtlessness, you ought to have opened my eyes—not hers. By your own showing she knew nothing of this before you told her—her happiness proves it; she would have known nothing and been happy still if you had not told her—if this gradual forgetfulness had been left to her and not to me. If carelessness was to be punished by remorse, I alone should be punished."

"You're too hard upon me, my dear, dear Mr. Swewn—you are indeed. It hasn't gone so far but that it may be remedied. You've only got to come, say once in three days, and then once a week, and after that once a month, and I warrant you'll get over it by the end of that time, and won't care to come any more."

"You women would always spare the man," he said, bitterly. "But how about the girl?"

"Lord, my boy, in my young days I had a dozen sweethearts and forgot 'em all, and we don't know that Miss Dancaester cares for you. Indeed I think she would hardly presume to think of such a thing."

"And if she does," he said with fierce sarcasm, "what then? She's only a 'circus rider.'"

"What am I to do?" asked the poor old lady, melting into tears under her beloved Swewn's harshness.

Swewn seemed to have no pity for her—he who never before had looked angrily upon her. He suffered her to whimper in silence as he passed firmly up and down the little room with knitted brows and compressed lips. He came to a stand at length, and taking up his hat from the couch where he had carelessly thrown it, said: "Do not breathe one word of what has passed between us to Miss Dancaester."

"Of course I won't, dear. Thank goodness, Grace knows nothing about it."

"But she must know, and I must tell her," he replied, going toward the door. He was going away in anger without even a word of farewell.

"Swewn—my boy Swewn," sobbed the old lady, stretching out her hands.

He turned round quickly, took her hands in his, and pressed them in forgiveness.

CHAPTER XXXV.—THE OLD ENEMY.

With such remorseful self-questioning as an honest man imposes, in finding that want of foresight and self-restraint may have destroyed the peace of an innocent woman, Swewn paced up and down the path before Myrtle Cottage until he caught sight of Nessa and her maid in the distance. Then the flash of joy and tender emotion that thrilled his heart answered the question whether his feeling for Nessa was anything more than professional interest and the permissible affection of a friend. He did love her; his heart went out toward her as it had never gone to any other. How graceful and how perfectly beautiful, she looked; and how perfectly in harmony with this lovely face and figure were the heart and soul within her! Surely no man could know her without loving her, he said to himself as he strode to meet her.

There was a little flush of color in her cheek, and her eyes were the deeper and more beautiful for the shadow of trouble in them as they met his. The sympathy of a secret sorrow made the man and woman dearer to each other—a sympathy that each strove to conceal as they walked side by side, exchanging the commonplace observations that people drop into under such conditions.

Nessa felt better—very much—better for her walk.

"You look almost yourself again," he said.

"Indeed, there is nothing the matter with me now. I have not taken any tonic for a week; and, you see, I am taking exercise without the doctor's orders."

"Yes, I think you can do without a doctor now. I am the more pleased," he added,

after a little pause, because I propose going away, for sometime."

He cast a quick glance at her to see what effect this announcement produced. He could not tell whether the expression in her face was one of regret or satisfaction—the one followed the other so quickly.

"You are going away," she said, with as much indifference as she could assume.

"Yes. I have not seen my brother for a long while—he lives in Yorkshire, you know—and he tells me in a letter that came this morning his child is ailing, and he would like me to see if I could do any good; and I think I ought to go."

"I should be very unhappy if you stayed here on my account, because I can do quite well alone now; thanks to you and Grace."

"Yes. I will pack up and be off to-night. But you will write to me if you want me, either as a doctor or as a friend. Here is the address." He put his brother's letter in her hand as they stopped before the gate.

"I will write if I have any need to write. Are you coming in to see Mrs. Blount?"

"No. I have seen her and told her I was going. Good-by!"

And with no further words than that they parted; but there was something in the clasp of their involuntary clinging hands more significant than speech—something which dwelt in their minds long, long after.

She had promised to write to him if she wanted him; but, if she had kept that promise, she would have written to him that night, and again and again, ever more often as time went on. The visits she had partly dreaded she now looked back upon as we look back upon the days of happiness that can never return.

She knew that he was gone away for good. She suspected the truth; that he had found out his danger, and fled for safety. He was lost to her forever. She might think of him and love him, now that they were parted; and though the pain was cruel, she did think of her love for him and of his love for her.

