

Choice Literature.

One Life Only.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

Mr. Crichton gazed at his eyes by gazing steadily at Una, as long as it pleased her to contemplate the view, but when at last she turned her glance downward to her companions, he bounded up the rocks and was at her side in a moment.

"Now, Lilith," he exclaimed, as Lilith followed more slowly, "you must come and act as a showman to this great panorama. I can tell Miss Dysart the names of the houses, but you must describe the inhabitants."

"Provided you do not expect me to be very critical," she said, with her gentle smile.

"No, indeed; I am only too well aware of the extent of your unassailable charity. I have no doubt you will persuade Miss Dysart that this county is stocked entirely with angelic beings, which will be very satisfactory to her, until she comes in contact with a good deal that will seem rather odd in a seaport population."

"Do you not know any of these wonderful beings yourself?" said Una, laughing.

"I know one, a young lady whom I met—not here, but in London, and it is quite—quite enough for me."

"And her name?"

"Is Miss Northcote—Miss Wilhelmina Northcote, commonly called 'Will.'"

"Not by you surely?"

"She would have no objection. I think of asking her to go out shooting with me some day, she is a capital shot." He laughed as Una opened great eyes of astonishment.

"I like Miss Northcote very much," said Lilith softly.

"Of course you do, who is there you do not like? but she is as unlike you as if she were the inhabitant of another planet."

"There is Northcote Manor, where her family live, Miss Dysart," said Lilith; "you see that large modern-looking house, half hid by the trees, not very far from here: though the whole property is on low-lying ground?"

"Yes, I can see it quite well. A gentleman and lady seem to be riding towards it along the high road at this moment."

"You are quite right," said Hervey; "it is Rupert Northcote, the eldest son, and his sister, whom I have already introduced to you as 'Will.'"

"Are they new people in the county? their house seems quite recently built."

"Oh no, they are an old family," said Lilith; "but the present squires pulled down the original house in order to build one larger, he has so many children."

"Happily, none are of an age to appear in the world of society yet, except Rupert and Will."

"Why do you say 'happily'?" asked Una.

"Because Rupert, though undoubtedly a fine handsome fellow, with some good qualities, is—shall I say what he is, Lilith?"

"Say whatever you think right," she answered, almost in a whisper; and the soft peace of her face remained undisturbed.

"Well, not to enter into details, he is extravagant and dissipated; very unlike his father, who is, I believe, a thoroughly good, kind-hearted man."

"And Mrs. Northcote?"

"Oh," said Hervey, drawing a long breath, "I met her, too, in London once; and she is the most terrible specimen of the British matron I ever encountered."

"She is very good, Hervey."

"Yes, my dear child; and in the days when I used copy-books, one of the wise sentences which I wrote over and over again was to the effect that goodness which made itself disagreeable was high treason against virtue. However, I leave you to comment on the rest of our neighbours; the Northcotes are really the only people I know, from having met them elsewhere."

"I have been making some discoveries for myself," said Una; "I can see that our present home is called Vale House because it lies just at the entrance of that pretty valley through which the river flows, and is called Valehead because it extends quite to the upper part, where the church stands, so well placed on ground that already begins to rise."

"Yes," said Lilith, "and there is the paragon where we live, just behind it."

"That quaint, many-gabled little house? It is very picturesque; your garden looks beautiful, even from here. There are only two other houses which are not poor people's cottages—a very ugly, red-brick building at the end of the village street, and a little villa on the river bank. Who lives in these?"

"The inevitable functionaries, doctor and lawyer," said Hervey. "I have seen them both at church—Dr. Burton and Mr. Knight."

"Well, I suppose we shall make acquaintance with them, and all the others you have named, in due course," said Una; "but, Mr. Crichton, I am very anxious to know the name of that grand, austere-looking old place just at the foot of the hill on the opposite side. It has a magnificent position, almost embedded in that dark forest of pines, and with such precipitous rocks rising up immediately behind it."

"That is Atherstone Abbey; formerly in possession of the gentleman, my brother mentioned in connection with Mrs. Amherst, and the very place you expressed such a wish to see."

