SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

I hear the uproar of conflicting seers,
The waste, wild warfare, full of wrath and pain,
As one from shelter looks forth on the plain,
Swept by a desert wind that whirls and veers
This way and that, before the rain appears;
Hiding all Heaven till the dizzy brain
Looks for repose, and looks not all in vain;
For soon that tumult melts in rushing tears.

And then the lily's lips are washed from stain,
The golden flowers and the grass-green spears
Are bright about the rocks; and, as it clears,
Each shaken leaf looks to the stars again.
While from the west across the silvered trees
The night wind whispers: "He shall give thee peace."

—*M. M. Richardson in Ave Maria.*

"A SORROW'S CROWN OF SORROWS."

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

Bruce himself, meanwhile, from force of habit, was already considering Lola in the light of a possible heroine. With her picturesque beauty and frank impulsiveness, with the unconventional circumstances of his first meeting with her, and the wonderful background of worn grey walls and dark oak furniture, she seemed to him a fascinating centre-figure round whom to weave one of those weird and thrilling romances with which his name was beginning to be associated.

When tea was over, Lola sat with her back to the light, that played on her tangled fair hair until it seemed an aureola round the face in shadow, and told them pretty stories in a soft, full voice, exceedingly pleasant to listen to, with her eyes fixed always on Bruce Laidlaw. He had said he liked legends, and that they were useful to him; whereat Lola, fired with the notion of being in any way serviceable to a genius such as she had already decided Bruce Laidlaw to be, began at once to tell all she knew about Donnithorpe Castle and neighbourhood, while Aubrey, who had never written anything, and did not interest her in the least, listened in delight, not to what she was saying, but to the sound of her voice, every note of which seemed to strike upon his heart and find an echo there.

Sometimes, indeed, her eyes would be drawn from Bruce's face by the intensity of Aubrey's gaze, and would rest for a moment, as if in wonder at the light shining through the dusk from his eyes to hers; but speedily she turned her attention again to the young author, with a clearly-marked preference that showed her country breeding.

All this Madame de Vaux noted; and perhaps for that reason she let herself be persuaded to linger for nearly an hour in the Castle, sitting with her hand on her son's arm as he hung over her chair and begged her to remain a little longer, as he was "so passionately fond of legends."

Just as, at last, the old lady rose to go, the real Mrs. Maloney appeared at the doorway, overwhelmed by the presence of so much "quality," and dragging along by each hand two bonny and rosy-cheeked boys.

She curtsied round Madame de Vaux as the latter was getting into her little carriage, and poured into the kind old lady's ears accounts of how "Pat—God bless him!—went off like a man;" while Aubrey, released for a moment from his mother's closely-observant eyes, stole to the side of Lola as she stood just within the shadow of the Castle doorway watching Bruce Laidlaw as he assisted Madame de Vaux to her seat.

Turning her head with a start, Lola raised her eyes, and met those of Aubrey, gleaming curiously as they shone down into hers in the dusk of the evening; the strangest eyes she had ever seen, she thought them; and that light in them, half fierce, half longing, fascinated her own gaze in return until, as she looked, the warm blood flushed all over her face and neck, and she was turning quickly away when he spoke.

"You—you come and see my mother early every day, do you not?" he asked in soft, courteous tones. "I want to thank you for making her life so much brighter, as your visits could not fail to do. I suppose she never told me of them in her letters lest I should be jealous that her son's place was taken by such a sweet daughter."

"Didn't she tell you about me?" asked Lola, forgetting the slight embarrassment his look caused sad in surprise at his words. "I have been her constantly for the last three years, ever since she came to live at Montague Lodge. Why, I live only three miles from her, and she has talked to me about you, and read me bits of your letters often and often."

"Then you don't feel as if I were a stranger?" he said in the same gentle tones, but with the same eager intensity in his eyes and a strange throbbing at his heart when, as he bent closer to her, the wind through the open doorway blew her loosened hair back from her ears against her shoulder.

"Oh no," she answered, trying to speak easily, and to shake off, for his mother's sake, the slight feeling of dislike and even of alarm that something in the eyes and tone inspired in her.

Madame de Vaux's voice, with a sharp, anxious ring in it, interrupted them.

"Aubrey, Aubrey! Where are you? We shall be late for dinner."

