

GOLDEN LIL.

Lily we called her—Lil—Lil !  
 Why the name seemed to float in the air —  
 Ay! matey, seems to float still;  
 For one can't seem to think she's not there,  
 Living, and lightsome, and free,  
 With her golden hair tossed in the wind;  
 And yet when I heard it, you see,  
 I most cried my aching eyes blind.  
 Yes I—a big rough hulking he,  
 With a hide 'bout as rough as a bear;  
 But, bless you, it wasn't only me  
 As turned soft when we larnt of the scare.

She was nobody's child, so they say;  
 But she came on our camp like a charm;  
 And it seemed, from the very first day,  
 That the bairn came to keep us from harm.  
 All up at the gulches, and creeks,  
 There was fever, and Injun, and fight;  
 There was flood; they was snowed up for  
 weeks:

And a stampede of buffler one night:  
 But with us, p'raps the roughest lot out,  
 Not a thing came to trouble the camp—  
 No worries to put us about,  
 Nor a glint of war-paint on the ramp.  
 He gold—why it washed out like crumb,  
 Wherever we tried a fresh claim;  
 And for drinking—all sober!—Well, come!  
 All the boys here will tell you the same.

It was all on along of that wean:  
 She could lead the lads here with a thread.  
 Why some on us used to keep clean!  
 And now—I can't b'lieve it—she's dead.  
 It seems but 't'other day she would sing  
 Like a bird—like a lark there on high;  
 And her sweet little trill how 'twould ring  
 From among the dark firs to the sky.  
 Lord! I've seen some rough cuss drop his pick,  
 To rub the hair out of his way,  
 And then a great smile would come thick,  
 As he'd peer where the sweet critter lay.  
 Why didn't Bill Smithers spoil Brown,  
 'Cause he rapped out a swear 'fore the child?  
 Whizzatus! he knocked him slap down;  
 And Bill of our lot the most mild.

She'd the best of the camp that had she:  
 Every boy would have give all he got;  
 And when sharing the gold, you might see  
 There was always set little Lil's lot—  
 And that not so gold as her hair,  
 As it danced in the sun while she played—  
 When she lay there so pretty and fair,  
 "Why the bairn's only sleeping!" we said.  
 We wouldn't believe it—don't yet—  
 They stole her—the devils—one day—  
 If for each golden hair we could set  
 Our heel on an Injun—I'd pray!

I'd tell you—the trail—and the fight—  
 How we got her and brought her—at dusk;  
 But somehow I haven't got right,  
 And my throat feels like full of a husk.  
 But I'll show you—just there: where the pines  
 Seem all sighing as soft as the sea;  
 And the sun like her golden hair shines,  
 As it dances in webs through each tree.  
 We laid her down there—such a nest—  
 Oh, so little!—and lined it with flowers;  
 Then we knelt till the sun in the west  
 Told us how we'd been staying for hours.  
 And then, with a sob, one Dick Gray  
 Dropt first shovel of soil of the lot;  
 But stopped, just to try to say pray,  
 Though the words came so slow—most forgot.

