

ANGELS WATCH O'ER ME.

When night her sable mantle spreads,
And waits the earth in ruddy glow,
When nature yields to soft repose,
And twinkling stars their vigils keep,
And when upon my knees I bend,
To offer up my evening prayer,
That Father's blessing may descend—
Angels are watching o'er me there.

When "nenth afflictions rod I bend,
When some dread die is cruel given,
When I have lost some cherished friend,
And feel that nothing true but Heaven,
When bitter tears of grief I shed,
Seeking relief in fervent prayer,
Feeling that earthly hopes are fled—
Angels are watching o'er me there.

When loved ones o'er my couch shall weep,
When life's short dream is almost o'er,
When I must sleep death's final sleep,
And pass to an eternal shore,
And when the silent, awful roll,
Of death's cold river greets my ear,
May angels bear my fainting soul
To rest in a celestial sphere.

THE DISCARDED WIFE

A Romance of the Affections.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE CHIMES."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BURGLARY.

A week soon passed by, and Eleanor found her life with Lady Joyce a very pleasant one, and had she only been in a state of mind for happiness, she might have enjoyed herself to her heart's content.

But what was pleasure now to her? She no longer thought and consorted with her ladyship, but her mind was far away, and Lady Joyce once went so far as to call her cold and apathetic.

Still the time passed on, and Eleanor day by day became more reconciled to her fate, and accepted the position which had fallen to her with thankfulness.

One night, sorely against her will, Lady Joyce forced her companion to go to a grand ball. It is needless to say how little she enjoyed it, nor how glad she was when the hour for departure arrived.

Her heart was too full for music and dancing, and the spectacle recalled too forcibly the happy days which had gone, never to return.

It was late when they returned to Park Lane. Lady Joyce at once retired to her own room; Eleanor, making some trivial excuse, remained in the drawing-room, mechanically turning over the leaves of a book, but in reality thinking with tear-fraught eyes, of the husband whom she feared she would never see again.

The hours passed quietly on, and Eleanor sank into a doze upon the sofa, from which she was awakened by a sudden noise.

She started to her feet.

The candle had gone out, and the room was in total darkness.

She listened and thought she heard a sound as of subdued voices.

Her heart beat violently, but she determined at once to ascertain whether or no there was any room for alarm.

Carefully and noiselessly she opened the room door, and advanced with noiseless tread along the landing, till she came to the top of the stairs.

Then she bent over and peered anxiously in every direction, but she could see nothing.

All was dark and silent.

She was almost disposed to laugh at her own idle fears, when a gleam of light from one end of the passage attracted her attention.

Holding her breath again, she bent forward, but could see no more than this one long ray of light, which it was evident, proceeded from a dark lantern.

Then came the sound of feet. The light advanced, and she was able dimly to distinguish the forms of two men.

One suddenly shifted his position so that the light fell full upon him.

It was a strong, stalwart man, dressed in a countryman's suit, but his face was hidden by the black crape which hung over it.

In his arms were some of the most valuable pieces of plate which Eleanor had noticed on the night of her arrival.

There could no longer be any doubt about the matter.

It was evident that the house had been broken into, and that the burglars were about to make off with their spoil.

What should she do?

If she were to cry for help the robbers would have ample time to make their escape before the servants were aroused.

She was not deficient in courage, but what would her strength avail against two men?

While she yet deliberated the burglars advanced towards the door.

Acting upon the impulse of the moment, she ran down the stairs, and threw herself between them and their means of escape.

For a moment they were paralysed by the suddenness and unexpected nature of the attack, but only for a moment.

One of the ruffians raised a formidable life-preserver. Eleanor uttered a shrill scream for help, and strove to seize the hand which held the murderous weapon.

It would have gone badly with her, but that simultaneously with her scream a door at the other end of the hall had been thrown open, and two men had rushed upon the scene.

There was a pistol-shot fired, and one of the burglars fell wounded at Eleanor's feet; the other turned savagely upon his assailant, but resistance was useless, and in a few moments he was bound and helpless.

It appeared that the butler heard the noise made by the robbers, and had awakened one of the servants who slept in the next room, and then together they had hastened to interrupt them, with what effect has already been related.

The surprise of the servants at discovering Eleanor on the spot was great, but that was nothing to her own when the light fell full upon the face of the burglar who had made so desperate a resistance.

It was Silder!

He too, in his turn felt surprise, but he betrayed none in his manner.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Vane," said the butler, "but hadn't you better go to your own room?"

"Yes," she answered, "directly—but I must speak to that man first," and she pointed to her brother, who lay securely bound on the hall floor.

The butler was too discreet to make any comment, but then he thought of great deal.

"Well, Eleanor," said the burglar as she bent over him, "you didn't expect to see me here to-night, did you?"

