

## THE LIGHT OF COLD-HOME FORD.

CHAPTER LVII.—(CONTINUED.)

Suddenly—as if trying to rouse to a last effort and find relief in expression—Magdalen burst forth with all her powers, but in a wail of infinite pathos such sadness as made any mothers there hold their babies tighter clasped to their breasts, and brought tears to the eyes of some.

The mandolin dropped from Magdalen's hand. Slowly she rose to her feet and stood dumb, with a sort of awakening horror in her eyes, facing the crowd.

In that moment, as so often before, the mask of madness seemed fallen from her face; a veil from her understanding. She loathed the eyes upon her: despised herself.

The manager gave a hasty signal. His startled assistant instantly began moving one of the lanterns behind, to divert the public attention from the dazed woman at once, and so flashed a light full upon the audience.

A sharp cry rang from the little stage. Magdalen threw up her arms wildly, and calling "Joy! Joy!" fell sideways prone, with her head buried among the cushions of her couch.

The curtains were hastily pulled before the stage again. The crowd was pushed, urged, persuaded outside by the hotly-bustling showman, deaf to all expostulations or kindly troublesome inquiries.

"Take me home, Joy; take me back to the cottage—Cold-home." Magdalen was whispering, with her head on her daughter's lap. "Take me to-night, do you hear?" with something of her old imperiousness. "That dreadful man has made enough money by me. I always told him I should leave when I pleased."

At a little distance, by the platform now deserted, another conversation was passing.

"Well, sir, of course it is a tremendous sacrifice for us! Such a thing on a country tour as perhaps no manager but me, no, sir! would be generous enough to allow. No, I don't say the countless signed any agreement exactly. Know her, sir? Wouldn't put pen to paper, so suspicious; no, nor let herself be bound in any way. Quite the 'aughty lady' just so. She did say, when we came across her near Dover, that she was struck by the superior style of my Royal travelling Show; and that, if it was likely to come into these parts on our tour, she would like to travel in my company. But still—"

Blyth tilted all the objections of the generous manager. The latter indeed, after a certain check had been safely enclosed in a greasy leathern pocket-book inside his own breast-pocket, was good-natured enough in speeding his late star and her newly found protectors on their way.

"Poor soul! quite in a dangerous state of despair in the happier story at times, though always the lady! Will be best with friends," he whispered, significantly laying his finger down his red nose. "But we must hurry, sir. Bustle up there, Bill, bustle. We travel at night sir, when the roads are more free, and by to-morrow morning we must be nearly arrived at our next destination."

And truly, when the lights of Moortown were all out, and the little town hushed after its unwonted excitement, while Blyth's dog-cart, with three figures on it now, was driving swiftly down the Chad valley in the darkness, the square round the old market-cross was once more empty.

Seven great yellow vans were rumbling in a southern direction, having "folded their tents like the Arabs," and silently gone away.

For some time after, the talk of those who had been at the fair often turned on the Royal Show, and the foreign singer especially. Then little by little the remembrance of the yellow vans faded, as of the strange comess, supposed to have gone away with them.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

"The same old home  
The same small house,  
With moss and houseleek overgrown;  
And surely 'tis the self-same mouse  
That from the walnut shyly peers  
The fawn, the deer, the hare, the same!  
No weather-stain our eyes can lack,  
Where in the change we only blame?  
'Tis in ourselves, Alack! Alack!  
The years have sped,  
Our youth has fled."

The next day, once more a faint blue

smoke rose in the morning and evening from the chimney of Cold-home. Any one nearing the porch would have seen that the great rusty padlock was gone which had been fastened across two staples in the door and post by young Berrington's own hands, for additional security to the deserted house.

That was all to be seen of change. Yet the cottage was once more inhabited by its old inmates. The old still life had begun there again.

But how should any one in the countryside know that news, for weeks to come? The little brown house was so lonely, and had a bad reputation of being haunted now, moreover; and the glen was so little frequented. Even the swallows were not disturbed. They had reared some young broods in nests between the very door and lintel in peace.

True, there was the lantern at night, which, if lit, according to old custom, would have told its silent tale by the red light gleaming over the broken wan water, and illumining rocks and trees here and there, to leave the rest in deeper shadows.

But there was no longer, now, need for a lantern.

During the past summer Blyth Berrington had caused a little foot-bridge with a stout hand-rail to be laid across the Chad by the ford. He had made the bridge soon after Rachel Estonia came to stay at the farm; until this was done, Joy had herself gone up every evening to light the lantern in the little deserted house. And the way was long for the young girl—although, indeed, Blyth had always gone with her in protection.