Her life was now quite eventless; and without occupation—without anything to look forward to—it became intolerably dull. Brixton is not a lively place at any time; but when the sky is overcast, as it was at this time for many days in succession, and the mud is deep everywhere, it is dreary and dispiriting. And there was nothing in the home life to give a fresh turn to Nessa's thoughts. Mrs. Blount was always the same; she prided herself upon this invariability. Everything went in her admirably ordered household arrangements, with the regularity and precision of a nicely balanced piece of machinery. It was terribly monotonous and fatiguing to Nessa, who was young, and naturally inclined to variety and change. Mrs. Blount's friends were naturally chosen for qualities like her own; and a more respectable, uninteresting set of people never met. Their conversation never extended beyond local topics, servants, ailments, and the weather. There could be no sympathy, or community of ideas and feelings, between them and Nessa. It was known that Nessa had been a "circus rider," and she was looked upon with something of awe and suspicion, tempered by pious charity.

If Mrs. Blount had harbored a "black" Nessa would have been much the same. Nothing could make either white, and their welfare here below depended on a gloomy and sectarian view of things in general.

Grace called sometimes and spent the afternoon at Myrtle Cottage. Swewn had told her all before he went away, exciting her deepest respect and admiration for Nessa. But her feeling was purely intellectual. She could not love the girl; the woman within her was too strong for that, and despite her will, she was jealous of her rival. Nessa, also, was now a woman, and the constraint that existed between them, and could never be overcome, was as much due to her own love of Swewn as to the human fault in Grace's character. And so there was nothing to give Nessa a zest for life.

One day she went out alone, and taking a cab, drove to Arcadia, and with some return of the old feeling of delight and expectation, she caught sight of the familiar building. The doors were closed. The International Company had gone. There was a look of neglect and abandonment in the place that made her heart sink.

The rain had soaked the placards on an adjacent boarding, and some of the more recent posters being stripped down, revealed that of an old parti-colored bill, on which and white wings. She returned to Brixton in deep dejection. "Who cares for me now?" she asked herself.

There were a few people, however, who among those that she met with anxiety, and one of those was Mr. Nichols, the money-lender. He was unremittent in his inquiries about her. Whilst her condition was precarious, he contented himself with such scraps of information as were to be picked up at the bar of the canteen; but when it was announced that she was out of danger, he thought it advisable to put himself to greater expense, with a view to getting a more definite understanding.

"So you're going away from us next week, Mr. Fergus," he said, buttonholing that gentleman, one slack evening toward the end of the season.

"Shut up here on the 30th, and open in Paris on the 6th of April."

"Well, we'll have a bottle of wine, just to drink your good luck. Try one of these cigars, my dear boy."

Fergus accepted a cigar, and seated himself; he was always ready to talk "shop" on those terms.

"I suppose you'll have Miss Dancaester over there as soon as she can sit in the saddle?"

"No such luck, I'm afraid," said Fergus with a sigh, as he cut his cigar.

"Dear me; don't you think she'll ever get over it, then?"

"Oh, she'll get over it all right. Her medical man admits that she's likely to be as well as ever she was in a few weeks, but—"

"Fergus shook his head slowly.

"No, you can't agree with him," suggested Nichols.

Fergus shrugged his shoulders, seeming disinclined to continue the subject, but the sight of the champagne loosened his tongue.

"I've no reason to disagree with his opinion, for I haven't seen the little woman once since she was carried out of this place. Here's luck!" They nodded and drank. "In fact," pursued Fergus, warming with the wine, "I've every reason to believe that he's right; for he wouldn't have let her sign a paper"

freeing us from all further responsibility if she hadn't got past all danger."

"Had to pay compensation, hey?" asked the Jew, in a low tone.

"Two hundred pounds, besides a handsome fee to the doctor for his services."

Nichols gave a whistle and pulled a long face in condolence.

"That's what it cost us, and I consider we've got off cheap. Got the receipt to day, and glad to get it."

"But what makes you think she won't come back to the business?"

"She's found some jolly good friends, and they won't let her."

"What a pity! what a pity! what a pity!" said Nichols, raising his fat hands.

"That's what I think when I look at our thin house. But when I think what a dear little lady she is, I cannot regret it. She's a lump too good for this life—especially with such a woman for a friend as she found."

"I know the one you mean. How did they manage to come together—them two?"

"Don't know. Don't know anything about them. However, she's in good hands now, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if that young doctor makes her his wife by the way he takes care of her; and I hope he may, for I respect them both—langed if I don't!"

With this Fergus rose, tossed off his glass, and with a hurried shake of the hand, left Nichols, and ran off to his duties.

This was great news indeed. If the doctor did marry Nessa, then Mr. Nichols life insurance was worth. He went home, and wrote at once to the relative in Hamburg, to whom he had sent Mrs. Redmond after the catastrophe, to know if the woman was still staying with her. By return of post, he learnt that Mrs. Redmond, soon after her arrival had engaged herself as a vocalist in a "Tingle-Tangle"—a kind of cafe chantant, frequented by sailors of all nations—where, in consideration of her lofty bearing, she was known as the "Duchess." Since then she had left Hamburg and gone to Liege, where she was well-known in the drinking-shops along the riverside as "La Duchesse de Tingle-Tangle."

