

Written for Truth.

A Reverie.

BY DR. MULVANY.

Tell dusk or is it day
In your bower, love, far away
Day or dusk within your bower,
It is love's most longed-for hour.
Love that, free or fetter'd, still
Bids his time nor wants his will.

In that bower what should love see,
Were his fiery wings but free?
What intensest joy or pain,
Could his heart know once again,
Might one wild hour once fulfill
Love's unfetter'd utmost will?

Love, what sense of sight or sound
Should that place of trust surround?
Only the soft lamplight's glow
Of the world shut in our room,
And your voice blest with the free
Far susurrs of the sea!

In that hour, love, would you share
Love's reward, were love but there?
And nor scorn nor shrink to give
All for which he cares to live,
And be his who comes to thee
Far-abiding by the sea!

CUPIDITY AND CRIME.

CHAPTER XII. (CONTINUED.)

"What did you do then?"

"I shouted with all my might as soon as I could get my voice back. All the servants came in, and we sent for a doctor and her ladyship. The doctor came at once, but her ladyship was not to be found."

John Hicks was followed by Celeste Dubois, Lady de Gretton's maid, a quick, bright-eyed Frenchwoman, who, in a very different fashion, told substantially the same story of the over-night dispute and the morning horror.

"I went to call milady," she cried, with a dramatic uplifting of her hands, "to break to her the sorrowful and dreadful news, and she was not there; she had fled, her bed unslept in, her dress untouched, for she would not allow me to attend her at night. She had gone, like a madwoman, out into the world."

Mademoiselle Celeste's evidence produced a profound sensation, and left little doubt in the minds of the listeners that the flight had not been the only mad act laid to Nora de Gretton's charge that night. Link by link the chain of evidence convicting her was being forged in her absence. It would be hard indeed to find a weak place in it presently.

The doctor, who was not a little flustered by the unusual importance attaching to his words, merely deposed that he was called between seven and eight a. m. to Cliff Cottage, and found Lord de Gretton, who had been dead five or six hours. He was stabbed under the left shoulder, and the blow had penetrated the heart. It must have been dealt with considerable force, but—in answer to a timidly-put question—not perhaps with more strength than an abnormally-excited woman could command. The weapon used was long, keen, and narrow; there was no trace of such a weapon in the room. He was of opinion that at the moment the blow was struck, or immediately after, Lord de Gretton had inhaled chloroform, as a strong odor still lingered in the room and about the dead man.

At this point of the proceedings the Coroner thought it better to adjourn the inquiry for the production of further evidence, and, if possible, for the discovery of the missing bride.

So matters stood when, for the second time in three days, Arthur Beaupre arrived at Stoke Vernon, and took up his quarters at the village inn. As yet his name had not appeared in the case; no local detective, it seemed, had discovered that there had been a third person present at that momentous beach meeting that had brought jarring discord to mar the music of the honeymoon.

He felt that it would have been wiser and better to keep away, but a fatal fascination drew him to the spot in which the death-blow to his happiness had been dealt, and kept him chained there from hour to hour, helplessly waiting for the news he longed and yet dread-

ed to hear—the news that Nora was found.

But the news lingered strangely. It was easy enough to bring the crime home to the unhappy maddened girl, who by her flight indeed had made a virtual confession of her guilt; but it was terribly hard to find her, though the keenest detectives in England were soon in search of her and descriptive handbills appeared on every wall.

It should have been so easy, such mere child's play, to track the maddened fugitive, who must surely have borne about her some traces of her terrible deed. The detectives were indignant with and ashamed of their own failure; the newspapers ironically congratulated them on their customary display of perspicuity and skill; but a failure it still remained, even after the Coroner's jury had returned a verdict of "Wilful murder," and the Government had given a fresh spur to zeal by the offer of a large reward.

Perhaps the verdict would have been a little longer in coming, a little more hesitating in tone, but for the arrival of a new witness, whose clear straightforward evidence destroyed the last element of improbability in the case, and gave a strong reason for Lord de Gretton's displeasure, a distinct motive for Nora's crime.