Magdalen had with difficulty been induced to sleep through the few dark hours of the first night at the Red House. Only the thought of seeing Rachel, and "giving her a little surprise," she said—with a low, light laugh like that of a child—had at last so tempted her.

And then, when the crisis so dreaded by Blyth and Joy had come—when the young girl, in fear and trembling as to the result of the meeting between the two sisters, had stolen up-stairs to wake Rachel in her dark bed-room, and break the wonderful news to her gently—and when Rachel, trembling now very much in her turn, but marvellously self-restrained from years of habit, had crept down the creaking stairs softly with Joy not to waken the good old farmer in his sick-room, and had come face to face with the sister so long sought and greatly loved, at last—why then, Magdalen, after receiving Rachel's close embrace, in which her great emotion, though repressed with effort, was still felt, and gratefully answering with a light, quick kiss on either cheek, which was a sign of offensive affection in her, only said,

"Well, are you surprised to see me back? I had strange fancy, do you know, Rachel. I thought at home one night that I heard you calling me—calling me from far, far away. A silly idea, wasn't it? But I turned homeward after that, and here I am."

And they answered nothing, but held their peace.

Magdalen was too restless to sleep that night, though she lay down beside Rachel, at the latter's earnest entreaties. But she could not be long still; the old disquiet, the old feeling that she needed to roam in the open air and large air of the hills, roused her by the glimmer of dawn.

"Up then (saw the red, red cock,  
And up and crew the gray;  
The eldest to the youngest said,  
'Tis time we were away.'"

At Magdalen's bidding, Rachel had asked for the keys of the cottage from Blyth, before he had said good-night to them a few hours ago. They lay outside her door now—a heavy, rusty lump of iron—as the sisters stole out in the early gleaming.

Blyth had asked leave to go with them and help them at the cottage. But Magdalen had so turned away, silent, with a little shuddering movement of her shoulders expressing dislike of strange company, that Rachel hastily refused, with an expressive look of thanks to the young man.

The sisters were again their long, black cloaks and little heads. Magdalen had never parted from hers all the years she had been away, but carried them in a bundle.

"I wanted to have it ready for when I came back," she whispered, with a little air of pride at her own foresight as she dis-

played it. "Where is yours, Rachel? Oh, you must put it on too. The people round will never know I have been away. It will all be just the old life again together. I am glad to come back to it."

The cottage was in all respects just as it had been left after Magdalen's flight and Rachel's hurried departure in illness. Only for a layer of dust over everything, it seemed to have been deserted but yesterday.

By evening Blyth came towards the little brown house under the cliff, and waited outside at the Logan-stone for Joy; because he saw Magdalen's dark figure wandering down from the upper glen, under covert of trees and bushes, with a secret air. 'It seemed to him, almost, as if neither of the wisht sisters had ever gone away.'

In the early morning Joy had gone up to the cottage, carrying the provisions that, as she guessed Magdalen's impatience had not suffered to wait for. All day the young girl stayed with her aunt silently helping her to clean, rub, and scour all in the little house to the old spotless perfection. All day long Magdalen was rambling alone out on the heathery moors, or down the glen among the hawthorns by the waterfall.

Rachel and Joy spoke hardly a word to each other. They had drawn so close together in the past year, and were so dear to each other, and now—

Joy had said, "Must the old life begin again for you? It ought not, it shall not. I will come every day—"

"Hush, dear, it must!" Rachel replied. "You have been my sunshine! it is a blessing to look back upon! But she, Magdalen, has taken such a hold on my life, we seemed so ordained to be bound together, that it is a sacred duty laid upon me from Heaven, I believe, to give her my whole thoughts and powers, as she wishes, to the end. At times, it has seemed to me as if she could not die—would never venture down into the river of death—unless I came too. A wrong fancy! She will have a better guide, then. Still, it often made me feel, even when we thought her lost on the moors, that she could not be really gone from earth without me."

And now, at sunset, Blyth had come to seek his betrothed, and Joy, shading her eyes, presently came out to look for him.

"Speak to my mother a minute," she said. "She wishes so much to thank you." (Nay, that was Joy's own sweet persuasion, as Blyth very well knew; but he honored the small, loving pretence.)

Magdalen, sitting in the little porch, with her hood pulled over her face, being perhaps confused in her own mind between past and present, perhaps playing at trying to restore her own feelings—who can say?—rose with dignified grace and gave him her hand.

