

THE TWO PATHS.

Eagle! that o'er the sunbeam's track of light
Flings the shadow of thy stateliest wing.
Hest thou home from distant wanderings
Unto this rocky mountain height,
Amid dark pine-groves, where lone waterfalls
Such to another call?

Bird of the shadowy plume and fearless gaze!
Thou art an emblem of the gifted heart
Called out and chosen for its nobler part,
A lonely wanderer in life's thorny ways—
And yet it is a glorious thing to claim
Thy deathless crown, Oh fame!

Into the light thy trembling shadow floats,
Who dost gliding through the evening skies
Flashed with the crimson sunset's burning dyes;
On the soft stillness thy fluttering notes
Fall as thy tired wing flutters to the rest
Of thy low woodland nest.

Thy home is where the greenwood shadows fall
On fairy dingles bright with summer flowers,
Where pleasant breezes fan the chestnut bowers,
And the glad echoes of fountains musical,
Amid the dancing leaves and blossoms, play
All through the laughing day.

Like thee and thy bright life, oh, gentle dove!
Is the glad spirit bound by subtle ties
Of kindred hearts and loving sympathies
To the warm shadow of home's sheltering love;
And ever in that sunny atmosphere,
Abiding without fear.

BROOKDALE.

BY ERNEST BRENT.

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CHAPTER XLII.

THE SHADOW OF A PERIL.

Laurence Drayton and Julia made each other very happy in this new beginning of their lives. The wise difference in their ages made his protective tenderness quite natural, without giving it the dictatorial tinge an elder man would have been apt to put on with so young a bride. He was at once too delicate to ever be betrayed into the ardent enthusiasm that inevitably grows wearisome. He knew what her ideal was, and he tried to make himself that ideal. Fortunately for the contentment of the long future which lay before them he succeeded.

From Switzerland they went along the Rhine, from the Rhine to Italy, thence through southern France to Paris. She did not notice so much for the fierce and feverish gaiety of the capital, and he took her to the quieter and better atmosphere of Versailles; away from the wonderful British tourist, who whether lord or Liverpooler, thinks it incumbent upon himself to keep up the glory of old England by proving how little like gentlemen the sons of the brave and the fair can be when abroad—away from the eternal military display and noise, the open *cafés*, and the ever-present dissipation. He did not want his darling to see those things till she had acquired sufficient knowledge of the world to be uninfluenced by them.

Mr. Drayton took a handsome suite of rooms, and made up his mind to stay there for the winter, as Julia seemed to like it better than Brookdale or London. Truth to say, he was in no hurry to return. Never the most sociable of men and caring as little for society as society perhaps cared for him, he was not anxious for the introduction. He had very little sympathy with rank or caste, and no regard for ancestry. His family was as old as most families are, and could date back honourably further than some; but he believed in new generations, and he knew that his opinions would be somewhat out of place in the set to which by his marriage he had the right of entry.

"I want my pot to myself," he said, when several Versailles residents, who dated from the west end of London, and had met Julia with her titled relatives, made ineffectual attempts to renew her acquaintance. "I object to have you stared at through an unnecessary eyeglass, and talked to by ladylike young men with straw mustaches and a drawl. I object to have you spoken of at the little or big fashionable clubs, as the members may please to rank them, as 'the little Drayton he saw at so-and-so's, you know—ya-as,' and I object personally to being studied and listened to as though a literary man were a curious specimen of drawing-room zoology. You can give me on your side of the family a lord or so, a viscount, and a wonderful old marchioness, and I can only give you myself. I know exactly what they will think of me, and I know exactly what I do think of them, and I am perfectly sure we shall contrive to exist very well without each other."

"What can they think of you except as I do, Laurence? They must admire you for genius, if for nothing else."

"They would not see me with your eyes, sweet. The instinct of your love reaches to the depths of my soul. To you I am myself. Every chord of my better nature answers to you if I only touch your hand or see you smile. The sympathy between us is complete; but it is not so when strangers are present. Our friends never see us as you do. I am not a genial man, except to those who are thoroughly my friends."

"And have you many?"

"Very few, indeed—and yet as many as I want. I liked my profession best of all things till the knowledge grew upon me that you loved me. A man whose heart is in his work has little time to spare from that work, and the habit it engenders."

"And now, Laurence, you love me better than your work?"

"Ah, my darling, if I could only make you understand. I never meant to marry, because the very insight that we gain by constant study made me fear it was useless to think of winning such love as I wished for. I have watched the experience of older men, and seeing the universal lesson of their lives, resolved it should not be my lesson too."