He came out of the shadow of the Castle entrance, and took his place by his mother's side. He was an affectionate son, and appreciated more than most sons do the deep love that was lavished upon him; yet a feeling of sudden resentment filled his heart as Madame de Vaux, turning to Bruce Laidlaw in her gracious, old-fashioned manner, asked him to see Miss Marsden to the door of her father's house.

"I don't like Lola to be about alone at dusk," she said, "so I entrust her to your care."

She placed the reins in her son's hands. He started violently as her fingers touched his. His eyes were fixed with a passionate intensity on the glowing picture of youth and beauty, of life and colour, that Lola Marsden presented as she stood waving her hand to them from the moss-grown courtyard of the Castle.

The pony had turned homewards of its own accord. With a deep sigh Aubrey recalled himself to his duty, and did his best to entertain his mother as they drove away through the lengthening shadows under the trees. His thoughts were still with Lola, and he did not see the terrible anxiety that shone in Madame de Vaux's eyes as she noted his preoccupied manner.

A chill had fallen on the spirits of three at least out of the four people who had lingered so pleasantly over afternoon tea in the old tower. Lola watched the pony-carriage drive away with a troubled look in her blue eyes.

"Madame de Vaux isn't nearly as nice to me as usual," she said, turning to Bruce with something very like tears clouding her vision, "and I am so fond of her! I hope her son's coming isn't going to spoil everything."

"Sooner or later something or someone must always come to spoil everything," he returned. "What an interesting pair they seem, and so devoted to each other."

"Ye-es," she said thoughtfully; "I don't think I like him much, though. There is something so strange in his manner; and his eyes have such a curious look in them, almost as if——"

She stopped suddenly, blushing deeply.

"As if what?"

"Oh, it is hardly fair to give an opinion of a stranger. And Madame de Vaux says my head is full of fancies; so perhaps this is one of them."

CHAPTER III.

Bruce Laidlaw enjoyed the homeward walk in the twilight, through the long wet grass and across the bridge over the river, to where the lights of sleepy, old-fashioned Oldford glimmered in the valley.

Lola Marsden, with her sweet voice, her buoyant spirits, and ready enthusiasm, was a new and most pleasant experience, and soon he forgave her for pestering him about his books, and even unbent so far as to tell her their names and a little about them.

To Lola's unsophisticated eyes, an author seemed a being of a higher order, hailing straight from Parnassus, and spreading an intellectual radiance around him.

"My father would like to talk to you so much," she said. "There are very few clever people in Oldford. In fact, Madame de Vaux is the only person about here I like to talk to myself. But my father likes the country, and has lived here with me ever since my mother's death."

"Are you an only child?"

"No; I have a brother twelve years older than I. But he is in Russia, where he has been tutor in a Russian prince's family for ten years, and I scarcely remember him. He will be coming home this year, I believe, and I am longing to see him. He writes such clever letters home every now and then."

"I know a young fellow named Marsden, who, curiously enough, has lived some time in Russia," Bruce observed. "But this man has been in London for six months at least; so, fortunately for you, he cannot be your brother."

"Why do say you 'fortunately'?"

"This Marsden is a man I dislike extremely. But he is clever, impudent, and unscrupulous, and, therefore, of course, a rising man, having all the qualities that ensure success."

Again his tone forbade further reference to the subject, and during the rest of the walk he spoke scarcely at all. Lola was impressed rather than offended by his abstraction and indifference. Her ideal genius must necessarily be the reverse of a chatterbox; she imagined him plunged in an intellectual world beyond her ken, and would have been considerably surprised and pained to know that pique and vexation concerning a very unideal member of her own sex formed the subject of his musing.

She felt honoured by the fact that he liked to hear her talk, unconscious that her own sweet voice was singing the dirge of another woman's love story; and Bruce, for his part, though he paid no great attention to her words, found the melody of her voice a soothing accompaniment to his meditations.

So, mutually pleased, they came back to Oldford in the evening, and passing through its wide, ill-paved High Street, arrived before the old-fashioned, red-brick house, opening to on the street, where Dr. Marsden had lived for fourteen years.

As Bruce and Lola stood at the door, the blind was drawn back from one of the ground-floor windows, and the figure of a man stood out against the lamp-light behind.

"There's a stranger in the dining-room," said Lola. "I wonder who he is?"