"You wish to marry my daughter, Juanita da Silva, I am told," she said. "Well, you are a worthy young man, and as I hear you have gold-mines in Australia—or, what, Joy, sheep farms, do you say? No matter, it all means riches, wealth! So I will give my consent, as you can keep her in a position befitting her rank. Good-by, and—be good to her!"

She hastily turned and disappeared into the inner bedroom before Blyth could speak. Nor did he again see her, indeed, for many a day; and then—the meeting was still more strange.

But Rachel's majestic form stood looking after the young people as they went away. Her still smile, so brave it told nothing of what was passing in her heart, seemed yet to lighten upon them as they halted in the distance, and beckoned their last greetings from the Logan-stone.

Ah! and yet it was so hard, they thought together; so hard for her to have tasted some of the happiness of domestic life and requited affection without constant fears; yet now, to have come to take up the old burden again, and travel on once more the weary old road!

But how did they know whether Rachel Estonia felt it so? If little has been said of her inner feelings of late, it is because of such spirits as hers is little to say, unless when great trials or duties call forth their powers. She had seemed to herself in a dream, relieved of her heavy duty, yet wandering ever to find it again. There was no place fitted in the world for her, unless she might once more undertake some weighty task—so used had she been to such.

And now in the browning twilight, there came a rustle behind her; Magdalen's breath was on her cheek.

"So they are gone! Ah, it is better; I am so tired of seeing many faces, and hearing talk. Silence! liberty! that is what I want; and you always liked what I liked, Rachel. It will be such a great rest. The old life is best for me, after all."

"But you were happy while away, sister?"

(Rachel used the old term, once fancifully begun by Magdalen, who grew weary of hearing their names mutually reiterated, she said.)

"Yes, yes; very happy in a way," Magdalen musingly replied. "It was all like a dream, travelling, and the new scenes and people, sights and crowds and music. I felt like a child at times, straying down the primrose-path, you know, and gathering flowers; and often I was half frightened at times, being alone. Then it seemed to me as if you were somehow appointed my guide to heaven, and that you would be sure to call me back, and look for me before I had gone too far. That was not the narrow, right path, was it? Ah, I fear I have been a silly stray sheep for you to watch over poor Rachel! Well, but now I mean to try to be good, and follow you wherever you wish, dear; I do indeed."

Summer had passed into autumn, and the yellow stubble-fields were empty, while the stock-yards and granaries were full.

The Red House was just as full of gladness and health, in a quiet manner of rejoicing. For old Farmer Berrington had taken a new lease of life, so the doctors owned, with astonishment. And indeed, he did, thereafter, live hale and hearty, however heavy, to a still ripier, good old age before he fell asleep; and his mortal remains were laid beside those of his forefathers.

And, for more good news, Blyth and Joy Berrington, his wife, had come back, after a short and happy time that they had gone away together, following their quiet marriage by license (to avoid gossip) in the nearest large town.

They might indeed have stayed away longer, for it was lovely weather, with a soft, warm sun by day and only mild hoar-frost at night; and the country they wandered in was one of lakes, and high mountains, and rural, old-fashioned inns, delightful and new to both; and lastly they were now too new to each other's way to feel anything but happy and at ease and perfectly trustful of each other under whatever little trials of travel might happen.

But one morning Joy was uneasy. And as she could not shake off the strange impression, she told Blyth presently of a dream that seemed to haunt her. She had imagined she awoke in the dead of the past night, in the hour when the deepest sleep falls upon men, feeling a cold air blow over her face.

And then—though it was quite dark—she, opening her eyes, saw her mother sitting on the bed at her feet like a white, illuminated shadow.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## A Tomb Opened by a Tree.

Very near where we live is the ancient Garten Church, in a large cemetery. In this cemetery is a most curious monument. A lady died and report says that she was poisoned by her nephew. Upon one of the stones which marks her grave is an inscription declaring that "this we should not be opened till eternity." Now nature would not allow herself to be thus defied, and a very large tree has grown up from the centre of the grave and forced every stone out of its proper place. Three immense blocks of granite, fastened together by the strongest iron clamps, form the foundation, upon which rest three other blocks, surmounted by a single block, over which is carved a stone pall. The tree's roots have risen up from under the stones and formed long claws, which seem instinct with life and grasp the stones as if with a death-like grip, burrowing every clamp and twisting the stones and turning them on one side and another in a most curious and wonderful manner. A most curious feature, too, is the fact that there is not another tree of this kind in the cemetery and not even in the whole town.

Here Goethe's Lotta is buried. Her grandson lives in Hanover and is a wealthy bachelor. He proposes to erect a suitable building in which to place his valuable collection of curios and then present them to the town.—*Hanover Letter.*

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