

THE CRAFTSMAN, HAMILTON, 15th AUGUST, 1869.

SAVED FROM DEATH.

WRITTEN FOR THE CRAFTSMAN BY D. D.

Original.

CHAPTER I.—"THE OLD OLD STORY."

In a handsome house in the suburbs of London, lives Mr. William Barton, a gentleman of large means, as everything about his well-furnished house indicates. More than that, he has an only daughter, only child, in fact, young, pretty and unmarried, so you may judge he was a gentleman, whose acquaintance was by no means to be disregarded, but rather to be sought after than otherwise. However, as yet, he was living quite retired. He had formerly been in business in London, but having accumulated a goodly store of this world's goods, he had retired to a country house in Devonshire, some ten years before, where, shortly after their removal, his wife died. He had never returned to London since then, but had devoted himself to the care of Nellie, his daughter, then only eight years old. Now she is eighteen, and her father's darling; so, when two months ago, she expressed a wish to see something of the great city, her father had yielded to her wish, thinking it most natural, as indeed he did almost every wish his daughter expressed. He engaged the splendid residence we have spoken of, furnished it elegantly, and installed her as its mistress, since which time they have greatly enjoyed themselves, seeing the sights in a quiet way.

Upon the evening on which our story opens, Nellie and her father were seated in a comfortable little room, handsomely furnished, of course, but conveying that idea of comfort, which, to our mind, is inseparable from an open fire. It was a cold evening, and Mr. Barton had drawn an easy chair to a corner of the fire-place, while Nellie was seated in a low seat beside him. Let me try to describe this heroine of mine. Rather *petite*, but very graceful-looking, with the tiniest hands and feet, hair of that golden hue which painters love, and eyes, "deeply, darkly, beautifully blue;" the straightest little nose, and the prettiest little rosebud of a mouth, that one could hardly refrain from kissing her on the spot. Just now, she is evidently engaged in that most feminine occupation,—teasing.

"Papa," she says, "I do want you to take me somewhere this evening, I am tired staying in the house, and have been expecting all day to go out in the evening. Do, Papa dear, please," and the eyes are raised beseechingly.

"But my dear," her father answers, "you know I told you it was quite impossible for me to be with you to-night. I have an engagement that cannot be postponed, and must keep it."

"But what is the engagement, papa, and why can't you put it off?"

"Well, my dear, for the very logical reason that I can't."

"Papa, you look as mysterious as any bluebeard. Where can you be going? Oh, papa! papa! I believe I have found you out you look as you used to, down in Devon some nights; you are going to *Lodge*! there, don't try to deny it, you look guilty, and may as well confess it at once."

Mr. Barton laughed heartily as he saw his secret discovered.

"Papa, you needn't, if you wanted to go out so badly, and some one wanted to go to *Lodge*, and you had to stay at home alone, you wouldn't feel so merry. Its too bad, I hate Masons and Lodges and——"

"What, what, how is this, Miss Nellie,—rank heresy! I am perfectly astounded," interrupted a gay voice at the door.

With a simultaneous cry of "Frank!" both father and daughter sprang forward to welcome a fine looking young man, who responded to their hearty greetings with expressions of delight, at being with them again. The first welcome over, and the suspiciously vivid blush which had testified to Nellie's emotion retreated, the party sat down in something like composure and a rapid stream of questions and replies followed, showing that the friendship between them was of long standing. Frank Middleton was, as we have said, fine-looking, tall, and with a breadth of chest denoting a strong constitution. His was a face to be trusted instinctively, his brown eyes had a penetrative, yet good-humored expression, and his mouth, that great index of character, betokened firmness and decision, altogether such a man as would be supposed to be generally successful in life, and deservedly popular as well.

At an early age, he had been left an orphan, under the guardianship of Mr. Barton, between whom and the deceased Mr. Middleton, there had existed a warm friendship. He had been well provided for, and at the age of twenty one, had invested, with his guardian's approval, most of his property in a large wholesale house, of which he was junior-partner.

He had been travelling on business for the firm for three years, and was now, as he informed his friends, home for a month, preparatory to a journey to New York, which would end his travelling for some time at least, and probably altogether. After this explanation, we must return to Nellie, who is defending her denunciation of Masonry, for which Frank has called her to account.

"Well, you see, Frank," she says, "papa will always go to lodge when I want him particularly."

"And that reminds me," interrupted her father, "that I must be off. You'll excuse me Frank, I know, and Nellie can tell you all about it when I'm gone," and without giving Nellie a chance to reply, away he hurried.

"Well," said she, "if papa is going, there is no use my saying any more about it this time."

"No indeed," said Frank, "especially as I can't allow it, Miss Nellie. Don't you know that I am a mason? Then just fancy my feelings, when, on stepping up quietly, expecting to see you sitting thinking of me with a melancholy look, I find you raging away at my best principles in a most outrageous manner."

"Why Frank, I really beg your pardon, but you see, I did not know that you belonged to the order, or that they had any such fine principles," said the girl, laughing saucily.

But Frank did not seem to hear her reply. He had fallen into a fit of abstraction, and was intently gazing into the fire, and evidently thinking upon some thrilling subject, for Nellie, who was watching