And Bruce, glancing up, made no remark; but as, after taking leave of her, he proceeded to dinner at The King's Arms, he knew that the Marsden he disliked and Lola's brother were one and the same person.

"Mr. Andrew, your brother, has come home, miss," said Bennett, the housekeeper, opening the door to Lola in much excitement. "He is in the dining room," waiting for your papa, who hasn't come home yet."

"Why, Bennett, when did my brother come?" asked the girl.

"Just a few minutes ago, miss. He said who he was; for he's so much altered I should never have known him, though he remembered me. 'How do you do, Bennett?' he says; 'and is my father in?' just as if he he'd been out for a walk. 'No, sir,' I says in the same way, for he took my breath away like. 'Is dinner ready?' he says. 'Not yet, sir,' I says; 'for the Doctor told me he wouldn't be in till eight.' 'Hang it!' says he and walks into the dining-room, where he's been smoking cigarettes by the fire over since, though I know your doesn't like smoking anywhere but papa in the smoking-room. But I thought it wasn't my place to tell Mr. Andrew so."

The next moment Mr. Andrew, standing with his back to the tiled fireplace, heard the door at the opposite end of the long room open, and saw it admit a surprisingly beautiful girl in a blue serge gown, with the brilliant tints of her skin enhanced by exercise in the keen October air.

There was not the slightest likeness between these two. Andrew was sandy, whilst Lola was fair; he was as sallow as she was rosy, as thin as she was plump; and as evidently of the town as she was of the country.

He also was good-looking in a way, being dapper and well-made, with clearly cut features, large brown eyes, and a singularly pleasing smile; and the hands he held out to her, when, after a comprehensive stare, he advanced to greet her, were white, delicately-shaped, and unusually small.

"So this is Lola?" he said.

He was very deliberate in his movements.

First he looked at her and smiled; then he threw away his cigarette, advanced to meet her, took both her hands, looked at her again, and finally kissed her gently on both cheeks.

"I suppose Bennett told you who I am," he said; "so that you are prepared to be fond of me. I hear from her that the fatted calf won't be ready till eight. Sit down by the fire, and tell me the news, and if our respected dad isn't here in time, I shall eat you. Do you object to smoking?"

"No; but papa does, in this room. Come to the smoking-room."

"I will if you come too, though it will cost me a pang to tear myself from the sight of the white tablecloth. I had a lingering hope that, if I waited long enough, dinner would serve itself, in the Arabian Nights style."

"It will serve itself in the Oldford style at eight; and if you had only written to say you were coming——"

"You would have missed this delightful surprise. I'm so glad you have a sense of humour! If I'd known of it, I would have run down here before."

"But you htve only just come from St. Petersburg, haven't you?" she asked, as she led the way across the hall to the Doctor's study, and seated herself in a deep armchair, facing her companion, who, as before, stood with his back to the fire. "When we last heard from you, about eight months ago, you said you didn't think of coming to England until the winter."

"Man is mutable," he remarked evasively. "I changed my plans. And, oh, by-the-bye, who was that who brought you home just now?"

"Mr. Laidlaw is his name," she answered, growing scarlet under the keen glance of enquiry he fixed upon her.

"Bruce Laidlaw the writer! What in the name of wonder is he doing down here? Why, he was in town three years ago."

"He only came down this afternoon."

"And he was immediately permited to walk about with you? Upon my soul, there's a Arcadian simplicity about the Oldford code of manners."

"Madame de Vaux, my greatest friend, asked Mr. Laidlaw to see me home from Donnithorpe Castle, where she and I, and her son and Mr. Laidlaw, who travelled from London together, had tea to-day. And you may be sure, Andrew, that I never do anything without telling my father."

She spoke in proud, hurt tones, and a flush of deep annoyance burnt in her cheeks. But Andrew Marsden only laughed.

"My dear child, don't go into heroics. If you really do tell your father everything, you are a very silly girl. You needn't be afraid of a stern mentor in the person of a brother. I assure you, my principles are most elastic, and I don't care a straw about peoples morals so long as their manners are good. What I complain of in Bruce Laidlaw is that both are equally bad. Here's a lofty ill-mannered, clever, bad-tempted humbug. Most people think he's cracked; I think he's simply rude. However, if you've taken a fancy to him—as I suppose you have, or you wouldn't get excited—I assure you I shan't interfere. I shall be going back to London almost immediately."

