

my regiment for India many long years ago. Then without direct questioning he led me on to give him many harmless details such as that we led a most tedious, quiet life—that in you, my eldest sister, I possessed a friend, teacher, and mother, that we kept no servants—how else account for the state of my poor hands—finally, that he was the first stranger in my own rank to whom I had spoken for three years. As the word rank unthinkingly escaped my lips I involuntarily glanced down at my old dress with its faded pattern, and felt as if I could have died from shame at the empty boast. "Dear Miss Tremaine," he said with an accent of inexpressible gentleness, "though I am but a stranger, you may safely confide on me the title of friend, which I will give, if it permits it, fully earn." After a few more words we reached the edge of the wood where he left me divining, I suppose, from the alarmed glances I cast in the direction of the house that I feared being seen with him. Before parting he gave me his card on which was inscribed his name, Col. Neville Atherton, late Madras Cavalry. His health consequent on a long sojourn in India had compelled him to leave the service. He had returned to his native land, settled down at Atherton Park his ancestral home, purchased some months ago, a shooting lodge not very far from Tremaine Court, and comes down to it occasionally for a few days' sport. So there is a veracious account of the first chapter of my life's romance.

"Lillian, Lillian, my thoughtless sister, how imprudent of you to hold such long converse in a lonely wood with a perfect stranger!"

"And that is not all Margaret. I met him again another morning that, suffering from a severe headache, I had gone out for fresh air on the breezy flat; and we had a delightful walk together. He accosted me with the most cordial friendliness, saying that his mother to whom he had spoken about his meeting with myself, had told him that there existed a certain relationship between his family and ours, the Tremaines and Athertons having intermarried though it was many years ago. We also mentioned that old Mrs. Atherton had known our father or mother well and had liked and admired her exceedingly. Finally he asked leave to call on father and ourselves, but I quickly assured him such a thing was out of the question."

"God help us!" moaned the eldest sister as she pressed her hand to her forehead with a look of acute mental pain. "What evil fate has added this last difficulty to the many that surround us already?"

"Nonsense, dearest Margaret, every trifling alarm you; but to finish my story as frankly as I began it, I intend to meet him again as soon as fate will permit, and it is for his eye I am quitting this poor little bit of lace and ribbon together."

For a moment Miss Tremaine gazed at her sister in bewilderment, dismayed silence, and then in a voice that mingled with pain, supplication and fear, whispered:

"Oh Lillian promise me you will not do this! For the sake of our dear mother, of the love and care with which I have watched over you from childhood, promise! Think, my sister, how I love—worship you. Earth holds naught else in the present, nor in the future, save that love; for to me, the sickly pale-worn invalid, no girlish dreams and hopes such as others of my age can indulge in, may ever come. Have pity on me then, my bright, beautiful sister, and promise you will not meet again this ungenerous stranger who takes advantage of your childish inexperience and youth to involve you in stolen meetings that may yet deprive you of the last jewel that belongs to the daughters of the Tremaines, that of a spotless reputation?"

"Ah Margaret!" and the youngest girl's lips quivered, "if I did not love you with a love equal to your own, I would not sacrifice for your wish the only pleasant dream that has ever yet brightened my dreary existence. However, Heaven forbid I should voluntarily bring tears to those dear eyes that have already wept so much; so I only promise to have done henceforth with Colonel Neville Atherton of the Madras Cavalry before I quite lose my heart to him; however, I warn you that I may possibly at no very distant date indemnify myself by seeking an interview with the ghosts of the east wing."

"Be it so," returned the eldest girl to whom all risks now seemed trifling when placed in the balance with the anxiety inspired by Colonel Atherton's attentions. Plainly she could tell from the artless acknowledgements a few questions drew from Lillian that this heinous man of the world, fresh from the insane listlessness and apathy of the daughters of India, had been charmed not only by the girl's rare patrician beauty, but by the untrammelled innocent frankness of a happy young nature untried to the spell of a clear bright intellect such as she possessed.

