

THE STORY OF A STORY.

BY EDWARD D. CUMING.

CHAPTER IV.

"Why, bless my heart! if she hasn't published it after all!" Thus Arthur Meadows exclaimed, as he opened a package which he found upon his breakfast table one morning in July. He had not expected ever to see or hear anything more of Miss Malden's novel; and lo! here it was, in three neat volumes, with the title stamped in rustic gold characters upon the covers, as inviting a book to look at as any that ever gathered its deserved shroud of dust upon Mr. Mudie's shelves. He picked up the topmost volume and glanced through it; the paper and print were of the best, and the whole workmanship reflected the highest credit on Twinkleby & Co., whose name was visible on the back. The book had been got up regardless of expense; and recalling a remark in Mr. Twinkleby's letter, Arthur guessed the secret of its splendour while he feasted his eyes upon it. "Wegwood's doing," he said, with a bitter little laugh. "What a grand thing it is to be a moneyed man!"

He sat down to breakfast, and having poured out his coffee, unfolded the newspaper as usual; but after casting a careless glance over the summary of news, put it aside, and took up 'At Eden's Gate' again. This time, something prompted him to look at the fly-leaf; and as he read the few conventional words Alicia had written there, he grasped their intention, and felt the blood rush to his face. She had forgiven him; and lost to him though she was, the thought gave him an unreasonable degree of pleasure. He cut a few pages of the book, and propping it against the sugar-basin, began to read, eating mechanically while he handled the story; whether he had allowed it to run its own wild course, or had laid a kindly restraint upon it, he did not know. A very brief examination showed how sparingly censorship had been exercised; the spelling had been corrected, and here and there he found a passage elucidated which he remembered as having baffled his understanding in the manuscript; but not one of the superabundant adjectives had been deleted, nor a single in-consequent phrase cut out; and on every page italics and inverted commas broke out like a rash. The faithful publisher had reproduced the melancholy original in all its crudity. It had looked bad enough on foils; but now, exposed to the unflinching glare of print, its weaknesses were deplorably manifest. Arthur turned back to the title-page with a shrug.

"Ah! she had been content to let it go with only her initials," he muttered. "I rather think she will have reason to be thankful she did."

Having finished breakfast, he put away the book, and set out for his office, pondering over the terms in which she should acknowledge the presentation. He did not want to mar her enjoyment of success; but he knew that a double motive had led Alicia to send him the novel, and was not inclined to admit that its public appearance had caused him to alter his opinion of it. So he wrote, expressing his gratitude for the mark of forgiveness, which had given him sincere pleasure. He praised the refined taste displayed in the binding and general appearance of the book; and added that his having read it in manuscript would in no way qualify the interest, with which he should peruse it again; which Delphic utterance he had no doubt would be accepted in its more flattering interpretation.

He could not bring himself to congratulate her on her approaching marriage to Mr. Wegwood, for he felt that felicitations from himself would be too transparently hollow; he therefore omitted all reference to the subject, quieting his conscience by the reflection that, as the news had only reached him by a side-wind, she would take his silence to mean he was in ignorance of her engagement.

Miss Malden did not answer his letter; but as it had contained nothing that called for reply, this gave him no disappointment. He was beginning to forget the matter, when one day, a fortnight after receiving the book, the evening post brought a note from her which gave him not a little astonishment.

"I am most anxious to ask your advice about something," she wrote. "If you could possibly escape from your work for a day, I should be so grateful if you would come up and see me. I shall be at home any day and hour you may appoint; but I earnestly hope you will be able to come soon."

Mr. Meadows thought he could make a very fair guess at the purport of this summons, but did not delay to speculate upon it. He despatched a reply at once, saying she might expect him at noon the following day; and he spent a sleepless night, making half-hearted efforts to convince himself that the hopes which would insist in springing up again were foolish and vain. Nevertheless, his heart beat very fast when he found himself once more confronted by the familiar face of the butler at No. 212. Mrs. Malden was not at home, but Miss Malden was, and had given orders to show Mr. Meadows into the library when he came. Thither he was accordingly conducted; and there, seated amid a litter of newspapers, wearing an expression of the most abject misery, he found Alicia. She sprang up as he entered, and before he could ask what distressed her, betrayed the nature of her trouble by her first words.