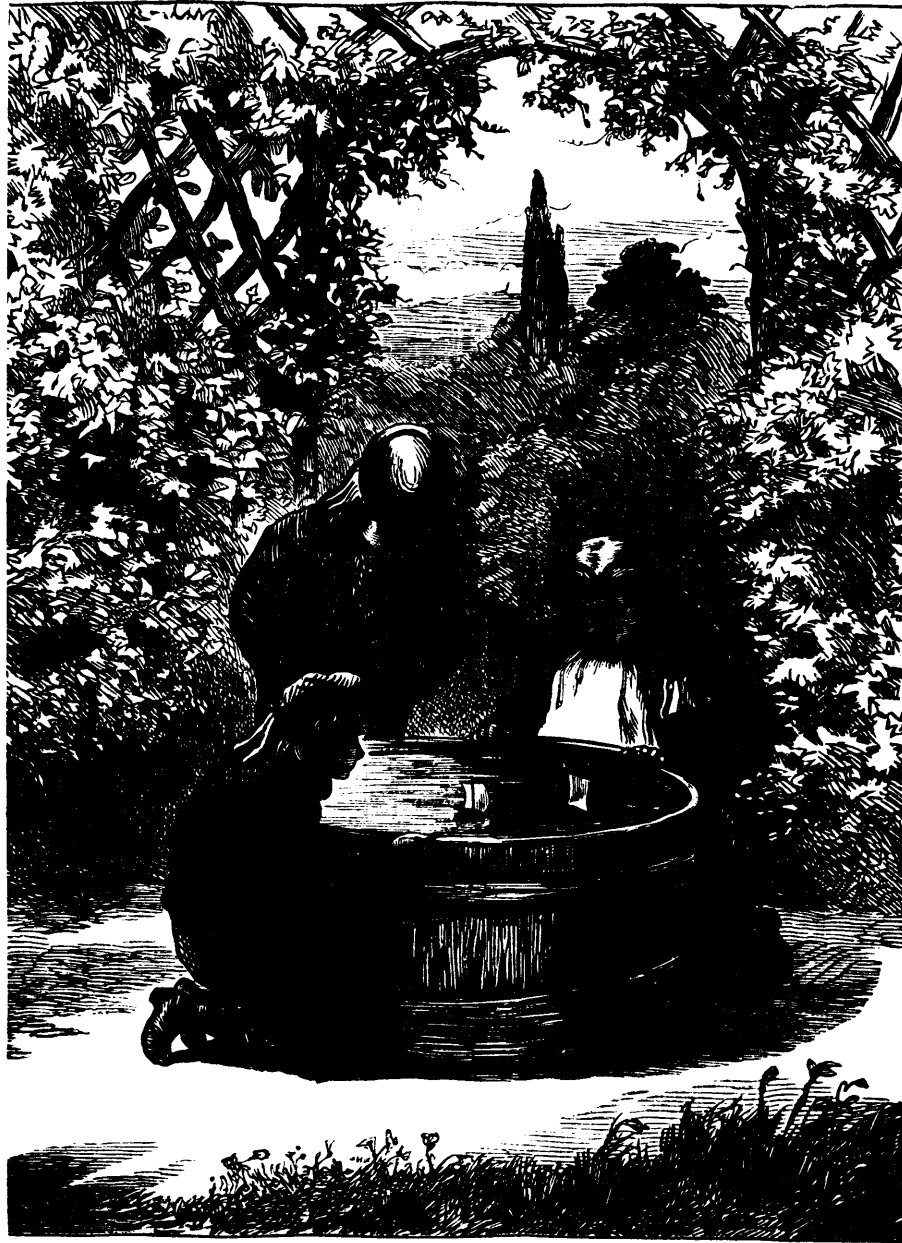
Yes—just there! There's the name on that  
 pine—  
 I cut it, rough like, with my knife.  
 Dick Gray? Well, mate, yes: the name's  
 mine;  
 But the sun seems gone out of my life.  
 See—Lil—Lil. That was all  
 I cut; and the others stood by.  
 Now spring; and I did it last fall—  
 So long, mate, and yet, oh, so nigh!  
 Oh, Lil! Lil! My little one! There—  
 She was like pure gold veined in our clay.  
 There are angels enough and to spare!  
 Why did God want to take her away?

no matter though it were a foolish one. Given youth, health, activity, and a handsome income, there yet remains something wanting to a man's existence, without which it is apt to become more or less a burden to him. That something is a purpose. Geoffrey having failed— from very easiness of temper, from being everybody's favorite, first in every pleasure-party, foremost in every sport that needed pluck and endurance, rather than for lack of ability—to achieve distinction at the University, had concluded that he was fit for nothing particular in life; that he had no vocation, no capacity for distinguishing himself from the ruck of his fellow men, and that the best thing he could do was to live upon the ample fortune his merchant father had amassed for him, and get as much pleasure as he could out of life.