"Thank God, my truthful, upright sister, that I can put perfect trust in your word. You have never deceived me yet, but hush, here comes Mrs. Stukely."

CHAPTER II.
MRS. STUKELY.

Slowly and widely the door was thrown open and a tall woman of rigid unbending presence with dark colourless skin, and cold light gray eyes gleaming suspiciously from beneath thick jetty eyebrows entered the room. She was dressed in dark tints of gray and purple, but the material was rich and soft, whilst the cap that covered the smoothly braided, still abundant hair though unadorned with flower or ribbon, was trimmed with rich black lace.

"Well, young ladies, you seem to be forgetting in your interesting conversation that there is such a thing as dinner to be prepared to-day. Lillian, go at once to the garden and gather some lettuce and pens. Take care that you do not pick unripe worthless ones as you did yesterday."

Suddenly the girl commenced folding up her work, taking it must be acknowledged an unnecessary amount of time to the task. Mrs. Stukely stood watching her with an evil light in her sinister gray eyes, then added:

"Hurry, girl, or the dinner will be late, and your father's anger—no light matter thoroughly aroused. Has it no terrors for you?"

"Scarcely. I am so much accustomed to abuse and harshness that I begin to take them as matters of course."

"Lillian, hush, I implore you!" whispered Margaret.

"Ah, poor sister, such is always your cry, but what has your angelic patience won for you? Nothing, except that light and colour have been stolen from your face—hope and joy crushed out of your heart."

At this juncture Mrs. Stukely's eye caught sight of the lace frilling on which Lillian had been for some time working, and darting forward, she snatched it up, exclaiming:

"So it is on such silly frippery as this you spend time that should be devoted to useful household duties, you vain idler!"

"Please put down that lace Mrs. Stukely," rejoined the girl calmly, "unless indeed you covet and intend to appropriate it, as articles of more value belonging to my dear mother were appropriated years ago."

"Be silent for my sake, darling Lillian!"

whispered the trembling Margaret in the speaker's ear. "Such scenes will kill me."

During her evident terror Lillian after one parting glance of uncompromising defiance at her antagonist swept from the room with the port of an empress.

"What has come over that girl?" at length ejaculated the irate housekeeper. "Pervorse and insolent she has always been from her cradle upwards, but at least there was measure in her arrogance, now there is none. There must be an evil spell put to this."

"Mrs. Stukely, may I remember that she is very young. Her character too, though generous and affectionate, is quick and impulsive—allowance will be made for her. The evil spirit that is in her must be curbed, aye, and cast out, even if her heart be broken in the struggle."

"For the sake of that dead mother, Mrs. Stukely, whom you lived with so long—nursed in her dying hours, you must bear with the trivial impertinences of the child."

A shiver of strong emotion ran through the housekeeper's frame, and with a malicious compression of her lips, and a strange husky intonation in her voice she rejoined:

"Aye, that is it! Like mother—like child. If ever pride and obstinacy dwell under a calm quiet exterior it did in Lillian's mother, just as it dwells in Lillian now."

"Shame, Mrs. Stukely!" retorted the usually all-enduring Margaret. "How can you malign my dear mother thus? I have spoken with the clergyman who so frequently visited her during her last illness, and who knew her intimately for long years previous, and he praised her as I have heard few women praised."

"Simple girl, he could not well do otherwise when speaking of her to her own child. Ask your father his opinion on the subject and he might enlighten you a little."

Margaret's lips quivered. "Ah! if her life," she murmured, "were anything like mine and Lillian's, what a relief death must have been to her—how she must have welcomed his approach."

"Enough of this idle gossip!" exclaimed Mrs. Stukely with strange abruptness. "See at once to making your father some of the wine jelly he likes so well, and remember, put in the flavoring essence carefully—counting the drops."

CHAPTER III.
THE EAST VAULT.