"It would be well worth going a much longer distance to get a good view of it. Both the building and its surroundings are wonderfully striking. It looks like the keep of some old Norman baron—sombre and massive, and quite capable of a stout defence; surely it must be very ancient."

"It is, undoubtedly. The county guide-book will give you a most elaborate history of it. I dare say you have studied it, Lilith."

"Every one here knows the history of Atherstone," she answered. "It was, just as Miss Dysart supposes, a Norman castle first of all; then one of the family in old times joined a religious order, and converted it into a monastery, from which it derived the name of Abbey. The chapel and cloisters were added at that time; but the next heir restored it to its original use as a dwelling place, and so it has remained ever since."

"Always in possession of the same family?" asked Una.

"Oh yes," said Lilith, "it is said that the Atherstones would rather put with life than with the Abbey."

"They are a proud race," said Hervey, "and cling with a wonderful tenacity of affection to their old inheritance; but really one cannot be surprised at their devotion to it, for, independent of their historic old fortress, the lands belonging to it are of great extent and value. I should think few commoners have such a rent-roll as Humphrey Atherstone."

"Is he the present proprietor?"

"Yes; he succeeded his uncle, who was Miss Amherst's friend—or enemy, as the case may be; and as he is unmarried, and without brothers or sisters, he has the sole enjoyment of his rich possessions."

"Do you know him?"

"Not at all; but my brother does, of course; and from what I have heard, I imagine that of all the Atherstones that have ever lived he is the one who is the most entirely devoted to his old home, and intensely proud of it."

"He has lived in it all his life," said Lilith, "and he always knew that it was to belong to himself. He was brought to it as the heir, on the death of his father, when he was quite an infant. His uncle, who died three years ago, was the eldest brother; but he never married, so Humphrey of course succeeded. I believe he has literally never left it, excepting to go to school and college, and he refused to stand for the county the other day, because he did not wish to leave home. He has always managed the whole property himself, for both his grandfather and his uncle were much attached to him, and trusted everything in his hands. I believe he retains all sorts of superannuated old servants about him still; but I should think it must be rather a rough establishment, for there has been no lady belonging to it since his mother died nearly thirty years ago."

"He is not very young, then?"

"Upwards of thirty, certainly."

"And what sort of a man is he, Miss Crichton? I suppose you know him?" asked Una.

Lilith was silent for a few minutes, and then, when Una repeated her question, she said with evident reluctance, "My brother Richard does not like him."

"Why, Lilith," exclaimed Hervey, "he must be desperately bad if you have not a good word to say for him. I had no idea that he was such a terrible character."

"I did not say he was bad, Hervey."

"Never mind," said Una lightly, perceiving that Miss Crichton looked troubled; "I dare say I shall make his acquaintance some day, and then I can judge for myself. In the meantime do tell me what is that exceedingly strange-looking little tower on the very top of a tremendously high cliff, a long way above Atherstone itself. It looks even older than the Abbey, and seems half in ruins; but I should think it must belong to the property."

"It does," said Lilith; "and there is a singular story connected with it. An Atherstone, in very olden times, committed some great crime—what it was I do not know, but he became haunted with a terrible remorse, which gave him no rest night or day; so at last he had this lonely tower built, as a place where he might spend the rest of his life in penitence; and when it was ready, he took leave of all his friends, and went up to it, and never left it again till the day of his death. It is called the 'Eagle's Nest,' because it is so inaccessible."

"It does look inaccessible; nevertheless, after hearing such a story as that connected with it, I most certainly shall make my way to it some day," said Una.

"If you think of going on horseback, Miss Dysart," said Hervey, "you would find it quite impossible; the ascent is much too steep and rugged, and there is no regular path."

"On these two feet I will go," said Una merrily; "but I shall not tell you, or any one else, how or when I shall accomplish it. I shall go by myself, and then perhaps I shall meet the ghost of the wicked old penitent."

"Should you think that a very desirable result?" said Hervey, smiling.

"Most certainly I should."

"And what would you say to him if you did meet him?"