Almost his first experience of pleasure and independence had been those two years' travel in the Far West. Pleasure in that particular instance had brought him face to face with death, but was counted pleasure nevertheless. After doing America, he had done as much of the old world as he happened to feel interested

middle-class houses which every one knows, and of which every English town can boast, no matter how remote from the fever of that commerce which makes the wealth of nations. Houses whose windows shine resplendent, without stain or blemish of dust, smoke or weather; houses on whose spotless doorstep no foot seems to have trodden, whose green balconies are filled with geraniums more scarlet than other geraniums, and on whose stems no faded leaf appears; houses whose sacred interior—arch-temple of those homelier British virtues, ready money and soap-suds—is shrouded from the vulgar eye by starched muslin curtain pendant from brazen rods; houses at which the tax-gatherer never calls twice, doors whose shining knockers have never trembled in the rude grasp of a dun.

Sometimes in the gloaming, Geoffrey, beheld the bald head of an elderly gentleman across the brass curtain-rod, and a pair of elderly eyes gazing gravely across the empty street, not as if they expected to see anything. The brass plate on the door would inform him of the elderly gentleman's profession—whether he was



"MINIATURE SHIPS ON A MINIATURE SEA."

in doing, not scampering round the globe in ninety days like Mr. Cook's excursionists, but taking an autumn in Norway, a winter in Rome, a spring in Greece, a summer in Sweden, and so on, until he began to feel, in his own colloquial phrase, that he had used up the map of Europe.

Apart from his passion for the lovely concert-singer, Mrs. Bertram, which was strong enough to have sustained his energies had the siren sought to lure him to the summit of Mount Everest, he really enjoyed this scamper from one provincial town to another, these idle days spent in sleepy old cities, which were as new to him as any unexplored region in central Europe. The great dusky cathedrals or abbey-churches into which he strolled before breakfast, careless but not irreverent, and where he sometimes found white-robed curates and choristers chanting the matin service; the empty square, where the town-pump and a mediæval cross had it all to themselves, except on market days; the broad turnpike road beyond the High-street, where, perhaps, an avenue of elms on the outskirts of the town testified to the beneficent care of some bygone corporation not quite destitute of a regard for the picturesque; these things, which repeated themselves, with but little variety, in most of the towns he explored, were not without a certain mild interest for Mr. Hossack.

He would gaze in wondering contemplation upon those handsome red-brick houses at the best end of the High-street, those respectable

family solicitor or family surgeon, architect or banker; and then he would lose himself in a labyrinth of wonder, marvelling how this old man had borne the burden of his days in that atmosphere of monotonous respectability, always looking out of the same shining window, across the same brazen bar. He would go back to his hotel, after this small study of human life, a wiser and a happier man, thanking Providence for that agreeable combination of youth, health, and independent fortune which gave him, in a manner, the key of the universe.

Stillmington, in Warwickshire, was a place considerably in advance of the dull old market towns, where one could hear the butcher's morning salutation to his neighbor from one end of the street to the other, where, indeed, the buzzing of a lively bluebottle made an agreeable interruption of the universal silence. Stillmington lay in the bosom of a fine hunting country, and, as long as foxes were in season, was gay with the cheery clatter of horses' hoofs on its well-kept roads, the musical clink of spurs on its spotless pavements. Stillmington boasted an aristocratic hotel, none of your modern limited-liability palaces, but a family hotel, of the fine old English expensive and exclusive school, where people eat and drank in the splendid solitude of their private apartments, and stared at one another superciliously when they met in the corridors or on the staircase, instead of herding together at stated intervals to gorge themselves in the eye of their fellow man, like the passengers on board a Cunard

steamer. Stillmington possessed also a wholesome spring, whose health-restoring waters were, however, somewhat out of vogue, and a public garden, through whose leafy groves meandered that silvery but weedy stream the river Still; a garden whose beauties were somewhat neglected by the upper five hundred of Stillmington, except on the occasion of an archery meeting or a croquet tournament.