Lillian Tremaine faithfully observed the promise given to her sister of avoiding all further interviews with Colonel Atherton, and more than once the latter had wandered with dog and gun through the woods in the unavailing hope of meeting the fair young being who had, without apparent effort on her part, thrown a spell around him such as his reserved and somewhat cold nature had rarely yet acknowledged. The incongruity of Lillian's dress and surroundings with her name and actual social rank, which might have chilled or repelled him the more, adding to admiration for her beauty a feeling of sympathy and compassion, as well as a sentiment of strong indignation against the father who set such poor store on so rare a child.

Lillian resolutely endeavoured to forget him, substituting for the frequent remembrances of their two meetings, that recurred so often to her, the thought of her meditated exploration of the uninhabited portion of Tremaine Court.

Her opportunity at length came on one bleak rainy evening that Mrs. Stukely had gone to Brighton to spend the night with her sick daughter. After tenderly bidding her sister Margaret—who was suffering from a severe attack of pain in her hip—to bed, and giving the anodyne potion prescribed for such occasions, she carried up her father's light supper at eight o'clock. He was wrapped in deep sleep, a heap of papers and periodicals beside his bed, and though the full light of the lamp streamed on his face, it had no power to awake him from the heavy slumber of intoxication. Roger Tremaine had been a very handsome man in his youth, but his regular features had long years ago been robbed of their comeliness by indulgence in his favourite vice. The years, unaltered, through all changes, the expression of relentless sternness that had distinguished even them in early boyhood.

Lightly Lillian crossed the room, set down her tray, and then tried the tiny drawer, but it was locked. Determined not to be baffled, she looked around, and a small key attached to her father's watch chain, which was suspended on a hook near his bed, met her keen gaze. She tried the key, which fitted, opened the drawer, and then replaced the watch guard in its former position.

Ah! how after, lantern in hand, and shawl thrown over her head, she had let herself into the east wing, and was cautiously threading her way through long, narrow passages—vast recessing rooms, where every footstep set in motion clouds of the thick dust that covered walls, flooring and furniture alike. Decay and desolation were everywhere visible, and as a mass of plastering from the ceiling, disturbed probably by her footsteps or the opening of the door, rattled down around her, she hesitated for a moment, fearing that the worm-eaten flooring might give way beneath her feet and precipitate her into some unknown gulf below. Yes, the rumors of the east wing, the reason alleged by Mr. Tremaine for closing it up, was certainly a just one.

Of furniture there was not much, everything of worth or value having probably been removed years before. Old family portraits, grimy and blackened with dirt and age, hung on the walls, and stared blankly down on the intruder. Few of the doors on the first floor were locked, but on descending a staircase she found herself confronted by one that resisted all her efforts to open it. Putting her lantern on the floor, she tried her keys, and the fourth or fifth one fitted, but it required her utmost strength to overcome the stiffness of the lock. She at length succeeded, and panting with exhaustion, threw wide back the door; but just as she was about entering, it was clapped violently to as if by some unknown hand on the other side. For the first time Lillian faltered in her project, asking herself if this was not an omen sent to deter her from it; and the thought of return momentarily presented itself; but soon conquering her terror, she bravely pushed it open again and resolutely entered. A broken window, the strong draft from which had precipitated closed the door, explained the circumstance which had alarmed her, and reassured the lock on.

Suddenly a strange, unaccountable noise smote on her ear. She paused and breathlessly listened. It was not the scurrying of rats and mice in the wainscot, the moaning of the night winds through the broken casements, but a rustling, creeping sort of noise, now faint almost to extinction, then loud as if close beside her. The girl turned sick with fear. Was it human or supernatural? Ah! there it was close beside, just in a niche of the wall, buried in complete shadow. With the desperation of utter fear she sprang forward, and projected the light of her lantern full into the recess. The enigma was solved. Some strips of papering, detached in part from the wall, and trailing down on the floor, had produced, as they were swayed about

by the wind, the noise that had so greatly alarmed her.