"No."

"But it's most infernally lucky, for otherwise I should have been marched off to prison, for a certainty."

"I should think you would meet the punishment you merit."

"What do you mean, Eleanor? Surely you are not going to turn against me?"

"Against you?—no. But I can do nothing to help you."

"It seems to me that you can do everything."

"In what way?"

"Hang me if your coolness isn't quite amazing. Why, unto these cursed strings, and let me go."

"I cannot do that."

"You can't?" cried Silder, with an oath. "Is it can't or won't?"

"Both. I cannot, and I would not were it in my power."

Silder growled a curse between his teeth, as these words, spoken calmly and deliberately, told him he had no hope of freedom to expect from her.

"You mean to say you'll have mesent across the seas again?"

"It is certainly your own doing."

"Now listen to me, Eleanor, I'm not going to stand any nonsense—either give me my liberty or—"

"Or what?"

"Or it will be the worse for you."

"I have all along assisted you in every way in my power, but now you have brought yourself into the hands of the law, and must pay the penalty. You must stand again in the prisoner's dock."

"Then mark me, Eleanor, as I live, you shall stand by my side."

To this last speech she paid no attention, believing it to be but the impotent anger of a baffled man. She left him, and went up-stairs to the solitude of her own room.

The servants had, in the meantime, been attending to the other burglar, who had been wounded by the pistol ball.

It was apparently badly hurt; but no vital part appeared to have been injured.

The hall was by this time full of servants, who had been aroused by the noise, and Silder, as he lay on the ground, gnashed his teeth, and cursed the ill luck which led to his discovery.

Both he and his companion declined to answer any questions until they were legally interrogated, and as nothing was to be gained by keeping them in the house, policemen were sent for to remove them to the station-house.

When Eleanor went up-stairs, it must be confessed she had not given Lady Joyce a thought, so busy had she been in thinking of the strange meeting with her brother; but she had not been long in her room before a gentle knock at her door recalled her to her duties.

It was Lady Joyce, who asked Eleanor into her dressing-room to narrate what had occurred.

She had just finished the account, when the sound of voices outside the door made her pause.

"Go and see what the matter now?" said Lady Joyce, who took the whole matter very quietly.

Eleanor opened the door, and found standing outside a policeman, and behind him several anger-faced servants.

"Is Eleanor Jerrold here?" asked the officer.

Eleanor turned ashy pale; but before she could make any reply, Lady Joyce had stepped forward.

"Who is it you want?" said she.

"Eleanor Jerrold, my lady!"

"Nonsense! There is no such person here!"

"Stay!" cried Eleanor, feebly; "that is my name! What do you want with me?"

"It is my duty to take you in custody!"

"In custody! Bless the man!" cried Lady Joyce; "he doesn't know what he's talking about! What do you want to take her in custody for?"

"For being implicated in the burglary, my lady!"

"Oh, the man's mad! Why, but for her the man would have got clear off with all the plate!"

"But for her, my lady, the men would never have laid a finger on the plate!"

"What does the man mean? Why can't you tell your silly story straight through?"

"One of the burglars, my lady, on being questioned, states that one Eleanor Jerrold living with your ladyship as companion, is his sister?"

"Is that the case?" asked Lady Joyce, sharply, turning upon Eleanor.

"It is!"

"Well?"

"He says, my lady, that she told him of the valuable plate always kept in the house, and opened the door to admit him and his companion to effect the robbery."

"What made you wish to stay down stairs last night after every one had gone to bed?" Lady Joyce, asked Eleanor.

"Oh, my lady!" sobbed the accused, "though things may appear suspicious, do not believe I have been implicated in this heartless robbery! I am innocent! I declare, before heavens, I am entirely innocent of the crime!"

"Can you prove your innocence?"

"Alas! I fear not!"

Lady Joyce shook her head sorrowfully.

"Surely, my lady, you do not believe me capable of this conduct! You, at least, believe me to be innocent!"

"I do believe you innocent!"

Eleanor fell on her knees before her kind patroness, and covered her hand with kisses.

"Thank you—thank you again and again for those words! If, one day, you will listen to my story, you will learn that all throughout my life I have been more sinned against than sinning!"

"What is it you wish to do with this young lady?" asked Lady Joyce of the policeman.

"Well, my lady, she must go before the magistrate with the other two to be examined."

"So be it, then?"

The circumstantial evidence against Eleanor was strong, and she, together with Silder and his companion, was fully committed for trial.

Lady Joyce was present at the examination, and offered bail for Eleanor, but it was refused, and she, poor delinquent—nurtured thing that she was, was removed in the prisoners' van to Newgate, with culprits and felons of the lowest order, there to await her trial for participation in the attempted burglary on the premises in Park Lane, occupied by Lady Joyce.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRIAL.