"I should ask him to tell me my future fate. I have no doubt I should find he knew it quite well," and as she spoke, with careless laughter, the flying breeze caught the words and bore them lightly away, but there came a day when they returned to her, and lay upon her heart with a weight of lead.

"I was now growing late, so after a glance at the huge house in the distance, which Mr. Crichton told Una belonged to the lake, the great man of the country, they turned down the hill and took their way homewards."

CHAPTER IV.

The Dysarts soon had hosts of visitors. Colonel Dysart was known by name—both as a distinguished officer and through Lady Mary's connections—to many of the families in the county, and they were very glad to welcome both him and his bright, aristocratic-looking daughter to the society of the neighbourhood; amongst others Una and Mrs. Northcote called, when both Una and her father happened to be out, so that one of the first places they went to when they got their carriages and horses, was to pay the return visit at Northcote Manor.

Colonel Dysart had limited his stud to riding horses for himself and Una, and the groom who attended them, but he also provided her with a little low carriage and a pair of fast-trotting ponies, which she was to drive herself, for he was much too indolent to give himself even that small amount of trouble, and when they started on a fine afternoon to visit the Northcotes, Una managed the spirited little steeds, while her father leant back on the cushions at her side, and watched the skill with which her light firm hand managed the reins.

They had reached a rather steep ascent on the road, and Una let the ponies walk till they got on more level ground. Just as they gained the summit of the highest part they overtook Richard Crichton, who was walking slowly on, talking to a man

following respectfully a step or two behind him.

"Wait a moment, Una," said Colonel Dysart, "I want to ask the rector a question," and she checked the ponies while her father got out and went up to speak to the clergyman. Mr. Crichton joined him at once, and they went on a few steps, while his companion, drawing back, turned slowly round, and standing within a few paces of Una, looked her full in the face. She gave an involuntary start, and an unaccountable fascination seemed to compel her to fix her eyes on the remarkable-looking person before her. It was fascination, but of a very unpleasant description, for the strangest feeling of chill and repulsion thrilled through her whole frame as she looked at him. He was a young man, not more than five-and-twenty years of age; not really tall, but gaining an appearance of height from his extreme slenderness, with a dark olive complexion which spoke unmistakably of Southern blood of some sort; he had thin, finely cut features and sleepy-looking, almond-shaped eyes, that were usually more than half veiled by the lids, but when opened to their full extent were of the most intense black, with a fiery glow in their inmost depths that made them look almost like the gleaming eyes of some savage animal. His thin lips had a snake-like curve, and his hair, cut very short over the whole head, was of a dead coal-black hue, straight and smooth. It was essentially an evil face, subtle and cruel in its expression, notwithstanding that it was, undoubtedly, not without a certain beauty of a peculiar kind. He was respectably dressed, but had not in the least the appearance of a gentleman. He wore gold rings in his ears and on the fingers of his dark little hand, and was unquestionably a foreigner, though it would not have been easy to judge by his appearance from what country he came.

As Una met the fixed gaze of this man, the sense of repulsion she felt at first grew into the strangest sort of superstitious terror she had ever experienced. How it could be she knew not, but she felt an instinctive conviction that this man had some terribly evil power over her destiny, and that she would be quite unable to free herself from his malignant influence. She shuddered, tried to avert her eyes, and found herself irresistibly drawn to look at him again. She felt as if an icy breath were passing over her making the whole air chill, and it was with inexpressible relief that she saw her father returning to her.

"Why, Una, you look quite blue with cold. How does that happen on such a sunny afternoon?"

She grasped hold of his arm and said in a hoarse whisper, "Who is that man?"

"The man Crichton was speaking to? How should I know child? What are you thinking of?"

The foreigner had moved away, and in a moment Una felt restored to herself, the chill of fear passed off, it seemed as if the sunshine had regained its strength, and she could not even understand what it was that had made her shiver and shrink so strangely the instant before.

"I do not know what in the world was the matter with me," she said, her bright smile returning as she made the ponies move on again. "I felt suddenly such a horrible dread and dislike to that man, though he never spoke a word, and seemed inoffensive enough."