With a light heart she now went on, resolved to yield no more to fear, but to seek a natural cause for every unaccountable phenomenon that might present itself. No new source of alarm, however, offered; and she threaded corridors ante-rooms, and descended staircases till she arrived at the cellars. Damp, noisome and inexpressibly gloomy they were, and sluggish, crawling vermin beset her path on all sides.

But soon what she deemed to be her goal came in sight: a low-browed door, defended with massive bars and studded with nails, which she felt must open into the last vault, as it was called. The bolts were discouragingly immovable, but some had fallen taken from the handle in her hand after a time conquered the impediment, and she succeeded in slowly forcing them back. She then applied the brass key, labelled as that of the last vault, to the lock, and opened the ponderous door with comparative ease. The morbid exclamations at first almost overpowered her, but fortunately the tide of life and health ran strong in her veins, and she soon overcame the sensation sufficiently to examine the place into which she had entered.

It was a low, square, stone apartment, with an opening aperture for admitting light, or air. Curiously rising into lantern under a calm light around, and the first object her glance fell upon was the long, brass-bound chest, the principal object of her visit. A heap of mouldering, musty papers, letters and accounts they seemed, lay in a corner; and these, with a rusty spade, probably the one of which David had spoken, were the only objects the vault contained. Placing her lantern so that its light might fall freely on her work, she inserted the key. It fitted well, but this lock was also hopelessly stiff. Would she ever succeed in turning it? Straining every nerve and muscle till perspiration beaded her forehead and her whole frame quivered with the intensity of her efforts, she returned again and again to the task. What! fall after all she had dared and braved? Surely such a thing was not to be thought of.

Pausing to recover breath, she examined the exterior of the mysterious object before her. What did it contain? Money, well, she would touch none of it, but would at least have the satisfaction of knowing that their alleged poverty was a fiction. It might be silver—old plate—of which very few specimens were to be met with on the sideboards of Tremaine Court, or perhaps it was jewels, papers or personal effects belonging to her mother. What if it should contain nothing but old receipts, accounts or leases of the time when her father owned the rich manor of Hillington, brought him by his wife, and gambled away later at the *rouge et noir* tables of Baden-Baden? Well, whatever were the contents she was determined on seeing them. Again she addressed herself to the task, and the lock sulkily and reluctantly yielded. Yes, it was opened at last, and with a low exclamation of satisfaction she lifted the lid. Then taking up the lantern she looked within, and this is what Lillian Tremaine saw:

As a woman she might sleep in fragments of what had evidently been a woman's night dress edged with rich laces. The teeth were singularly perfect and white as ivory, whilst long tresses of fair silky hair yet adhered to the dry skull.

What a sight for the pallid faced girl who stood there staring down with eyes full of stony horror at that awful spectacle.

Who or what had been the being whose mortal relics lay before her? What accident or crime had brought her here? Had her father anything to do with it?

As if fascinated by the terrible sight, or seeking some clue that might help to elucidate the mystery, she looked still more closely down into the chest. Suddenly a look of agonized intelligence flashed over her face—an expression of now and deeper horror looked from her eyes, and with a cry sharp, terrible as if a death blow had been suddenly dealt her, she fell unconscious to the earth, the lantern slipping from her hand and extinguishing the light in its fall, thus leaving her in darkness at that dead hour of night, in that dreary vault.

(To be continued.)

LIFE'S BETTER MOMENTS.

Life has its moments
Of beauty and bloom;
But they hang like sweet roses
On the edge of the tomb.
Blessings they bring us,
As long as we live;
They meet us when happy,
And leave us in grief.

Lines of the morning,
Tingeing the sky,
Come on the suburbs,
And off with them fly.
Shadows of evening
Hang soft on the shore:
Darkness wraps them—
We see them no more.

So life's better moments
In brilliance appear,
Dawning in beauty,
Our journey to cheer,
From the shadows of evening
Like shadows of omen:
Would that we, like them,
Might melt into heaven!