"What was the lesson?"

"Those who remained single thought how happy they might have been had they married. Those who were married thought how happy they might have been had they married some-body else. If marriage is made in heaven, the heavenly arrangement is sadly spoiled on earth."

"Why should it be so?"

"Because they are very rarely founded on genuine love and pure sympathy. When these do not exist, women tire of the trouble—men of the expense. They keep together only because they are fettered. An outward study of self-respect supports an outward show of duty and fidelity. They must set an example to their children, and if they are depraved, keep their depravity out of sight. It is solemnly true that a perfectly good man and a perfectly good woman may meet and marry, and yet for want of sympathy make each other so intensely miserable that they almost pray for death to take them out of each other's lives."

"Then they cannot love each other as we do," said Julia, clasping her hands over his knee, and looking into his face with a sweet and serious smile.

She was sitting in a low chair at his feet—her favourite attitude when the business of the day was over, and they had the uninterrupted evening to themselves.

"People who love each other as we do rarely come together, pot. In the ordinary course of things you would have married some such inconsequent piece of flaxen-haired patricianism as the Honourable Mr. Colburn, and my fate would have been a half-bred woman of the world who had taken presents and kisses from several scores of men—Sunday-school teachers, singing-class associates, little lady-killers, who danced at low assembly rooms all the week, and sang in the church choir on Sundays, illiterate city dandies, fast commercial travellers, a rich publisher's son, a thriving young tobacconist or two, with a down-at-heel medical student by way of a *bonne-bouche*. For in middle-class life, where the daughters go comparatively unwatched, a professional man with a moderate income runs the risk of getting for his wife a woman who has done all this."

"How wretched a man must be who marries such a woman."

"Such women are in the large majority, and, therefore, so many men are wretched. Once—about eight years ago—it was nearly being my fate."

Julia opened her beautiful eyes in mute surprise.

"Then you were in love with some one else."

As fond of new toys. A revolution is the natural holiday of a Frenchman's generation, and he is always thinking less of what is, than what is coming next. He does not require to be governed so much as he requires to be catered for. Let him have plenty of drums and trumpets, *fiets* and carnavals, and he is happy for twenty years or so. Then he must have a revolution or a war—you can only divert his thoughts from one by giving him the other. He must have something to conquer, or something to avenge. Tell him that peace is glory, and he says in his heart down with the Empire, or down with everything. I tell you, Julia, this political restlessness has made our gallant, gay, and courteous friends more like unreasoning tigers now and then than they would care to be told."

He told her some few incidents in the Reign of Terror, when the insurgents made an indiscriminate massacre of every one who bore the name or stamp of an aristocrat, sparing neither the innocence of childhood nor the beauty of fair women. In the midst of his narrative he came face to face with a man whom he had no wish ever to meet again: Everard Grantley.

Julia shrank back, and clung close to his arm. Laurence made no sign of recognition, but passed on quietly, and Mr. Grantley went his way. All his old friends passed him like this now. He had escaped the actual consequences of his crime; but it seemed, nevertheless, as if a silent sentence had gone forth against him, and

favourite. He came of an old race too, and was in every instinct a gentleman. As to his profession, she held it to be the highest to which human intellect can be applied.

Everard's bitter anger sunk into silence after a time, but it was the deeper and the more inveterate for that silence. He recalled his own words, that nothing was impossible to him who understood the philosophy of biding his time.

"I must wait," he reflected. "It will be more easy to reach him after a time, when he is lulled into a sense of security, and feels safe in the strength of his own self-confidence."

He took means then to find out where they were from time to time, but he arranged no plan of definite action. He waited a month when he heard they were at Versailles, and then, without telling Margaret why he went, he took her to France.

Then he tortured himself with the sight of the man he hated extremely happy in the possession of the beautiful girl he had so fiercely passioned for. He left Margaret in Paris while he went to Versailles daily, and maddened his heart by watching Laurence Drayton and Julia. He tried to keep from actual contact with them; and it was entirely by accident that he met them face to face in the dusk of this summer evening.

He returned to his apartments in Paris, determined to delay the blow no longer. At any risk—in spite even of that terrible picture Dray-

ton had conjured up which to her seemed the very essence of inhumanity.

"I have helped you in too much wickedness already, Everard," she said, with the passive quiet which had grown upon her since she lost Mr. Fleming. "We have been doubt very leniently with, and I should like to look forward to a better life now. Julia never can be yours."

"Why?"

"She is a wife!"

He laughed.