Nichols wrote to some of his fraternity in that improvident city, offering ten pounds for an I.O.U., signed by Mr. Redmond, in the possession of the Duchess, and waited the result with the patience of his tribe.

"La Duchesse de Tingle-Tangle," in a low-necked dress with a very short skirt, had sung her song, and was going round with the plate for contributions from the audience, when a long-nosed Rosignoles patted the seat by his side, and asked her, in passable English, what she would drink. She accepted the invitation at once, told the seedy garcon to bring her a punch, and counting the sous and two-centime pieces, with which the not too generous Walloons had rewarded her vocal entertainment, listened to her admirer's compliments. When the conversation took a turn, the young man asked her if she knew an English lady, in the same profession as herself, who was acquainted with a Mr. Redmond, of England. The Duchess ceased to count her coppers, and looking at the young man with awakened interest, signified that she did know the lady in question; whereupon her companion informed her that he was a hundred francs for an I.O.U., signed by Mr. Redmond. The Duchess was badly in want of a hundred francs, but the fact that the paper was in making was sufficient to make her wary in accepting the price offered for it. She tried in vain to find out why the young man wanted it; his natural weariness and the difficulty of making themselves understood, either in bad French or bad English, made a clear understanding impossible. She promised to give him an answer next evening; and the bell having summoned her to the platform to sing her next song, they parted. Later in the evening, a long-nosed, elderly gentleman offered her a drink, and made nearly the same proposal as that of the young man. The Duchess put him off to the next day. Before the close of the performance, a third gentleman with a long nose treated her to punch, and went up as high as one hundred and twenty-five francs in his offer for the I.O.U. He, also, was told to call again; but, by that time, the Duchess had determined that she would not sell the paper at all, feeling sure that nothing death of Nessa could account for this activity on the part of the Jew money-lender. She had nothing in the world but the receipts of the evening, amounting to 2 fr., 82c., or she would have started at once to London on the strength of this conviction. All she could afford was 25c. for a postage-stamp, and this she put on a letter to Nichols, asking for information. He checked over the letter, but did not for a moment dream of answering it. Receiving no reply, Mrs. Redmond's conviction was confirmed. Nessa was dead; and Redmond counting upon her state of poverty, had set the Jew to purchase the I.O.U. for a few pounds. How she got the money it is impossible to say, but, by the end of the week, she had sufficient to pay her fare to London; and on Monday morning Nichols had the satisfaction of finding her waiting to see him in his office.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, affecting the utmost surprise; "whatever has made you come to London?"

"I'll tell you straight," she replied, "I've had a dozen offers for that I.O.U."

"What a lucky woman, to be sure. And you've got the money, and come back to spend it with me."

"I'm not such a fool as you think. Catch me parting with it!"

"What! you haven't sold it?"

"Not I. Look here I hadn't enough to get me decent food, and I was offered two hundred francs for the paper, but I wouldn't take it."

"Oh, what a pity—what a pity!" he groaned. "How silly not to take eight pounds, how very silly—and such a fine woman too!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that I.O.U. ain't worth eighteenpence. Redmond ain't got a bit of shoe to his foot respectable, and never will have; so he ain't likely to buy up his paper; and here's Miss Grahame as lively as a cricket, and here's going to marry a young doctor well to do, who'll see she gets her property safe, as sure as justice is to be had for money. Two hundred francs—eight pound for that bit of paper—and you refused it. Oh, what a silly woman—and so 'andsome!"

"I won't believe it. The girl is dead," Mrs. Redmond said in desperation.

"My dear lady, go to Somerset House and see for yourself. Bring me a copy of the certificate of death, and I'll pay your expenses—there!"

The woman sank down on a chair, overcome by this last shock.

"I'll do more than that," he continued; "if you show me that she is dead, I'll give you ten thousand pounds within twenty-four hours for that I.O.U."

Suddenly, goaded to desperation, she turned upon the money-lender.

"I'll do it yet," she cried; "give me some money and tell me where I can find her, and I take my oath—"

He checked her. "No, my dear lady, never no more. I ain't going to risk any more. I've lost enough. You don't catch me flinging good money after bad. You've lost your chance. Miss Grahame is safe now. She's got a lot of money out of the International people. She's given up the profession, and no one can find out where she lives." He paused, looking at Mrs. Redmond as if in doubt, and then added, decisively, "No, you couldn't do it. You've got a lot of talent in you, and when you get an idea you ain't wanting in courage to work it out. You're a fine woman—very 'andsome; but you ain't clever just when you ought to be clever. Very sorry, but I can't afford to give you anything."