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TO THE BITTER END.

By Miss M. E. Braddon.

AUTHOR OF 'LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXVI.—(Continued.)

"O, Sir Francis is come home, is he?" said Richard listlessly, looking round the familiar room, with its heavily-embroidered ceiling, and lattice windows looking out on a spacious stone yard, and tumble-down low-roofed outhouses, a pump, an empty dog-kennel, and half a dozen fowls scratching on a shrunken manure-heap. How well he remembered Grace sitting in and out of the old stone-flagged kitchen, pretending to help a little in the household work, sitting down by a sunny window to shell a great basket of peas, and running off before they were half done, and forgetting to come back!

"Sure to goodness, Mr. Redmayne, didn't you know about Sir Francis?" exclaimed Mrs. Bush, who evidently supposed that English newspapers would have made it their business to supply the colonies with the latest news of Clevedon Hall.

"How should I know?"

"Dear me! He's been back going on for a year. Let me see, it was last August as he came, and you not to know anything! He was married this morning to as sweet a young woman as you ever see—Colonel Davonant's

daughter of the Wells. I went over to see the wedding, but it was as much as I could do to get inside the church-door. I don't suppose as Kingsbury church was ever so full since it was built."

Richard Redmayne seemed quite indifferent to Sir Francis Clevedon and his affairs. He left the kitchen, and roamed through the old house, unlocking the doors of the rooms, which had been kept carefully locked in his absence, and going into one after another, only to stand for a little while looking round him, with a slow half-wondering gaze, as if he could hardly believe he had ever lived there. The rooms were all faultlessly clean, but had a dump chilly atmosphere, and a certain dreariness of aspect, as if they had been thus shut and thus disused for the last fifty years. If Richard Redmayne had been a believer in ghosts, he might almost have expected to see one in those dusky chambers, where the half-opened shutters let in the afternoon light grudgingly, leaving obscure corners where a ghost might lurk. But for Rick Redmayne there was only one shadow, and that was with him always.

He had lived and been happy in those rooms once upon a time. His thoughts went back to the days of the early manhood, before his wife's death, to pleasant peaceful days, when his worst care had been a doubtful harvest or sickening among his cattle, and from that quiet time they went to the summer afternoon on which his young wife left him smoking his pipe in the garden, left him with a light word and a loving smile, a little look back at him which he remembered to this hour, and thus left him for ever.

Bitter memories! Can any life into which death has once entered ever again be perfectly happy? Rick Redmayne had outlived the sharpness of his, but not the grief itself. Ten years after that day of horror, with his fair young daughter by his side, loving her with all the force of his strong heart, the recollection of that loss was as fresh in his mind as it had been in the first week of bereavement. And now that Grace was gone, he forgot the tranquil years that had intervened between those two great sorrows. It seemed to him rather as if an angry Deity with one sweep of his hand had left him desolate, robbed him of all hope and comfort.

If he had any virtue, it was that of Job. He did not curse God, and die. He lived; but he lived to cherish a purpose which perhaps was worse than the suicide's desperate sin. He lived on in the hope that fate would give his child's false lover into his hands—a vague blind hope at the best, but strong enough to keep him alive.

Sorely had he changed since that day when, dashed a little by misfortune, but still daring and hopeful, he had asked the indulgence of his creditors before he sailed across the world to redeem his fortunes. In mind and body the man was alike altered: moody where he had been social—doubtful and suspicious where he had been open and trusting as a child—brooding alone over his injuries, angry with the very world for having held such a traitor, rebellious against his God for having permitted such a wrong. In his outward aspect even the change was striking. It was not so much that his dark brown hair was streaked with iron-gray, that there were deeper lines than his actual years would have warranted upon the handsome rugged face. The change of expression was a greater change than this. The face had hardened, the eyes and mouth had grown cruel. At its best now the expression was at once gloomy and reckless; at its best the face of Richard Redmayne was the face of a man to be feared.