"There is not much special magic in that word in these days. It is as best but a link where no link is required. Fidelity goes with perfect mutual love, and none other; and where perfect mutual love exists it would be a lasting and as faithful were there no priest, no law, and no marriage ceremony. With any one but Julia the winning of her from her husband would be simply a work of time; but with her I must have recourse to other measures."

"You might break her heart, Everard, but you would never touch her to forget Laurence Drayton."

"I have more confidence in myself. A woman's heart is not broken so easily. She does not find it so difficult to resign herself to the inevitable when there is no help for it. But it is not in that spirit I want to take her. I want to make her love me so that she will always be mine, and forget these last six months as if they had never been, for I cannot live without her."

"You do not know," he went on, with some strong pathos in his voice, "What a bitter and incessant yearning there is in the soul of a man for a woman that he loves. How he tortures himself by picturing rivals whom he has never seen, and has at times almost a savage hatred for the woman herself because she is not always with him and always his. To a man like me—one whose passions are strong, and whose likings have been few—this feeling is the more intense because my life has been comparatively pure. If I had an oriental excess of wives, and each one were a goddess, I should still long for her. Without her my existence is but half-complete."

"I never thought you cared so much for her."

"I never knew how much I cared for her till she was quite lost to me; till she took with her to the altar my own hope of redemption. The pure and peaceful existence I could have had with her would have almost blotted out the black lines inscribed against me in the past."

"Why not think of her as I do of Alexander? I bear my burden patiently."

"You have not the power to win him against his will. It is your nature, being a woman, to resign yourself to the inevitable. Man does what he will—woman what she must. I can and will make Julia mine."

"By some fearful crime, that must lead to discovery."

"Do not fear," he said, with a smile. "My plan is simple enough, and does not include the infliction of personal injury on my friend, Mr. Drayton. By this time to-morrow he will be in England, and by this time to-morrow we shall be on the road to Spain—Julia and you and I; and, remember, Margaret, that in helping her you will, perhaps, be her friend."

"Her friend, if I help you to wrong her solitarily."

"Is it better," he asked, slowly, "for you to leave her entirely to my mercy? There may be a time when I should require to be saved from myself."

Margaret only gave him a sad, reproachful look. She knew what would be the fair young bride of Laurence Drayton would be in if once she fell into her brother's power.

"I am a thoroughly reckless man," he said, after looking at her steadfastly. "I have no purposes in which she does not take part, and if I were not certain of winning her I would find a painless way out of this life her husband so embittered. Do not play me false, Margaret, or you will have my death at your door."

"Up to the present, Everard, I have been only too faithful."

"I know it," he said, gently. "Rich as I am, Margaret, I would give my money to his last shilling to see you less despondent. I have not seen you smile since we left Brookdale."

"I have taken the bitter lesson of my life to heart; and it is hardest of all in looking back to find that I discover no more happiness than I have found. You could make me happier."

"How?"

"By giving up this mad design—this cruel passion."

"I cannot, except I die," he said, hoarsely. "Since I have begun to clear the way to her it has absorbed every other sense, and I think less of my revenge than my love. Ask me anything but that."

Margaret said no more, but she made a mental resolution. She was so quiet that he was satisfied she had, as usual, given way to him.

The telegram was sent as he dreaded, and did his treacherous work but too successfully. Laurence did not for an instant doubt its entire genuineness.

"Some accident, perhaps," he thought, "or the reaction of the mental torture he suffered during his captivity. Poor Eugene was always delicate, and needed the tenderest care. It would be hard if he were to die now that the danger and the trouble are over."

He did not tell Julia the nature of the message. He read it silently, with so composed a countenance that she had no idea it could be of grave importance.

"One of the perils of my profession," he said. "I must go to London at once. I shall have to leave you to the care of Brutus and Rachel for a couple of days or so."

"Won't you take me with you, then?"

"There is the fatigue of the journey, my darling, and the general discomfort that attends all such fugitive visits. The business will not detain me long. They seem to think my presence indispensable, so I had better go. I shall not be longer than two days, or three at most. You may be sure I shall not stay a moment longer than I am absolutely required."

Julia knew he would not go without her if he could help it, and tried to be brave over her parting; but it was the first time since they had stood together at the altar that he had been away from her for more than a few hours, and both the prospective absence and the journey seemed longer than they were.

He could but smile at her solicitude for his safety. She pictured dangers that had never suggested themselves before. He was to be sure and write and tell her of his safety immediately on his arrival. She recollected how her brother had gone away one morning, smiling at her fears, and then disappeared, to be kept in deadly peril.

"And how do we know," she said, "that something of the same kind may not happen to you?"