In the bright April weather, all sunshine and blue skies, like a foretaste of summer, Geoffrey found himself at Stillmington. His enchantress had been delighting the ruder inhabitants of Burleysbury, the great manufacturing town fifteen miles away, whose plethora of wealth served to sustain the expensive elegance of her unproductive neighbor, and was now at Stillmington. There were to be two concerts, with an interval of a week between them, and Geoffrey, whose knowledge of Mrs. Bertram's movements was of the fullest, had ascertained that she meant to spend that interval week in Stillmington. He had followed her from town to town, through all the deviations of a most circuitous tour; now at Brighton, anon at Liverpool, now at Cheltenham, anon at York. He had heard her sing the same songs again and again, and had known no weariness. But in all his wanderings he had never yet spoken to her. It was not that he lacked boldness. He had written to her—letters enough to have made a bulky volume had he cared to publish those sentimental compositions—but on her part there had been only the sternest silence. No response whatever had been vouchsafed to those fervid epistles, offering his hand and fortune, his heart's best blood even, if she should happen to desire such a sacrifice; letters teeming with unconscious and somewhat garbled quotations from Byron, made eloquent by plagiarism from Moore, with here and there a touch of that energetic passion which glows in the love songs of Robert Burns, yet to the very core honest and manly and straightforward and true. She must have been colder than ice surely to have been unmoved by such letters.

She had recognised the writer. That he knew. However crowded the hall where she sang, Geoffrey knew that his presence was not unperceived by her. He saw a swift sudden glance shot from those deep gray eyes as she curtsied her acknowledgment of the applause that welcomed her entrance; that keen glance which swept the crowd and rested for one ecstatic moment upon him. The lovely face never stirred from its almost statuesque repose—a pensive gravity, as of one who had done with the joys and emotions of life—yet he had fancied more than once that the eyes brightened as they recognised him; as if even to that calm spirit there were a sense of triumph in the idea of so much dogged devotion, such useless worship.

"I daresay she feels pretty much as Osiris, or Ashtaroth, or any of those ancient parties would have felt, if they had been capable of feeling, when they were propitiated with human sacrifices. She won't answer my letters, or afford me a ray of encouragement, but likes to know that there is an honest fool breaking his heart for her. No matter. I would rather break my heart for her than live happy ever afterwards, as the story-book say, with any one else. So courage, Geoffrey; let us show her how much ill-usage true lovers can bear, and still love on, and hope on, till love and hope are extinguished together in one untimely grave."

And Geoffrey, whose philosophic mind was wont thus to relieve the tedium of the toilet, would contemplate his visage in the glass as he arranged his white tie, and wonder that ill-starred passion had not made greater ravages in his countenance; that he had not grown pale and wan, and seamed with premature wrinkles. "I wonder I'm not as grim-looking as Count Ugolino, by this time," he said to himself; and then went down to his private sitting-room at the Royal George, to eat a dinner of five courses in solitary state, for the benefit of that old established family hotel. Love as yet had not affected his appetite. He did excellent justice to the *cuisine* of the *chef* at the George, an artist far above the common type of hotel cooks.

This young worldling was not without expedients. Inaccessible as his bright particular star might be, he yet contrived to scrape acquaintance with one of the lesser lights in that planetary system of which she was a part. A little finesse and a good deal of brandy-and-soda obtained for him the friendship of a youthful pianist, whose duty it was to accompany the singers. From this youth, who wore his hair long, affected the dreamily-classical school, and believed himself a mute inglorious Chopin, Geoffrey heard all that was to be heard about Mrs. Bertram. But, alas, this all was little more than the music-sellers had already told him.

No one knew any more about her than the one fact of her supreme isolation, and that reserve of manner which was, perhaps unjustly, called pride. She lived alone; received no one, visited no one, kept her fellow-performers at the farthest possible distance. If she took a lodging, it was always remote from the quarter affected by the rest of the company; if she stayed at an hotel, it was never the hotel chosen by the others.

So much as this Geoffrey contrived to hear—not once only, but many times—without committing himself to the faintest expression of his feelings. He would have perished sooner than degrade his passion by making it the subject of vulgar gossip.

"If I cannot win her without a go-between," he said to himself, "I am not worthy of her." Many times, stung to the quick by the freezing contempt with which she treated his letters, he had watched and lain in wait for her, deter-

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**A LIFE PICTURE.**

BY MISS M. E. BRADDON,

Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "To The Bitter End," "The Outcasts," &c., &c.

**BOOK I.**

**CHAPTER VI.**

"BY HEAVEN, I LOVE THEE BETTER THAN MYSELF."

While Lucius dreamed his dream beside the wharf where the barges lay moored under the smoky London sky, Geoffrey was following his strenuous from one provincial town to another, not without some enjoyment in the chase, which filled his empty life with some kind of object,