He came back to his old home, but not to his old habits, or his old friends. The friends had fallen away from him long ago, chilled and repelled by a change so obvious. Of the details of that sorrow which had changed him, the outer world, his small world, knew very little. People in Kingsbury knew that Grace Redmayne had gone away from home, and had died away from home, but when and where she had died had been told to none. This very silence was in itself mysterious, and to the minds of most people implied disgrace—some sad and shameful story which the girl's kindred kept hidden in their own hearts.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"BUT O, THE HEAVY CHANGE NOW THOU ART GONE!"

Richard Redmayne sat in the old room, and paced the old garden, or lay smoking his pipe on the grass under the cedar day after day, and made no attempt to occupy himself, physically or mentally, but let the days drag themselves out how they would. They were very slow to pass, yet so empty, that when gone they seemed to have travelled swiftly, like the days in a workhouse or a jail, where there is no greater event to mark the passage of time than the monotonously recurring hours for meals. He shrank from being seen in his old haunts, and from being greeted by his old companions. If he had himself committed some unpardonable crime against society, he could hardly have avoided his fellow-men more persistently than he now avoided all the friends of his youth and manhood. He rarely went beyond his own garden and orchard in the daytime; but at night sometimes, when the rover's restlessness was strong upon him, he would set out long after dark, walk fifteen miles, or so, across country, in a reckless mood which took no heed of distance or direction, and come back to Briarwood in the drowsy dawn, worn out and haggard.

"I try to walk the devil down, you see, Mrs. Bush," he said to his housekeeper, on returning from one of these rambles, a speech which filled the honest woman with consternation.

"There's something unkind about Richard Redmayne," she told her husband. "I don't think he's ever been quite right in his head, poor soul, since he lost his daughter."

He was in England, and he had come back to find his child's destroyer, yet he did so little. He went up to Mr. Smoothey's office, made an appointment with Mr. Rendel, the private inquirer, and offered that gentleman any terms he chose to demand if he would only find the man who had called himself "Walgru" on one occasion, and "Walsh" on another.

He pressed the business with such a feverish eagerness, that Mr. Rendel, who did not by any means see his way to making the required discovery, affected a kind of hopefulness for very charity.

"It is rather a difficult matter," he said. "You see, I have positively no clue. The man takes a furnished house at Highbury, gives it up, pays every one in cash, on cheques or anything of that kind, and vanishes. I have no

photograph of the man, no knowledge of his profession, antecedents, anything; and yet you ask me to pick him out from the entire population of this city, supposing him to be an inhabitant of this city, which were by no means sure he is."

Richard Redmayne sat with his back to the dusty window of the dusty office, listening to those arguments with a gloomy countenance. "Never mind the difficulty," he said abruptly; "it's your trade to get over that. If it was easy to find him, I should have found him long ago. Find him, Mr. Rendel, and I'll pay you what you like for your difficulty."

"But, my good Redmayne," said Mr. Smoothey, in his comfortable family-solicitor-like way, "supposing the man found, what then? You have no redress. The law which makes abduction a crime would not tell here, since your daughter was nineteen years of age. Nor can you prove that any wrong was done her, or that any wrong was intended. To what end, then, would you trace the offender?"

"Never mind what end. Find him for me, that's all I ask you to do. I may have my own manner of reckoning with him. I want to see him face to face. I want to be able to say, 'You killed my daughter.'"

"Upon my honour, Mr. Redmayne, I think you look at this business from a very false and fatal point of view. Granted that a great wrong was done in tempting your poor child to leave her home; but remember that it is a kind of wrong committed almost every day, and a kind of temptation to which every good-looking young woman of the middle class is more or less subject. The fatal result was not a part of the wrong, not contemplated by the wrong-doer. Had your daughter lived, who knows that this gentleman might not have married her? Even if it were not his immediate intention to do so, he might have done so ultimately, prompted by conscience and affection."