"Oh Mr. Meadows," she cried, "I wish I had taken your advice."

"About your book?" asked Arthur, though he had grasped the situation already. Miss Malden did not answer. She withdrew her hand from his, threw herself into a chair, and hid her face in her handkerchief. Mr. Meadows did not distress her with further questions. He put down his hat and took up the nearest newspaper; it was a copy of the previous day's *London Courier*, and he turned to the column headed "New Novels," never doubting what he should see; a blue pencil-mark halfway down showed him what he sought.

"At Eden's Gate. (By A. M., 3 vols. Twinkleby & Co., London.) A silly, hysterical, and rapid example: obviously the work of a very young person indeed. It is quite impossible to deal seriously with such a production; we can only recommend the parents or guardians of 'A. M.' to keep writing

materials out of the child's reach for the future. The book is daintily got up."

Arthur Meadows lowered the paper and stole a compassionate look over the top at the unhappy authoress, who met his gaze with red eyes.

"They're all like that," she sobbed out—"every one. Oh, I do wish I had believed what you told me."

"Who sends you these things?" demanded Arthur indignantly, throwing aside the paper.

"Twinklebys. I asked them to send me all the critiques as they appeared; and—here poor Alicia completely broke down—"they—they've—been coming in—by every post for—days." She pointed to a corner by the window as she spoke; and there Arthur saw an untidy heap of journals, some of which bore traces of rough handling.

"What am I to do?" sobbed Alicia. "Some of the things they say are simply awful—I'll show you," she continued, choking back her tears and going over to the heap of papers. "The *Northern Celt's* the worst; just listen to this."

But before she could begin, Arthur Meadows took the paper gently from her hand. "It only pains you to read such things," he said; "and you surely can't imagine it gives me any pleasure to hear how your work has been ridiculed or abused. Nobody believes all a reviewer says. Besides, who is to know the book is yours? You kept it a profound secret, and only your initials are on the title-page."

"But it is not a secret now," she said. "I have sent away copies to quite a dozen people, and they are sure to tell every one they know. And it will be in all the libraries besides," she continued in a quivering voice. "I shall never be able to show my face anywhere again. Fancy meeting one's friends after they have seen *those*!"—with a shuddering gesture at the newspapers.

"But they won't see them, Miss Malden. They may perhaps see what their own paper says, but it's more likely they will not. Moreover, such exaggerated, sarcastic censures as I read will evoke sympathy for you rather than derision."

Alicia drew a long breath, and looked up at him gratefully. "Do you really think that?" she asked. At this juncture a loud double knock at the street door made her start. "The post again!" she ejaculated with a long sigh.

The post brought three more newspapers for Miss Malden. She would have torn them open at once, but Arthur Meadows quietly took possession of them.

"You are not going to see these until I have looked at them," he said, stuffing his capture into his pocket. "You sent for me to ask my advice, and I'm going to take what steps I can to save you further annoyance. If these critiques are of a nature to give you any pleasure, I'll give them to you; otherwise, they go into the fire."

Alicia yielded. Her book had been condemned with such exasperating unanimity that curiosity was almost strangled by this time; nevertheless, she devoured every review as it came, in a fervent hope that she might find a good word for some other part than the covers. All the papers praised the binding; and the majority drew satirical comparisons between that and the contents.

"Now, Miss Malden," said Arthur, taking up his hat, "this kind of thing must be stopped. I am going into the City to see Mr. Twinkleby at once. I shall be back in a couple of hours, and will see you again before I return to B—"

"Do," replied Alicia; "and don't be longer than you can help." She felt that his presence gave her heart to face her trouble. He had not once hinted that he had "told her so," as another person might have done; and she nursed a vague idea his visit to the publisher might somehow stem the current of hostile opinion.

Mr. Twinkleby was in his office; and when Arthur explained his mission, he had no hesitation in informing him how the novel had come to be published.

"I did not tell Wegwood in so many words that it was all twaddle," he concluded, "because I knew the authoress was a friend of his, and I didn't want to hurt his feelings. But when I declined to do it, he was so upset that I consented to do it for him. I never thought Wegwood was so human; and he was fearfully agitated at the idea of my sending back the manuscript. He offered to pay any sum I chose to name for doing the work."

"He asked you to send all the critiques to the authoress, didn't he?"