"I do not see anything remarkable about him to make you notice him at all," said Colonel Dysart, glancing back at the foreigner, who had rejoined the rector. "He seems to be one of those mongrel fellows, half-African and half-European, of whom we have seen numbers at the Cape."

"Perhaps he reminded me of some I had a bad opinion of there," said Una; "but apparently he must be a meritorious individual, since Mr. Crichton seems to be actually feeling a grim satisfaction in talking to him: the rector's hard, cold face gives one the impression that his natural tendencies, at least, are towards a general condemnation of every one for everything."

"A sweeping conclusion, which certainly would leave no loophole of escape for any of us; but he is a thoroughly upright man, Una, you may be sure of that, he only unfortunately mars his goodness, as many do, by a want of geniality and courtesy," replied her father.

They were soon at the gates of Northcote Manor, and drove up a long avenue, through park-like grounds, to the door of the large substantial-looking house which, with no pretensions to architectural beauty, seemed thoroughly commodious and comfortable. A tall distinguished-looking young man with a rather languid air was lounging on a terrace at one side of the house, smoking a cigar, and he watched Una critically as she jumped out of the carriage and gave the reins to the servant, but he did not come forward, and she passed on with her father and entered the house.

They were ushered into a large pleasant drawing-room, which had only two occupants, a ponderous lady of decidedly formidable aspect, attired in the stiffest and most rustling of silks, who sat on a sofa reading the *Times*; and at once recalled to Una Hervey Crichton's description of Mrs. Northcote as a British matron, and a young girl who was crouching down on the floor beside a large Newfoundland dog, whom she seemed to be tormenting with all sorts of malicious tricks. She started to her feet as the visitors came in, and showed a light elegant figure, small but in perfect proportion, and a strikingly *piquante* face, with sparkling dark eyes, a mischievous little mouth, and a quantity of black hair, cut short and brushed off her forehead, in a state of wild confusion, which was rather increased than diminished by the knots of scarlet velvet that were supposed to restrain it.

"I shall like 'Will,'" thought Una as she glanced at her, but she was obliged to give her undivided attention to Mrs. Northcote, who now came forward, wearing a look of stern benevolence, and welcomed the new-comers with deep solemnity. All this lady's movements, even on the most trivial occasions, seemed designed to show that she was engaged in a very self-conscious performance of duty, and that she wished it to be understood her every action, even when it consisted in nothing more virtuous than the depositing of her formidable

able frame in a comfortable arm-chair, was conducted on the strictest principle. It would probably be a very complete explanation of the eccentricities of Miss Wilhelmina Northcote to say, that they were simply the result of a strong reaction from the too severe training she had received.

The visit commenced with a most rigid observance of the laws of etiquette. Miss Northcote was introduced, Mr. Northcote was sent for, and Mr. Rupert Northcote, who sauntered in at the open French window, was named with a state of ceremonial which would not have been out of place in presenting the heir to the throne. The gentleman who for thirty years had had the overpowering felicity of enjoying life in company with Mrs. Northcote was a stout, good humoured looking individual, who had forgotten his spectacles on the top of his bald forehead where he had pushed them up from his eyes, and who glanced perpetually at the mistress of his affections (and everything else) with a bland, weak expression which seemed to show that, having resigned his purse and his conscience to her careful keeping, he was now enabled to take life very easily, secure that all his affairs, including his duties, would be carefully managed. He was, however, a thorough gentleman, and talked pleasantly and kindly to his new acquaintances in the general conversation which followed his entrance; Mrs. Northcote's share in it was chiefly addressed to Una, who was painfully conscious that she was becoming exceedingly drowsy under a course of that lady's remarks, and she welcomed the appearance of afternoon tea with great satisfaction, as an event which might possibly cause a change in her position. Miss Northcote took care that it should; she had been openly manifesting no small impatience at the formal nature of the visit, and had already visited it on her own behalf by rushing herself out at the window to order Colonel Dysart's carriage to be sent round to the stables, when her father proposed it, and returning back again into the room before Mrs. Northcote had finished the speech in which she was requesting Rupert to ring the bell, that she might give the necessary orders. The young lady's next proceeding was to place Mrs. Dysart's cup of tea on a little table in the window which opened on the lawn, where they were out of hearing of the rest of the company, and Una gladly rose at her invitation and joined her there; Rupert followed, and Mrs. Northcote was soon laughing and talking as if she had known her visitor all her life. Presently she began to question her as to the acquaintances she had already made in the neighborhood, and when Una mentioned the Crichtons, she perpetrated a frightful grimace at the rector's name.