"Don't try to humbug me by that see-saw kind of argument—if he didn't and if he did," cried Rick Redmayne roughly. "I only know that he stole my daughter away from her home, and that she died of that shame he brought upon her, and that I hold him her murderer."

"There was no use in talking to such a man. The words of wisdom were wasted on this passionate undisciplined soul. Mr. Smoothey shut his spectacle-case with rather an impatient snap.

"You must do as you please, Mr. Redmayne," he said. "I have no doubt Rendel will do his best with your business, and of course my legal advice you may want from me as to your service; but I really cannot see your motive."

"That man's in a bad way," said the astute Rendel, when the farmer had left the office. "The sort of man who would scarcely surprise me if he did something desperate. I shan't help him to find the seducer. In the first place, I consider the thing beyond the limits of possibility; and in the second place, even if I could find the man, it would go against my conscience to have my hand in bringing those two together. Yet you know, Smoothey, that my conscience is rather elastic."

"Toughish, certainly," answered the lawyer; "and warranted to stretch. However, I quite agree with you about this poor fellow Redmayne. The man has brooded on this subject until it has become a monomania."

Richard Redmayne went back to Briarwood soon after this interview, believing that he had done his utmost, but not till he had been to look at the cottage where his daughter died, and the grave in which she lay. The pretty little gothic bandbox on Highbury Hill was let. He could only prowl up and down by the railings for a little, screened by the laurel hedge, listening to the fresh voices of children in the tiny garden. There were guelder-roses in bloom, and a bed of standard roses in the centre of the miniature lawn, bird-cages in the open window, the whole aspect of the place bright and joyous. He looked up at the window of that room where they had laid her in the last solemn slumber, looked at it, and thought of the day when she had lain there, a dull November day, with the rain beating against the window-panes, perhaps, and all nature gloomy. It wounded him to see the house under this cloudless June sky, to hear happy voices from the room where she had died broken-hearted.

He walked all the way to Hetheridge—seven miles along the dusty north road; then away westward, by a quiet cross-road, to the quietest village within twenty miles of London. He passed the village green, and the pond where the ducks were floating lazily in the sunshine, and went on beneath the shelter of chestnut and lime to the churchyard where Grace was buried. This sixth of June was her birthday, and he had chosen this day of all others for his pilgrimage to her grave.

"I might have brought some flowers or something," he said to himself as he opened the low wooden gate. "What a hard-hearted wretch I must be not to have thought of it! Did I ever go to see her empty-handed when she was at school?"

The churchyard was not particularly pretty one, only very solemn and tranquil, with a great yew-tree making a wide circle of shadow above the quiet green hillocks. There were no splendid monuments of modern date, but here and there a ponderous tomb with a rusty railing, a mouldering stone sarcophagus, with sinuous ivy creeping in and out among the cracks in the stone, and a dank moss thick upon the time-worn inscriptions. The charm of the scene was its utter tranquillity. A village churchyard on a hill, with a wide stretch of landscape below it, and only the faintest indication of a city in the far distance.

Richard Redmayne found his way to the gravestone. Was not every detail of the quiet scene burnt in upon his brain? The churchyard was empty of all human kind, yet on the granite slab there lay a wreath of waxen-petalled exotics, all pure white, and as fresh as if it had been that minute laid there.

Rick Redmayne went back to the gate, striding over the low graves recklessly. Who was there to bring votive wreaths to her grave—who, in all her little world—except the man who had destroyed her?

"He has been here," the farmer said to himself; "is here still, perhaps, loitering somewhere. O God, if I could only meet him, in this place, by her grave! It seems the fittest spot for us two to come face to face; and if we do meet here, I think I shall strangle him."

The muscular hand closed with a tighter grip upon the oak sapling which Mr. Redmayne carried as a walking-stick.

He planted himself by the churchyard-gate and waited, listening for a footstep on the gravel-path.