"There is not much danger of that, my pot. I have not many enemies, and those I have would think twice before molesting me, or any one belonging to me. It is simply a matter of a very ordinary kind, and I shall not be gone an hour longer than I can help."

Julia bore the parting bravely, and kept her tears till he was gone. She wanted to accompany him as far as Paris; but he knew the trial of seeing him depart in the train would be too severe, and was firm in his gentle denial. Brief, however, as he thought the separation



THE FORGED TELEGRAM.

"No, my pot. I only thought I was; but had it happened, I should now have been the wretched husband of a weak, untruthful, and illiterate woman who would have valued my work for its price only, and in her heart longed for, as she would have said, a steady-going man of middle age, with a respectable shop in the city, and a genteel semi-detached villa in the vicinity of Brixton or Stratford."

"What would you have done?"

"My duty—as I have seen it done by other men. I should have settled down to the dull necessity of work with no purpose but to keep out of debt, and make the punctual payment of the weekly bills life's nearest aim. It would have worn out my spirit, made me gray before my time, taken from my soul its music and its poetry, but I should have plodded on faithfully, if worthily, to the end."

He seemed to realize so strongly the wretched picture of what might have been that he looked for the moment old and gray, and burdened with care. Julia seated herself upon his knee, and laid her tender, girlish lips to his bearded face.

"I thank heaven," she said softly, "I thank heaven, my own dear love, that it was not to be."

"Ah, my little one. I can feel what unutterable weariness it would have been. How much the worse with always the chance of the third heart meeting and crying out for its own. Had I been fettered then, and not you now, can you paint the bitter struggle with the strong temptation that makes those who meet too late long to under the cruel bondage, and defy the worldly code which tells them they must live on in separate misery?"

"It must be very hard," said Julia, thoughtfully. "If I were asked whether it is the greater sin to live with those we do not love, or love those to whom we must be always strangers, I should not know what to say."

"The answer is easy," said Laurence, patting her cheek gently. "Wiser heads than yours settled that question years ago. The less sin is in doing that which duty tells you is best. Loving those to whom we ought to be strangers, forgetting that we are not too late, is a crime for which society exacts a terrible penalty. No one can afford to set it at defiance; woman is the chief sufferer always."

"Would not the intensity of her joy at being taken by the man she loved from the hateful presence of the man she had wearied of more than repay her for what she might suffer?"

"If it would only last, my darling; but there is the danger and the doubt. An honourable man would not let a woman take such a step, and she would not be safe with a man who was less than honourable."

"I never loved any one but you," said Julia, in the same thoughtful tone, "and so, perhaps, I do not know; but it seems to me that even if I belonged to some one else, and you came and claimed me, I should let you take me anywhere, and if you were tired of me I should want to die. It is very wicked to say so, dear?"

"Not very wicked, as it is only to me, but not very wise at best. Let us leave such subjects alone for the future, and be glad that we belong to each other. As I, my darling, with those summer stars, looking down upon us, am glad with all my strength of soul that you belong to me."

"And I," she said, "as if I were a little child, love you more than I know how to tell."

In the lingering passion of the kiss he gave her there was a prayer that it might be always so.

They went for a walk a little later. Even at the risk of being thought out, they preferred to spend their soft summer evenings out of doors; the old French town was full of historical associations, and Laurence had so much to say that interested her.

"The French are like children in their temperament," he said; "as wayward, fitful, and

he was as much socially an outcast as if he belonged to the tribe that scatter like a horde of rats at the sound of a policeman's footstep, and do not leave their dens in the light of day."

When he heard of Julia's marriage he was in London. The loss of Brookdale did not make him poor. Always careful to provide against contingencies, he had been careful of the money that he wrung from Eugene. His name stood on several directors' lists, and it was generally understood in the financial market that where his name stood there was money to be made. He made full use of that impression to his own advantage.

He was in London, living in a splendid house, over which his quietly sister presided, and his friends—men of the City ring—never thought he could have a cure. He was the most daring and successful speculator of his day. His luck was so proverbial that men were known to follow him, just as in a kindred profession men follow the mounts of a favourite jockey, or the operations of a big bookmaker. When he left Brookdale he gave the Exchange all his attention, and it was said that in the next six months he must have made, at a rough calculation, at least a hundred thousand pounds.

The money might as well have been a heap of withered leaves for all the joy it brought him. He could indulge every taste and passion that magnificent wealth and an unlimited power placed at his command, but in spite of this he had a perpetual nightmare on his soul. He had lost Brookdale, he had been conquered by the man he hated, and that same man had now the beautiful young girl on whom he had set his heart with the intensity of a maniac.