"Don't you mean to live at home, then?" she asked in surprise.

"Well," he answered with a beaming smile, "that is scarcely my intention. The prodigal son on a flying visit, with a bag and hat-box, one foot in the house and one in the train, gets welcomed, fed, petted and handsomely tipped. But the prodigal son settling down at home, to be bored to death by bad jokes and worried to death by bad debts, dragged to church against his will, and cribbed cabined, and confined into a respectable member of society, has a very rough time of it. No; I came down here for a forthnight, but since my arrival I have heard something to induce me to change my plans, and I propose going back to-morrow or the next day."

"What have you heard?"

"Oh," he answered with an old sort of smile, "I have heard of two young men being presented to my sister and paying her some attention, so, like a dutiful brother, I am going up to town to enquire all about them. By the way, did Laidlaw say anything about me to you? I saw him look up at the window."

"He did mention your name," she answered, blushing again. "At least, he said he knew a Mr. Marsden, who had been in Russia, and he hoped it wasn't my brother."

This answer seemed greatly to delight Andrew. He threw his head back and laughed with real heartiness.

"No," he said at length, stroking his shady moustache. "I don't expect he does regard me with any particular favour. To tell the truth, I suspect his visit to this benighted village was the direct result of a slight discussion concerning me with—with a mutual friend."

He kept on laughing, and Lola was about to question him as to the cause of his merriment when the entrance of the Doctor, whom they heard crossing the hall at that moment, put a stop to further discussion.

Dr. Marsden was a tall, rather stout, powerfully-built man of between fifty and sixty, blue-eyed, gray-bearded, and of a florid complexion. His face, which wore a singularly cold expression as he greeted his son, at once warmed into sympathetic kindliness when Lola rushed to meet him and threw her arms around him.

"We're half jangling already," she said, with a little backward toss of her head in the direction of Andrew. "You'll find two children much more difficult to manage than one. And your daughter has blossomed into a beauty, sir. Two young men have made much fuss with her today, and I am sure that that is far more wonderful news than any your son can bring from St. Petersburg.

"Two young men," said the Doctor, pinching her cheek. "If you'd said two hundred I shouldn't have been supprised. The wonderful part of it is that you should condescend to mention it."

"They weren't Oldford young men, you may be certain," she said. "But Andrew is starving; not even the account of my adventures can make him forget his dinner. And I'm hungry, too, which makes me very thoughtful for others."

That Dr. Marsden was in no way delighted at his son's unexpected return was evident from the glances he incessantly cast upon him from eyes that looked cold and steely when they did not rest upon Lola. Yes, being a man of a reflective and humorous turn of mind, he was amused by the flippant brilliancy of Andrew's conversation, which, while it occasionally grated on the heart's, could not fail to appeal to the heads of his hearers. But, through all the interest he showed and felt in the yonnger man's graphic description of Russian society, he did not forget to demand an exact account of Lola's adventures, and was evidently anxious to hear all she could tell him about Aubrey de Vaux.

"If he is anything like his mother," he said, "Aubrey ought to be a most delightful fellow. He's been in good hands, too, travelling with Victor Merrimee; it was indeed a loss to medical science when the man retired. I used to often meet him when I was a younger man, and I always fancied that at some time he must have had a tender feeling for our little Madame de Vaux who by the way, must have been a wonderfully pretty woman years ago. Merrimee wrote to her regularly every week all the time he and young De Vaux were on their travels—tremendous letters, too; and a correspondence like that is a strain on a man nearing seventy. I know I shouldn't care to do it, and I'm a full ten years younger than Merrimee."

"Have these De Vaux got any mony?" enquired Andrew.

"Yes. This young lady will be very rich at his mother's death. She married well twice, luckily for her, considering the money she squanders—yes, absolutely squanders," the doctor repeated with rising indignation, "in charity. There's not a day passes but what she receives begging letters, and she encourages half the disreputable pauperism of the county."

Father and son, left together, remained in silence. Then the former enquired:

"How long have you been in London?"

"About seven months."

"And now, you've come down here?"

"Not exactly. My pupil is here in town, under my watchful eye; and I am responsible for his manners, morals, and English, whilst the respected Prince, his papa, is responsible for my salary."

