

THE ORANGE LILY.

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THE GAOB CHAPLAIN.

THE BURIED ALIVE.

There are times when, even with the most anxious and sorrow-stricken, the heart ceases to glow with glad existence, and the bowed spirit to throw off its crushing weight of care. Trials appear light. Disappointments are forgotten. Inquietude slumbers. The cheerfulness of nature communicates itself to our spirits; and all without and all within speak of renewed enjoyment and refreshed existence. To many this feeling is peculiarly present on a sunny morning in early spring. The bright green of the trees; the wild singing of the birds; the busy hum of animated being which rises from glade and coppice, and cottage-garden, and hedge-row; the perfume of the flowers, and the blossom of the tree; each and all tell the tale of living gladness. With the balmy breath of morning the deity is, as it were, forced upon our recollection. Nature is the vast and glorious sanctuary; and we adore him in the temple which he himself has raised. Thus mingling in the deserted pleasure of a religious community which had long since passed away—a pleasure which yet contained traces of taste of its former owners.—Two old trees scattered in clumps, or gathered together in broad sweeping woods, and with their clear and well-defined shadows nobly contrasting the vivid green around, it was with reluctant step and slow that I turned from the soothing tranquillity of nature to my arduous task of marking the strife of human passions, the wreck of better feelings, and the ravages of crime: A distant clock admonished me. It was my hour for visiting the gaol.

"Mr. Cleaver," cried the surgeon as I passed the portal, "a word with you, if you please! I have just returned from the sick ward, and have seen that old woman, — Waldron, but, really she requires your assistance more than mine."

"How so?"

"She is ill, but will take no remedies. In fact, I believe she wishes to be so,—a free-bias in an old woman. The genus generally holds out to the last. Such, at least, was the feeling of my two venerable maiden aunts, whose tenacity of existence had well-nigh starved their dutiful nephew. At length they retired, aged respectively ninety-two and ninety-seven; the survivor departed to her last breath, the fatal mistake of her dear sister Bessy; who called in the doctors, and in consequence was permanently hurried off the stage of life."

"But what has this to do with Waldron?"

"Something in the way of illustration. They both parted with existence unwillingly; she, after seeing you, will do so cheerfully. My questions she cut very short by asking repeatedly the hour, and whether you had come."

"Why did you not mention this sooner?"

"I was thankful to escape from the merciful gossip."

"I found the old woman much altered; she was gradually sinking; her voice had become hoarse, and her features had assumed that sharpness and rigidity of outline which I knew full well indicated approaching death. She received me with a smile,

"Well, sir, shall I be believed at last? I told you that I should hold up my head before no earthly judge. What say you to me now?"

"That you lose no time in preparing for the award of an eternal one."

"Good!" she murmured, after a pause; "and it is because you have thus and so warned me that I now ask from you a favour,—easily granted, and not likely, I hope, to be denied."

"Let me hear its nature."

"Here I shall die. I know well what this faintness, fluttering pulse, and clanging brow mean. Be it so—I am content! But, dying within prison walls, an inquest must, and will, be held upon me: that the law of the land requires. Circumstanced as I am, little decency after death, probably, awaits me; and very few hours will, I dare say, elapse between the drawing of my last breath and a very hurried burial. Now, sir, will you—will you grant my dying, my final request? Will you see that I have fair play?"

"You wish,—if I rightly catch your meaning,—you wish that your last moments may be undisturbed, and that you may be permitted to pass quietly away. Be at ease on that point; no unkindness shall be shown you; this is no hour for it."

"No," she returned quickly, "that is not my meaning. My dread extends beyond beyond that. I fear—and into her fierce eye a tear stole as she spoke,—I fear burial before death! Oh! prevent it, prevent it!"

"Don't distress yourself by apprehensions so trifling and so needless. Nothing of that sort ever takes place in this county."

"I know to the contrary," said she sternly, "I know to the contrary; and for years I have dreaded that what I consented to do in the case of another would one day be visited on myself. That day has come! Oh! rebuff me, and save me!"

"Explain to me what you mean; tell me what I can do, and it shall be done. But don't expend the little strength you possess, —and, above all, don't waste the last moments of existence in exclamations and expressions which—"

"She interrupted me eagerly."

"And you would exclaim, if your conscience were as heavily burdened as mine! Years ago—yes! I find I must speak—call it Nurse Waldron's confession, testimony, explanation, what you will—years ago, a young officer, of the name of Hesham, came to E—th. He was hurried there, labouring under confirmed consumption; feeble, emaciated, and worn down by hectic fever. But the extension of his life was important to his family; and, as a last expedient, a trial of the mild air of Devon was recommended to him by those who must have well known that, in his case, no air, —ever balmy, would avail. He came into Devon—as hundreds before him with ulcerated lungs have done—but to die! His family accompanied him. By his sick couch watched most attentively his father, mother, and three sisters, not one of whom would admit the extent of his danger, or believe that recovery was hopeless."

"Fear, they say, is blind; so is love. Strong affection, sir, acts furiously on different parties. Some it renders sensitive

and keen sighted in the extreme, others it wholly blinds;—the latter was the case here. The Heshams, one and all, were persuaded that Harry had no radical disease; and that the soft breezes of the Devon coast would soon bring him round. They saw daily amendment;—while what others saw as his usage was death. But, independent of natural affection, his family had ample cause for dreading an evil issue to Harry. He was their prop, their stay; to him they owed every luxury they enjoyed; and his death, were that to occur speedily, would leave them beggars. They might well reject with frenzy the most cautious hint of its approach. Who would not, so situated! Their case was this.—A self-willed grandfather had bequeathed to Harry Hesham the whole of his large property, without the slightest provision for either his mother or sister. While a minor, the property was under the control of trustees, for the young heir's benefit, to whom a very liberal allowance was made. If he lived ever one and twenty he could dispose of the property as he pleased; but if he died under that age, the whole passed to his cousin, who was his guardian and managing trustee. It was a cruel will, and vast was the amount of misery which it caused. The young man grew weaker; his sleepless nights, incessant cough, profuse perspiration, and hectic fever rapidly reduced him. A subsidence became necessary; I was sent for. His debility was alarming, and I urged the attendance of a physician. Dr. D—n— of Exeter was called in. In kind, gentle, and cautious terms the doctor apprised the family of his patient's danger. The father, Major Hesham, became outrageous. Poor old gentleman! he had a paralysis, and was, as most paralytic people are, peevish, testy, and obstinate to the extreme. He called Dr. D—n— to his face an "ignoramus" and an "alarmist," told him to "return to Exeter and study his profession," and vowed he "would never trouble him for an opinion again." Another practitioner was sent for, and he, after exhausting the invalid with a succession of questions, declared the "symptoms distressing," and the "case attended with difficulty," but "by no means with danger!" Nobody told him to "return and study his profession;" but there was one who was very sure such a recommendation was necessary. Days rolled on, and, however blind to his danger his family might be, the sufferer himself gradually awoke to it. One morning after a very restless night, during which he had been greatly harassed by cough, hectic fever, and a burning feeling in the palms of his hands,—a common accompaniment of consumption,—he called me to his side and said—

"Nurse, I am about to ask you a question, and I expect from you a resolute and explicit answer. Your experience in cases like mine must have been great: tell me, do you think I shall recover?"

"I hesitated."

"Be candid: you will neither shock nor distress me by your reply; only let it conform to your real opinion. Say, shall I recover?"

"I told him I thought he would not. He asked for a few moments, and then, pointing to his forehead, he said—"