"I believe he wrote about it. I was away, and my partner Tweek would have opened the letter."

"Well, I've just seen the lady who wrote the book," said Arthur, "and I've come over to ask you not to send her any more of them. Wegwood pressed for publication under some misapprehension, and the authoress is very much annoyed and distressed about it."

"I can quite believe it," answered Mr. Twinkleby dryly. "I'll give orders on the subject at once."

"Thanks, Pray, do. I suppose you have not sold many copies of the book?" remarked Arthur, rising to go.

"Barring those distributed for review and a batch we sent the authoress, nearly the whole impression is down-stairs. It was a very small one, and I don't think I've now got a dozen copies ready bound. I suspect the account will give Wegwood a shock."

Arthur Meadows fervently hoped it would, but did not say so; and he travelled back to the West End, wondering how any sane man could have been guilty of such monumental imbecility as this.

"I know he confines his studies to the sporting papers and *Ruff's Guide*," he said to himself as he turned into Brook Street; "but surely he must know that it's customary for newspapers to review novels; and why on earth he insisted on having it published in the face of Twinkleby's advice, passes me altogether."

"It seems my fate to have awkward tasks thrust upon me," he mused. "Now I've got to tell her that she has to thank the man she's going to marry for her trouble. I only hope I get out of it better than I did the last difficulty."

He found Alicia eagerly awaiting his return; and in answer to her inquiries told her that she would see no more critiques, and that only very, very few copies of the novel had been sold; so she might set her mind at

rest about the danger of her friends obtaining it at the libraries.

"Of course you told Mr. Twinkleby on no account to sell any more?" said Alicia.

"I could not do that, Miss Malden. You see, Mr. Wegwood published the book at his own expense, and no one has any right"—

"Mr. Wegwood did what!" demanded the young lady with flashing eyes. "What do you mean?"

"Another fiasco," said Arthur *sotto voce*. "No help for it."

"Please explain yourself, Mr. Meadows," commanded Alicia.

"It's rather a delicate thing for a man to do," he said awkwardly, "to interfere between—I believe I ought to have congratulated you—your engagement—Mr. Wegwood," he got out the words with an effort, blushing purple as he did so.

The fluency of Alicia's reply took him utterly aback. "I'm not engaged to Mr. Wegwood," she said angrily. "It's too bad, the way people talk. Who told you such an untruth?"

"Mr. Twinkleby. I understood that his information came direct from Mr. Wegwood; but may be mistaken."

Alicia bit her lips with suppressed anger, but said no more on the subject.

"Please explain about the novel," she said, pointedly reverting to the topic.

A crushing weight had been lifted from Arthur's heart by Alicia's flat contradiction of her reported engagement, and he addressed himself to his now greatly simplified task of explanation without further hesitation.

Alicia heard his story in silence, listening with downcast eyes and hands tightly pressed together; nor dare she speak when he had finished. She was comparing the truth with Mr. Wegwood's circumstantial mendacity about his interview with the publisher, which she had so implicitly believed. He had made a fool of her, flattered her vanity with pretty stories, blind to the results his idiotic behaviour would bring upon her.

Several minutes passed before she awakened from this train of thought, which Arthur Meadows did not interrupt. At length she looked up, and with a long-drawn sigh dismissed the matter from her mind in favour of more prosaic affairs.

"I never asked you to have some lunch, Mr. Meadows," she said. "I was only so come into the dining-room. I'm not going to bother you with my worries any more now; I want to hear about yourself."

On hearing that Mrs. Malden was expected to return at any moment, Arthur consented to stay, and he ate his lunch, tended by Alicia.

"I suppose it is not quite conventional for me to entertain a young man by myself," she remarked; "but I owe you a great deal for all you have done to-day."

Arthur's services had not been of a very practical nature; but Miss Malden gauged their value by effect. She had been utterly wretched for the last day or two—ever since that storm of newspapers had broken—and his method of dealing with her trouble had been, as she told her mother later, particularly "nice."

Although he lingered until late in the afternoon to see Mrs. Malden, she failed to appear; and at four o'clock he bade Alicia good-bye, and set out for Victoria, after the longest and most confidential talk he had had with her. If his run up to town had brought comfort to her, it had been productive of infinite joy to himself. Not only had he re-established their old friendship on the firmest basis; he had learned from her lips that her engagement to Mr. Wegwood was a myth.