We must pass over the long, dreary weeks which Eleanor passed in prison, mixing with the most debauched and wicked of her sex. The days dragged slowly onward to that appointed for the trial when she, Eleanor Jerrold, who but a few months before had been the proud, happy wife of a gentleman, and the owner of a comfortable home, should stand in the felons' dock, friendless and forlorn, to answer the charge of being a burglar's accomplice.

Lady Jerrold had sent her a message that she believed in her innocence, in proof of which she had given her own lawyer instructions to prepare her case, and to see that full justice was done her on the day of trial, but Eleanor obstinately refused to consult with the solicitor.

She contented herself with protesting her innocence of the crime laid to her charge, but at the same time professed to believe that oscape for her was impossible, for, owing to Silder's false accusation, the crime seemed fairly fixed upon her.

The day of the trial arrived at last, and it was

with a sense of relief that Eleanor left the prisoner's gloomy walls.

After a short delay, she was conducted into a large, close room filled with people.

Shame made her bend her eyes upon the ground, and it was only a faint glimpse she obtained of the sea of white faces turned towards her, as she entered, of the judge in his robes of office, of the barristers, buzzing hither and thither in their wigs and gowns, making a vast deal of bother about some very small matter.

Then she became aware that she was confined in a small pen, with a fierce individual in a blue uniform keeping water over her, and then, last of all, she became aware that standing next her, close by her side, was Silder.

There was a buzz throughout the court for some minutes, after which the erler made a great noise in proclaiming silence, and then the proceeding commenced.

Then the indictment was read, and the prisoners were called upon to plead guilty or not guilty.

"Guilty!" said Silder, boldly.

"Not guilty!" pleaded Eleanor, in a firm, though low tone, and the trial proceeded.

But where was Silder's companion?

Eleanor looked around, but he was not to be seen.

Had he fled of the wound he had received? She longed to ask this question, but she could not summon up sufficient courage to do so.

First Silder's deposition taken at his preliminary examination was read, in which he stated that Eleanor had assisted in planning the robbery, and had given them admittance to the house.

Then Lady Joyce was called as a witness.

She deposed to having returned with Eleanor late at night from a party. She had at once retired to rest, she said, but Eleanor had remained in the drawing-room, giving some trivial reason for so doing.

The butler was the next witness examined.

He related how he had been awakened by a noise in the house, and had immediately aroused a fellow servant, and they two, proceeding to the hall, found the two burglars and Eleanor together. He heard a cry for help as he entered the hall. He could not say whether the two prisoners were struggling together or not.

His fellow servant confirmed this statement in every respect.

After that another witness was called.

It was a servant of Lady Joyce's. He recalled a conversation respecting the plate and its being kept in the house taking place between his mistress and the prisoner one day at dinner.

These were the chief witnesses for the prosecution.

Many others were examined, but only on comparatively trivial matters, into which it is needless to enter here.

When the case for the prosecution was ended, Silder glanced at Eleanor with a malignant smile upon his face. Certainly, so far the case had gone very much against her. The evidence was purely circumstantial; but still the links appeared to be complete, and but a narrow chance left to Eleanor to prove her innocence.

Lady Joyce had engaged one of the first barristers of the day to defend Eleanor but it seemed as if he had but little hope. He had asked few questions of the witnesses and, by his demeanour, had led most to imagine that the case he had in hand was a hopeless one.

But when he rose to his feet his whole manner changed, as he plunged into a plain forcible speech, showing matters in a very different light to that in which they had been hitherto viewed.

He told the truthful story of Eleanor's gallant endeavour to arrest the burglars; he declared no reliance was to be placed upon the word of the convict Silder, and picked to pieces the whole of the evidence given by the witnesses.

"Now," said he, "in conclusion I have only one witness to call for the defence; but his statement will, I feel sure, be so satisfactory that the prisoner will leave the dock triumphant, not only without a stain upon her character, but with the one hind which now darkens her life completely removed."

Eleanor listened and wondered.

"Call Jabez Bourke," said the Barrister.

There was a movement in the crowd as a pale, crippled figure was helped into the witness box.

Silder turned pale and sidgedot uneasily, for he knew that his hour of triumph was at an end, and that his devilish machinations would be exposed, and he himself held up as an object of universal disgust.

It would be tedious to give the whole of Jabez Bourke's story, as elicited from him by examination, but the substance of his evidence was as follows:

He commenced by narrating facts already known to the reader, respecting his engagement to Phoebe, and the arrival in the village of Percy Hardwicke, of whose attentions to his sweet-heart he became jealous.

He told how it was the talk of the village that Mrs. Jerrold was in the habit of meeting some man at night, in the fields near her husband's house; and he told of the sudden disappearance of Percy Hardwicke, and the subsequent discovery of his body, bearing marks proclaiming that he had met his death by violence.