The new witness was Cristine Singleton—the only member of Lady de Gretton's family, it was explained, who was able to give evidence, Captain Bruce being paralyzed, and Mrs. Bruce suffering, on the testimony of a medical certificate, from extreme weakness and nervous exhaustion.

Cristine was always pale, but she looked whiter than ever in the deep black dress she had assumed for the occasion. She stood quite calm and composed, conscious of the intent and curious scrutiny of which she was the object, but in no way disturbed by it. Many were there who knew her, and, guessing instinctively at the jealousy that had embittered her step-sister's life, wondered that she could so well control the remorseful anguish of which no doubt she was the prey. Remorse! If he could but have known what a tempest of passion surged beneath that calm exterior, the hardest person present would have shrunk in horror from the fair, delicate-looking girl so genuinely pitied now. Anguish she felt indeed; but it was for her own crushed hopes and wounded pride; in her savage exultation there was nothing that savoured of remorse.

Once—how long ago!—when first she learned how terribly fate had helped her plans, how far vengeance had outstripped her thoughts, she had felt remorse indeed, and would at almost any sacrifice have undone her cruel work. But Arthur Beaupre's scorn had frozen the better impulse in the moment of its birth and awakened the old resentless jealousy that would hardly slumber again.

Clearly, coolly, and succinctly Miss Singleton's evidence was given, and every word told with deadly effect against the absent Nora.

Lady de Gretton had never loved her husband—it had been a marriage of convenience only. She had been engaged to a young man who was supposed to have been killed in the Zulu war, and grief for him had completely changed her nature. The young man however was not dead, and Lady de Gretton unhappily learned the fact on her wedding-day.

A quick murmur of surprise, mingled with pity, passed through the room; the motive, hitherto a little uncertain, was growing terribly clear.

Did she learn this fact before or after the wedding ceremony?

Cristine raised her clear eyes, and met the Coroner's gaze fully, as she answered, with mournful decision—

"After, certainly, or the wedding would never have taken place; she was devotedly attached to Mr. Beaupre, and—"

"Keep to the point, if you please," the lawyer interposed a little sharply. "Are you sure she did know it at all?"

"I gave her Mr. Beaupre's letter with my own hands. I know that Mr. Beaupre followed her down here, and that Lord de Gretton found them together on the beach."

The last words, as evidence, were wholly inadmissible, of course; but they told as nothing spoken in that room had told yet; and, looking at Arthur Beaupre's ghastly face—the point on which her eyes had rested through the whole speech—Cristine felt that her vengeance was at last complete. For him to stand up and speak the words that would rob the girl he had loved so loyally of her last desperate hope would be a martyrdom indeed.

"Now he is sorry he flung back my penitence and refused his pardon!" she thought, with cruel exultation. "He should have remembered that Nora had something still to lose, and what a woman scorned could do. I wonder what he thinks of me now!"

The speculation was a wasted one. She had no place in Arthur Beaupre's thoughts, which were wholly absorbed in the task before him. Strong man as he was, he felt a sudden deadly faintness steal over him, felt his eyes grow dim and misty, and for a moment feared that he was about to swoon. How should he speak of Nora to these men, how tell the love and terror that possessed him? Why had he not put the width of the earth between him and the possibility of such a cruel task? Could he escape even now? Alas, no! Even as he asked himself the question, he heard Cristine's clear cold voice answering it and the query addressed to her simultaneously—

"Mr. Beaupre told me. Mr. Beaupre is now present."

And the slender black-gloved finger pointed with vengeful purpose to the remote corner in which Arthur sat. He had no choice now but to perform the one duty laid upon him, to tell the story which had served to convict the girl he loved so dearly in his eyes, and which must needs, he thought, tell terribly against her in those of others.

All eyes rested eagerly on the pale handsome face, all ears were strained to catch the low-toned words in which this, the hero of the romance, told the painful story of his meeting with his lost love.

He had met Lady de Gretton by accident, and knowing nothing of her marriage. Lord de Gretton had interrupted the meeting, and had naturally seemed displeased that it should have taken place. There had been no quarrel—this with an earnest emphasis and evident sincerity. They had parted with the understanding that the farewell was final. Mr. Beaupre had returned at once to town, and only learned that Lord de Gretton was dead from the evening newspapers.