It was a myth, but not wholly without foundation. Mr. Wegwood had carried out his project, and on the day which brought Alicia the copies of her novel from Twinkleby he had laid his fortunes at her feet. The occasion was well selected. Alicia was too blissfully happy to inflict pain upon any one that day; and as she could not say "Yes," sought to spare his feelings by procrastination. She was not prepared to give him an answer, she said, and hoped he would not press her to do so. She would suggest that they should continue to be friends only for the present. To this, Mr. Wegwood, albeit not a little astonished at the lady's unreadiness, had acquiesced, and stated his intention of renewing his proposal on some future day. Alicia did not realise that in this temporarily disposing of the subject she was riveting her chains upon him; and we fear that she gave it very little thought afterwards. Mr. Wegwood, seeing the situation in his own light, accepted it with more philosophy than might have been expected; he meant, of course, to marry her eventually, but wanted to impress upon her with a proper sense of her value by repelling the first attack. Mrs. Malden, to whom he confided the result of his proposal, was only too willing to confirm him in this theory; and mother and lover, therefore, patiently lay on their oars to await the turn of the tide.

This was the position at the time of Arthur's visit in connection with the critiques. Mr. Wegwood was not in town just then, it is to be noted; some domestic calamity had taken him away to his mother's place in Berkshire, a few days after "At Eden's Gate" appeared, and he knew nothing of the annoyances his publication of that work had inflicted upon the authoress.

What course events might have taken had Miss Malden not been enlightened as to the means Mr. Wegwood had employed to publish her book, it is no part of our business to conjecture. What did happen, an hour after Mr. Meadows had taken his departure the sequence of our story requires; we should here relate. Alicia sat down, and invited to Mr. Wegwood a temperately worded but very frank expression of her views on the subject; concluding with a request that he would be good enough to inform her what sums he had disbursed, that she might immediately refund them. The effect of this letter was to bring the recipient back to London by the first available train. He came to Alicia to explain, apologise, and sue for pardon, with an energy of humiliation which proved his sense of the injury he had done his cause; but he soon understood that any chance he might have had of winning the lady's hand was fatally wrecked. Alicia admitted that her eagerness to see the novel published might have misled him; she quite believed he deeply regretted the results of his shortsighted zeal, and these she would have overlooked. But she could not and would not forgive him for having practiced upon her credulity as he did; he had misrepresented and concealed facts which would have con-

vinced her, as they should have convinced him, that the book was not good enough to publish. He had consistently deceived her about it; he had treated her like a child, telling pretty stories simply to please her, and she had only found him out by accident.

And Mr. Wegwood, standing before her, limp but not languid, received this flagellation in submissive silence. When it was over he begged Miss Malden to say what reparation he could make; he would do anything in the world to recover her good opinion and friendship. Alicia was sorry, but he could do nothing, save render an account of the expenditure he had incurred, and direct the publishers to act upon their instructions in respect to the unsold copies of the book; Mr. Meadows had been up in town yesterday, and had done everything for her that could be done.

The mention of his rival's name made Mr. Wegwood turn pale; he forgot the unkindly book, and in a hungry whisper implored Miss Malden to say that he might still—hope.

"I scarcely thought, Mr. Wegwood," said Alicia gravely, "that you would ask me to speak more plainly than I have done. I cannot respect any one who tries to please by double-dealing. The truth may be disagreeable to hear, and I did not like it, I believe, when it was told me about my book. But I honour a man who has the courage to say boldly what he thinks, regardless of the consequences."

She could not refrain from firing this last oblique shot, when she remembered what she had suffered; and it answered its purpose by bringing the unpleasant interview to an immediate close. Mr. Wegwood said no more; he raised her hand to his lips, and left the room, creeping down-stairs and out into the street with a meekness of deportment which obscured his identity.

This phase of his disappointment, however, did not remain for long in the ascendant; he thought that Arthur Meadows had brought this disaster upon him, rankled in his breast; and such black ingratitude from a man who might almost be called his private pensioner made him vindictive; he had no scruples about gratifying his thirst for revenge, and he lost little time in doing so.