(To be Continued.)

Birth and Death.

Men are seldom indisposed to recall the season of their birth. They rather love to go back to it. They cheerfully keep its anniversary. And if there happens to have been anything of a memorable kind connected with their entrance upon life—anything distinguished about their parents, or their birth-place, or the persons who then took an interest in their welfare—they are even proud and happy to recall and recite the fact. None but those whose birth has been in some way or other infamous, have any dislike to revert to the time when they began to be.

Are men equally disposed to bethink them of their death? Quite otherwise. They willfully avert their eyes from that event. They would fain forget that such a gloomy event awaits them. And even when it is forced upon their thoughts, instead of detaining it before their minds, that they may ponder its issues and prepare for them, they only busy themselves in contriving how they may most speedily get rid of the unwelcome intruder.

Whence comes it that, while thus ready to go back on our birth, we are so reluctant to go forward to our death? Are we equally indisposed, in other instances, to anticipate and live upon the future? If we had the prospect—to borrow an opposite comparison—of emigrating a few years hence to a foreign land, where we were to spend the remainder of our days, would we exclude that prospect from our thoughts, as we exclude the prospect of going to death to the land beyond the grave? No, verily. In that case how completely would our minds be filled with the prospect! How eager would we be in collecting information about that foreign land! How little interest would we take in anything which did not in one way or other help forward our preparation for it! Why, then, do we not so differently with reference to the land beyond the grave? Why, with the certain prospect of going thither, do we habitually shun the thought of it? Why, with a holy book in our hands—an "Emigrant's Guide"—richly stored with authoritative intelligence, do we evince so rooted an aversion to study its contents and complete our preparation? Alas! this strange variance between our practice and our prospects bespeaks and betrays our conscious guilt. Death is to usher us into the presence of a holy God, and the thought of encountering that dread presence makes us tremble. Death is the portal to the great judgment-hall, and guilty fear antedates the gloomy sentence which awaits us there. It is a guilty conscience which makes cowards of us all. We are afraid of the issues of death, and therefore we strive to forget death—like the foolish bird which when the eagle is about to swoop upon it, hides its head under its wings, and because it sees not its danger supposes itself safe.

No true work since the world began was ever wasted; no true life since the world began has ever failed.

The best way of knowing the secret of the Lord is to be much in secret with the Lord.—*Ps. xxx. 14.*

If faith be the mainspring, devotion winds up the machinery, and keeps it in continual motion. It is as impossible for the soul to remain strong in faith and active in obedience, without continual communion with God, the fountain of all grace, as it is for a clock to perform its revolutions without being regularly wound up.

Scientific and Useful.

FRICASELLED OYSTERS.

One hundred oysters, one quarter pound butter; brown the butter, then put in the oysters and let all simmer for fifteen minutes; drain one tablespoonful of flour and butter well together, add one spoonful of chopped parsley, some salt and pepper; when ready to serve add the yolks of three eggs well beaten; serve on toast.

TOMATO SAUCE.

To four quarts of bruised tomatoes add half a pound of salt, and allow to stand for three days, then express the juice. To each half gallon of juice add 1 oz. of shallots, and 1 oz. of black pepper; boil for an hour, strain and add mace, allspice, ginger, nutmeg, of each a .oz., coriander (and, if desired to impart color, cochineal, of each 1 oz. Simmer gently for half an hour, strain, and when cold, bottle it.

BROWN BREAD.