No one doubted the truth of the young man's story; all pitied the pain with which it was strung forth; but none the less did it do the work Cristine Singleton intended it to do and sweep the last shadow of doubt from the jurors' minds.

"Wilful murder!" The verdict, after all, was but the echo of Arthur Beaupre's own desperate thoughts. Yet the words, linked with Nora's name, seemed to him the most horrible profanation. Nora, his fair gentle love, his innocent betrothed, a murderess! There was something hideously unnatural in the idea. These men did not know her, they could not call to mind a thousand instances of her patience, long-suffering, gentleness, as he could; and yet the thought struck him sharply as a knife-thrust that he too had doubted—no, not doubted—convicted her—in his own mind.

He laughed aloud at the thought—laughed louder still when he saw that his immediate neighbors in the room first stared at him in a half-shocked, half-scared fashion, then, with a remarkable unanimity, made way for him to pass. He paused to thank them, wondering the while in a dazed and misty fashion why his voice sounded so far away and odd,

and why the wrong words came with such singular pertinacity to his lips.

He was faint—that was it; he had not eaten or slept for—how many months and years was it? He could not sleep while this suspense lasted. But now it was all over—now that Nora was dead.

"They have hung her, have they not?" he inquired, with extreme courtesy, of a man who stood beside him in the doorway; but somehow the tone, suave as it was, made the stranger jump.

"You forget, sir," he began quickly; but a look at Arthur Beaupre's face changed his purpose. "Take my arm," he said, with kindly haste. "You look as though you would faint. This has been terribly hard for you, but—"

The sentence died in a dismayed ejaculation, for Arthur Beaupre, with a smothered groan, slipped suddenly to the ground, and lay there like a man struck dead by a sudden blow.

CHAPTER XIII.

Arthur Beaupre closed his eyes upon a summer world, and opened them consciously upon a world whose brighter autumn tints were fading fast.

The small stock of strength he had brought home with him had been recklessly expended in those days of waiting agony; and when the reaction of the strong excitement came, it came in the shape of utter and complete collapse.

For six weeks he lay between life and death, parched by fever, and tortured by fierce pain, but mercifully spared the supreme agony of suspense. When, slowly and painfully, sense came back and memory took up its torturing task, he learned that for the girl he had left in such deadly peril there was nothing more to hope or fear.

Very gently, very pitifully the news was told him, for it was told by his mother's lips. Mrs. Beaupre summoned from her northern home by the news of her son's sudden and dangerous illness, had come without loss of time and nursed him night and day with true motherly devotion through the terrible weeks and months that followed, never losing heart, even when hope seemed madness and the doctors gravely warned her that death was hovering near. The shadow presence could not kill the fervent faith that comforted and upheld her. What had been would be again, she thought, as she sat, an erect and watchful figure, through the long night hours, keen-eyed and eagerly alert. Had not this her son been given back to her from the dead already, and would the Power in whom she trusted with a firm unflinching faith work but half a miracle in her behalf?

The doctors shrugged their shoulders over the old Scotchwoman's argument; but she was justified in her faith. The doctors said her son owed his life to her nursing, and thought, and intended her to say, that he owed it to their skill. But, though she thanked them with the gracious sweetness of a true gentlewoman and with a tender tremor in her clear voice, she still held firmly to her faith that Heaven had heard her prayers and given back her son.

He was himself but half thankful for the boon of life; it would have been so easy to drift out with the ebb tide of his own weary weakness. It was cruelly hard to bear again the burden and heat of the day. Life had lost all interest for him.

Mrs. Beaupre read the eager question in the blue eyes that gleamed with a pitiful brightness from the pale haggard face, and answered it in her gentle womanly fashion before her son had time to put it into words.

"My poor boy!" She drew the hot head down upon her shoulder, and smoothed back the soft short brown hair with true mother-touches, tender and soothing. "You have been ill so long, Arthur, that—that there is nothing terrible to face now."

He misinterpreted the words, and a sudden horror dilated and darkened the blue eyes. He tried to free himself from