Hence, a week after our hero's trip to town, he received an official communication from Mr. Watson briefly advising him that his services would be dispensed with at the end of the following month; or, if he found it convenient to leave at once, no obstacle would be thrown in his way. Arthur Meadows was not altogether unprepared for some display of his patron's ire; but he had not anticipated that he would wreak his vengeance so spitefully as this. He was somewhat surprised at his employer's subservience to the young brewer, knowing nothing of the financial secrets of the syndicate. He received his dismissal with dignity, elected to take a month's salary in lieu of notice, and in a very few days was once more installed in his old lodgings, engrossed in his literary work.

We need not linger over the sequel to this veracious history. Mr. Meadows resumed his visits to Brook Street with Mrs. Malden's full concurrence. She had learned from Alicia what her husband's results the young man's services to her had wrought upon him, and her sympathy was not decreased by the indignation she felt against Mr. Wegwood. The revelation of Alicia's great secret had not disabused her mind of her old theory—that Arthur Meadows and her daughter had loved each other; and as Alicia had given Mr. Wegwood the conge he deserved, she gave up her dream of becoming a peer's mother-in-law with perfect unselfishness, and watched the young author's progress with equal interest. Before the Maldens left town that year, Alicia discovered that to respect a man is a step towards loving him, and she soon took the next. As her mother promises to smooth out pecuniary difficulties, we have every reason to suppose she will shortly take the third, and "obey."

[THE END.]

Ocean Wonders.

As oceans cover three-fourths of the earth's surface, it is interesting to know certain facts regarding them. The water at the bottom of the ocean is much colder than at the surface, and in many places the water freezes below before it does above. At the depth of 3,500 feet waves are not felt. The temperature is the same, varying very little from the poles to the equator. Waves are deceptive; water does not travel; it stays in the same place and the motion goes on. Sometimes, in storms, waves are forty feet high. The base of a wave—the distance from valley to valley on either side at the bottom—is reckoned fifteen times the height. A wave twenty feet high, for instance, has a base extending over 300 feet. A mile down the water has a pressure of a ton to every square inch. Taking the average depth of the ocean to be three miles, there would be a layer of salt 230 feet deep if the water should evaporate. The force of waves breaking on the shores is said to be seven-ton tons to the square yard.

A Queer Hobby.

Men suffering from a superfluity of cash have strange hobbies. Some men delight in collecting expensive pocket handkerchiefs. At Harborough's, in Cockspar street, they told me that this was the hobby of many of their customers. They showed me a couple of dozen handkerchiefs made of the finest hand-woven cambric, that they had just finished for a young swell. The handkerchiefs were a guinea apiece, and the young gentleman's monogram was elaborately embroidered in the corner of each one. Such extravagance is almost incredible, is it not? It is very galling to us poor women who think a guinea a long price for a hat.

A curious reason is assigned by a St. Petersburg correspondent in a letter published to-day for the assassination of Lieutenant-General Seliversky at Paris. It appears that at the time of his murder the General was engaged in making a census of the Russian residents in France. There are many of the Czar's subjects, persons of rank and fortune, who have left their country without the necessary permit of the Imperial Government, and if official confirmation is secured of their residence abroad they run considerable risk of being visited with penalties involving the loss of station and possessions. They have reason, therefore, to entertain very strong objections to the projected census, and under the circumstances, it is, to say the least, peculiar that Colonel Cheremetieff, who began the work of enumeration, was found mysteriously murdered at his Parisian residence in the Rue Caumartin last spring.

Wonderful Recovery of a Horse's Sight.

The most wonderful recovery of a horse's sight that has ever come under our notice is told of the great stallion Onondaga, sire of many of the famous horses now on the American turf. It appears that a few years ago, upon the advice of prominent veterinary surgeons, Milton Young, of McGrathiana Stud, Ky., consented to an operation being performed upon his young stallion, the aforesaid Onondaga, which consisted in chloroforming the horse and puncturing the ball of each eye with a needle. The horse was afflicted with a peculiar disease, which rendered him not only unmanageable but a dangerous animal to groom, and no less than three men nearly lost their lives from the effect of his viciousness. The veterinarians called in by Mr. Young said the horse must be blinded by an operation or killed outright. Being highly prized in the stud at McGrathiana, he did not want to lose his services, and therefore, as abovesaid, consented to the operation prescribed by the surgeons. Once done, a number of papers set up a howl of cruelty to animals, and the superstitious predicted Mr. Young's as a breeder. The latter has been controverted by the brilliant success of his establishment, while Onondaga has become not only a great sire, but as gentle as a lamb. Now follows the startling announcement that his eyesight has returned and the great son of Leamington sees the world as of yore. Since the operation was performed, now nearly seven years ago, the horse's eyes have always been kept constantly bandaged and the discovery that his sight was returning is in itself as remarkable as the result of the operation performed on his entire to the stud. It appears he has constantly rubbed at his bandages until he finally made an opening for his eyes, and then this accomplished, he ceased to try to rid himself of his head gear. Such instant is worth of a human, and is as wonderful as the restoration of his eyesight which is believed to be without a parallel in equine history.