Six cups Indian meal; 1 cup Graham flour; 1 cup molasses; 3 cups sour milk; 3 cups hot water—scalding the meal; 2 even teaspoonfuls saleratus, 1 teaspoonful ginger, salt. Steam three hours and bake one. Four or five cups of milk will make it better. Two cups Graham flour are better than one; or a cup of the bran sifted from the graham, is good.

WATERPROOFING THE SOLES OF SHOES OR BOOTS.

This simple and effectual remedy is nothing more than a little beeswax and mutton suet, varnished in a pipkin until in a liquid state. Then rub some of it slightly over the edges of the sole where the stitches are, which will repel the wet, and not in the least prevent the blacking from having the usual effect.

GREEN TOMATO PICKLE.

Take a bushel of green tomatoes, chop fine, put in a colander and drain dry, add one quarter of a pound of white mustard-seed, one quarter of a pound whole allspice, six green peppers, chopped fine, three table-spoons of ground allspice, two of ground cinnamon, and ground cloves, one tea cup of salt; mix well and put in a stone jar; add one gallon of scalded vinegar hot; set away to cool; after cold cover tight and it is ready for use.

KEEPING EGGS.

Slake 1 lb stone lime in 2 gallons water. When cool add 1 pint salt. Stir well and let the mixture thoroughly settle. Place the eggs in a stone jar, pointed ends downwards, and pour over them the clear liquid without disturbing the sediment. Be sure that the lime-water covers them. Close the jar tightly, and do not disturb until wanted for use. Be careful to break each one into a dish separately, as there will always be found a few which the lime will penetrate, but the proportion is very small. This receipt will preserve 9 dozen eggs.

CHICKEN PIE.

Take a pair of tender, fat chickens, prepare and disjoint them, put them into a stew pan, and season highly with salt, black pepper and a very little cayenne; dredge in a little flour, stir well together with water sufficient to cover them; stew over a slow fire three-quarters of an hour. Line the sides of a pie dish with a light paste. With a fork, place the chickens in so as to lie even; pour in half the gravy; roll out the lid, place it on the top, trim and ornament the edge, cut a cross in the centre and fold the corner over, lay some strips across the opening. Bake in a quick oven one hour. Before sending to the table, pour in, through the opening in the centre, the balance of the gravy.

A MYSTERY OF PERFUME.

No one has yet been able to analyze or demonstrate the essential action of perfume. Gas can be weighed, but no scents. The smallest known creatures—the very monads of life—can be caught by a microscope lens and made to deliver up the secrets of their organizations; but what it is that emanates from the pouch of the musk deer that fills a whole space for years and years with its penetrating odor—an odor that an illimitable number of extraneous substances can carry on without diminishing its size and weight—and what is it that the warm summer air brings to us from the flowers, no man has yet been able to determine. So fine, so subtle, so imponderable, it eluded both our most delicate weights and measures and our strongest lenses. If we come to the essence of each odor, we should have made an enormous stride forward both in hygiene and in chemistry, and none would profit more than the medical profession if it could be as conclusively demonstrated that such an odor proceeded from such and such a cause, as we already know of sulphur, sulphuric hydrogen, ammonia, and the like.

WATER AS A SOURCE OF AGUE.

Some facts, which seem to point somewhat clearly to the source of diseases as due to the water used by individuals, are being discussed in England. The troops at Tilbury Fort were supplied with water collected on the roofs of the building, and stored underground in tanks at or below the level of the subsoil and high-water-mark of the river Thames. The officials and servants at the railway station, a few hundred yards distant, obtain their supply from another source, viz., spring water, pumped from an ordinary well, about a mile and a half inland from the Thames. Beside the railroad hands, a small body of coast-guardsmen, occupying a ship lying in the river mud and just outside of the Tilbury fortifications, are supplied with this same water. Ague has for some long time past been common among the troops at Tilbury Fort, and almost unknown at the railway station and on the ship. During some cleansing and repairing of the tanks at the fort the spring water was used for some time by the soldiers, and ague disappeared, but made its appearance again when the tank water was used. Samples of water from the different sources having been subjected to analysis, in the tank water was found an excess of ferruginous matter, evidently derived from the soaking of the marsh water which surrounded the tanks.