He saw the announcement of the marriage one morning at the breakfast table, and he put the paper down heavily. Margaret knew by the savage look upon his face that something had happened.

"Have you had news?" she asked.

"Worse than any bitterest enemy could wish to tell me; but then it is through my bitterest enemy that it is here. They are married."

"Who?"

"Julia and Laurence Drayton."

He literally trembled with the strength of savage hate and disappointed passion. To Margaret, who had only loved as women do without knowing why they loved, this powerful emotion was a mystery.

"I could slay her in his arms," he said, with his voice thick in his throat; "lay her body dead before him, and in spite of my own pain glory in his bitter agony."

Margaret waited till he was quieter before she spoke. She loved Alexander Fleming as well and deeply as her brother had loved Julia, but had Mr. Fleming married she could not have felt like that. In her heart there was nothing but sorrow for the faithful man she had lost.

"It is something to have money after all," said Everard, rising a few moments later. "Revenge is a rich man's luxury, and I will have my share of it. Curse him to his death. I would give every shilling I possess if I could take away the joy that has been his since yesterday."

"I never thought you cared for her so much."

"It would have served no purpose to have let you know; but I set my soul upon her when she was a child of twelve. I watched her grow in beauty day by day, and pictured with a sybarite's delight the joy of teaching her to love me. And this man was last of all the one I ever thought would come between us—a wretched back who has to dig his bread out with his pen, write to please an untaught multitude, and be a slavish sycophant to any uncouth brute who has money to pay him for his work when done."

This ill-paid scribbler to win the most beautiful of all his highborn race from us," said Grantley.

Margaret did not follow her brother quite so far. She herself had felt the peculiar fascination which made Laurence Drayton a woman's

ton had conjured up—if death with all the hideous ignominy of a scaffold and a crowd were to be his—yet he would consummate his revenge, and bring Laurence Drayton's proud soul to the dust.

He told Margaret he was going to England for a couple of days, and he started that night by the mail. He was in London a little after midnight, and by the evening had ascertained that Eugene was staying at Castle Hill, with Mr. Wyatt.

Next morning he went to his office, and saw the secretary—a middle-aged, bald-headed gentleman, with a partly white waistcoat, as spotless as innocent-minded people might have imagined his character was.

"I am going back to France this afternoon," said Grantley, writing a message on a telegraphic form while he spoke, "and I may reckon with a moderate amount of certainty on being there some time to-morrow morning. Now, I want you to despatch this by the middle of the day—not before."

"Very well, Mr. Grantley; it shall be done."

"Do you read it correctly? I have written it with rather a nervous hand."

"I think so."

"From Mr. Wyatt, Castle Hill, Hastings, to Mr. Drayton, Boulevard du Roi, Versailles.—Come immediately—alone. Something has happened to Eugene. We hope for the best; but no time is to be lost. Do not tell Julia."

"That is right," said Grantley. "See that it is despatched not later than noon."

He knew he could depend upon the secretary's promise. He saw the message enclosed in an envelope, and marked, "For despatch—noon to-morrow," and then he went to a hotel near the railway station, and sat down to a *recherché* little dinner while waiting for the train.

"I shall be on the watch until I see him fairly on his way to England," he said, with a smile of satisfaction, "and then I can see whether my sweet cousin has quite forgotten me. It was a good thought—that forged telegram."

CHAPTER XLIII.

IN THE LAIR OF THE TIGER.

Grantley took no rest now that he had begun the consummation of his purpose. From the time he started on the journey till he started for the return he had no sleep, except such as he could get in the train. He did not feel the necessity of it yet.

He travelled back to Paris, and found that he had still some hours to spare before, by the arrangement made with his secretary, the telegram would arrive. Margaret had not expected him so soon.

"You can have taken very little time for recovery," she said, seeing the weary look that the feverish brightness of his eyes could not hide. "You are very tired, Everard."

"I do not feel so. I had some special business to do, and I will begin to remember that I am tired when it is finished. You must help me, Margaret."

"In what?"

"Julia is here in France, dreaming her life away with Drayton, as it was my thought she would dream it away with me; and my soul is bent on one desire, Margaret. I mean to take her from him."

"Everard?"

"I know every word you would say. You would ask me to think of her misery, tell me how dearly she loves her husband, and point out the utter hopelessness of my winning her by any means, however desperate; and I tell you simply that she shall be mine. I can teach her to love me when she is separated from him."

Miss Grantley knew her brother's determined nature too well to think of trying to dissuade