"Considering your own favourite theory of hereditary influences, and the risk you ran, therefore, in adopting me, I really think you have escaped far more cheaply than you might have expected. Had I been your son, no doubt I should have shone as brightly in the lustre of middle-class virtues as you do yourself. But for the son of a convicted felon—no, don't stop me; I'm not a bit ashamed of it—and of the feminine black sheep of the family, I really think I'm a jolly sight more reputable than anyone had a right to expect. What are the few hundreds my college debts and subsequent money dealings have cost you, compared with what you might have had to pay? I do assure you, sir, when I consider my parent's antecedents, I feel impelled to heartily congratulate you—upon myself."

Dr. Marsden looked at Andrew for some moments with a kind of puzzled scrutiny; then he laughed.

"Of course, there is something in what you say," he remarked; "and you have at least inherited the plausibility of my brother, your father. If I thought you would make any sensible use of the money, I should be very ready to increase your allsvance. But, as you know, I am not a rich man, and——"

"And you've got Lola to provide for. How about hereditary there? Nobody Knows Who on the one side, and an ignorant, Irish beggar-woman on the other. She's a very handsome girl; but I tell you candidly I myself should never think of marrying a woman who, but for an accident, might be selling flowers in the streets, or going round with an organ, as her mother did before her."

Dr. Marsden shot across at his adopted son a look of scathing indignation and contempt; but, before he spoke, this expression changed to one of trouble and anxiety. Little as he liked Andrew, he esteemed his intelligence highly, and felt a relief to be able now to unburden his mind on a subject which constantly perplexed him.

"I have watched that girl since she was two years old," he said, "and I am most deeply anxious to see her happily married before I die. I know that I shall not attain any great age; and the idea that the beautiful child should be thrown on the world unprotected at my death, which may occur at any moment, troubles me incessantly. It is impossible to leave her in the charge of a man of your principles"—Andrew smiled and bowed—"although you are my only near relative. Now, in the event of my death being sudden, what would become of her? It is not only her beauty that the danger lies. The girl is as good as gold—as innocent as a child; as healthy as a young savage, and as tender as an angel; but she is headstrong, reckless, impulsive and passionate. She has never yet in her life had a harsh word said to her; and, out of books, cruelty and vice are merely names to her. She believes everything, trusts everyone, and feeling everything keenly, is liable to violent revulsions of sentiment. She is like an instrument filled with all manner of untried harmonies—of passion, of sweetness, and of charm; but capable of jarring discords when wrongly played upon. God grant she may fall into the right hands!"

The Doctor remained silent a few moments, gazing straight down before him on the table, with eyes a little dim.

Andrew, who had been listening—interested, but not in the least touched—to his uncle's words, now enquired whether there was any suitor to Lola's hand yet on the tapis of whom her guardian approved.

"I dare say my sentiment will amuse you," the older man said, looking up from his reverie with a smile; "but I have indeed an ideal husband in my head for Lola, whom I have absolutely never seen. However, I have seen his portrait and some of his letters, and, above all, I have seen his mother; and she is the woman I desire, before all others, as a mother for my child. A woman of beautiful personal character and perfect breeding; who thoroughly understands Lola, and loves her dearly; of good old family, to counterbalance Lola's shortcomings in that respect; of wealth; and whose son, from all I can gather, is an accomplished, amiable, healthy, and nice-minded man."

"I think I have guessed his name," said Andrew.

"I dare say you have. The ideal husband I wish for Lola is the man who arrived at Oldford to-day—Mr. Aubrey de Vaux."

(*To be Continued.*)

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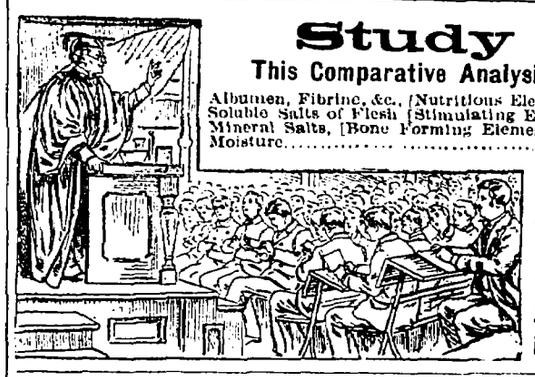

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The child belongs to the father' and is, as it were, the continuation of the father's personality.—*Leo XIII.*

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