A Chill has Followed.

The publication of general Booth's "In Darkest England" produced even in high circles a brief but lively spasm of sympathy and subscriptions rolled in. The patronage of a few aristocrats had the effect of prolonging the zeal of middle class philanthropists, and for a few weeks the prospects were good that all the money the General asked for—\$500,000—would be forthcoming. But chill has followed fever. English practical sense began inquiring for guarantees as to how the money should be invested; how it should be prevented from becoming private property and what the Salvation Army had to show for its gigantic pretensions to undertake the colossal scheme, amounting in effect to a reorganization of society on strictly ideal and a perishable lines. Skeptics, led by Professor Huxley and the Archbishop of Canterbury, appeared in print denying the truth of General Booth's averments about what had already been accomplished. Economists pointed out the folly of undertaking model farms in distant colonies. Historians recalled the uniform failure of similar utopian enterprises. Moralists objected to offering the idle and vicious all the necessities and many of the luxuries at the expense of the industrious and virtuous. Lord Derby ostentatiously denied that he had subscribed. Stone after stone has fallen out of the newly made foundation of Salvation on paper. The fever was short but the chill is likely to be long.

A Poem on Resuscitation.

Turn the patient upon his face,
And under the forehead the left hand place,
Grasp by the waist and most earnestly strive
To lift while you count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
Repeat the jerk gently two or three times
more,
And lower each time to the ground or floor.
Next raise up the chest as high as can be,
And hold while you're counting 1, 2, 3.
One motion more before you are through,
Press hard on the ribs while you count 1, 2
Repeat motion 1, motion 2, motion 3,
Until a return to life you can see.

As soon as he breathes get him to bed,
Applying hot bricks to the body and head,
Rub briskly until the skin is bright pink,
Then give him a cup of hot milk to drink.

It is to the credit of the government at Ottawa that it is taking active measures to meet the wishes of the Imperial government as regards the adoption of stringent measures for the protection of cattle at sea. In response to urgent representations from the Colonial office, the Minister of Marine has submitted the draft of a bill that the Dominion Parliament will be asked to pass at the coming session. Some amendments are yet pending, seeing that Mr. Pimms, M. P., better known as the seaman's friend, is now on his way to Canada to consult with our government in the premises.

Eighteen hundred and eighty-nine was a year of disasters. Eighteen hundred and ninety will probably be remembered in Canada, at least, as hangman's year. Since January eight men have expired the crime of murder on the scaffold. These were Smith at London, Davis at Belleville, Dubois at Quebec, Spencer at Kamloops, Birchall at Woodstock, Day at Welland, and Blanchard and Lamontagne at Sherbrooke. The record is a sad one enough. It is to be remembered, though, that it comes after what might be called an epidemic of murderous crimes, to which the attention of the whole country had been attracted. It is to be trusted that it will be long before it sees such another year of such crime and its punishment.

The Behring sea dispute may yet make serious trouble if the words of a prominent Canadian officer are to be believed. "The matters," this man remarked, "bear a graver aspect now than at any time during the negotiations. The Americans seem determined to make this international question a matter of public politics. Hill taunted Blaine with backing down in the face of Lord Salisbury's threats, and Blaine seems inclined, by the reports we get from Washington, to adopt a swash-buckler policy till after elections. If Blaine refuses to arbitrate the matter a very dangerous situation will be created. England will protect Canadian vessels plying any avocation on what she considers to be the high seas. You can easily see how close to an actual state of warfare that will be." It is to be hoped that any feeling of foolish pride will not be allowed to determine the solution of this important question. Warfare should not be looked upon even as a remote possibility.