"I'm penniless. I haven't taken food since yesterday morning," she whimpered.

"Poor dear lady, don't take on like that. I've got a tender ear, and I can't bear to see ladies crying. There now, if I give you a trifle, will you promise not to ask me for any more?"

She forced herself to accept the degradation and said "yes."

"Then, there you are. There's half a crown for you. But you mustn't come bothering me again—you really mustn't."

He had calculated exactly the effect of the humiliation he inflicted, and the overthrow of all the false hopes he had led her to entertain. Exasperated to the last degree by his taunts and the consciousness of her own folly and failure, her spirit rose in fierce energy from the prostration which had overcome her. She lingered to retaliate on Nessa—to make her suffer for the injuries she had brought upon herself.

"I'll do it!" she muttered between her set teeth, as, blind with fury, she pushed her way through the crowded street. "I'll do it if I hang for it. It's through her I've come down to this; she will pay for it. Am I to beg in the streets for a crust? Not while she lives!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Death of Canon Liddon

By the sudden death of Rev. Henry Parry Liddon, D.D., D.C.L., which occurred on the 8th inst., England has lost one of her most distinguished sons and the Episcopalian Church her most gifted and eloquent divine. Possessed of marvellous rhetorical power and gifted with an intellect of great clearness and strength, his pulpit performances have from the beginning attracted immense crowds of eager and enraptured hearers. A writer in *Temple Bar* some time ago gave the following description of St. Paul's on the occasion when the eloquent divine occupied the pulpit:—

"On the afternoon of the Sundays when Dr. Liddon is in residence, the cathedral presents an extraordinary sight, with its huge nave and aisles densely thronged. So far as the preacher's voice will reach, people stand, straining eyes and ears, and fortunately Dr. Liddon's voice resounds well under the dome, though now and then it becomes indistinct through the preacher's speaking too fast in his excitement. Two other things occasionally mar Dr. Liddon's delivery. Shortness of sight makes him often stop to consult Bible or notes, and again, he bows the head in a marked manner when he utters the holy name; but when he thus bends he goes on speaking, so that his words fall on the pulpit cushion and are deadened, which produces the effect of continued stoppages and gaps in the sermon. No other defects besides these, however, can be noted in orations which for beauty of language, elevation of thought, and lucidity in reasoning could not be surpassed. We have heard Dr. Liddon many times at Oxford and in London, and have observed that the impression produced by his eloquence was always the same, no matter who might be listening to him."

The London press are unanimous in declaring him the brightest ornament England has possessed during this century. One writer makes him the peer of Jeremy Taylor, while another predicts that "his name will descend to history as the greatest English preacher of the time."

Pent as Fuel

With coal showing a disposition to disregard the law of gravitation and with the prospect of increased expenditure for fuel during the coming winter, many will find some little satisfaction in the following statement which gives promise that present prices will not always rule. "Samples of the new compressed peat product are on exhibition in Ottawa. They consist of solidly compressed cylindrical blocks of peat, about twelve inches in circumference and in length, composed of almost pure carbon, black, shining, and heavy. This fuel is being put on the market at the low price of a dollar per ton. This, if it can be continued, seriously affects the coal trade, because the great railway companies will use peat almost exclusively. For engine and boiler furnaces it is unexcelled as a heat producer. Almost inexhaustible deposits of this material are found in the meadows of the 'Mer Bleu,' in Russell county, and these, in the opinion of mineralogists, will yet be used instead of Pennsylvania coal for smelting the ore of the Ontario iron mines."

Montreal's Population

Desirous of ascertaining "how many were" Montreal has just been enumerating her people, and finds that by actual count the city's population is 212,000. Owing to the temporary absence of many of the citizens—the count having been taken during the vacation season—and to the fact that many withheld correct information, fearing that the census had something to do with increased taxation, it is estimated that the count is too small by at least 10 per cent., which if added would make the population 233,000, exclusive of the suburbs, which the enumerators say contain 5,000 people. The size of the city at the several dates named and the periods of greatest growth may be seen by the following statement: "At the capitulation in 1761 Montreal contained about 7,000 inhabitants. In eighty years it had grown to 27,297 (1840); in 1852 to 57,715; in 1854 to 65,000; in 1857 to 90,323; in 1863 to 106,000; in 1871 to 107,225; in 1872, civic census, to 117,865; in 1881 to 140,747; in 1886, civic census, to 186,542, or with suburbs 230,700. The total area of the twelve wards is 5,362.07 acres."