Then, amidst the breathless silence of the whole court, he told how Captain Jerrold had accused his wife of crime, and had turned her forth from his house, and how now that wife, Eleanor Jerrold, stood before them the prisoner at the bar.

So far his story had been but a recapitulation of facts already stated.

The audience wondered to what it was to tend, for, as yet, the only facts elicited connected with the prisoner were rather adverse to her cause.

"Did Mrs. Jerrold know anything respecting the murder of Percy Hardwicke?" asked the Barrister.

"Nothing."

"Do you know who was the murderer?"

"I do."

"Who was it?"

"Myself!"

An exclamation of surprise and horror broke from all within the court, but Jabez Bourke continued—

"I was madly in love with Phoebe, and I hardly know what I did. Phoebe was as good a girl as ever lived, but it was hard to me to see another man making love to her before my eyes. When I'd done the murder and the first hue and cry was over, I came up to London, but my conscience wouldn't give me any peace. I took to drink, but it was no use. I couldn't forget it. Then I went from bad to worse and fell in with him," and he pointed to Silder who, pale and cowering, shrank before his gaze.

"Did the man, Silder, over-mention Eleanor Jerrold to you?"

"Often. He boasted of being able to obtain money he required from her. He told me he was her brother, but that Captain Jerrold did not know of the existence of such relationship between them, and was awfully jealous of him, supposing him to be his wife's lover."

"What did he say when he heard Captain Jerrold had discredited his wife?"

"He laughed, and declared it was the best joke he had heard for a long time."

Jabez Bourke then related how he had been tempted by Silder to join in the burglary at Lady

Joyce's, and fully confirmed Eleanor's statement, declaring that they had forced an entrance for themselves.

This turned the tide of popular feeling in Eleanor's favour; but when the witness continued, and related the substance of the conversation which he had overheard, between Silder and Eleanor, in which the former threatened to implicate his sister unless she aided his escape, as he lay wounded on the floor of the hall, it settled all doubt, and there was not a person present who did not firmly believe now in Eleanor's innocence.

"My lord," said Bourke, as he finished giving his evidence; "I surrender myself as the murderer of Percy Hardwicke. It has eased me a good deal making a clean breast of it, and clearing Mrs. Jerrold of all of which she has been accused. It's a doubt if I live to come to trial, but if I do, I'll face it."

He was removed in custody, but his foreboding was a true one. He never came to trial, for two days after giving his evidence in the witness-box, he died in the prison infirmary, of fever, caused partly by the wound he had received, but principally by the great excitement to which he had been subjected when in so weak a state.

Silder had pleaded guilty, but it did not avail him in procuring any mitigation of his punishment, for he was sentenced to penal servitude for life.

In Eleanor's case, the judge summed up very shortly, and the jury, without leaving the box, returned a verdict of "Not guilty."

No sooner had the words left the mouth of the foreman, than a wild cheer, contrary to all rule, rang through the court, and in spite of the stern cries made for silence, it was some moments before quiet was sufficiently restored to enable the judge to pronounce the few short sentences which enabled Eleanor to leave the court—free—and with the stain entirely removed from her character.

No words can describe the emotions with which she had listened to the whole of Jabez Bourke's evidence.

It was the opportunity for which she had hoped and prayed, and her one thought throughout had been, "Will my husband ever hear of this?"

"Oh, kind Heaven! grant that he may know one day how much he has wronged me in his suspicions," she prayed within herself, as the cries of the crowd told her she was free.

Stainless she left the court which a few short hours before she had entered as a prisoner only to quit, she had expected, as a convict.

Lady Joyce had been waiting for her to take her leave in triumph to her house in Park Lane, there to receive her, not as an upper servant, but as an equal—an honoured guest—until such time as Captain Jerrold should return from sea, and bear how cruelly he had wronged his wife in suspecting her! but Eleanor, dreading the crowd which had collected round the principal entrance, implored to be let out a private way.

The crowd, waiting to cheer her on her acquittal, dropped off one by one, finding that she did not make her appearance, but Lady Joyce still remained.

"Where is Mrs. Jerrold?" she asked. "Has she not yet left the court?"

"Oh, yes, my lady! she left half an hour ago."

"Come! Where—where?"

"I've no idea, my lady."

Lady Joyce got into her brougham, and rode home in an uneasy and unhappy state of mind. She had fully reckoned on having Eleanor's face opposite her at the dinner-table that day, but she was disappointed, and in consequence, inclined to be cross to her servants.

"Where can she have gone?" she asked herself. "Where can she have gone?"

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

One fine summer morning, two days after the trial related in the preceding chapter, the ship "Good Endeavour," Captain Jerrold, dropped anchor at Spithead.

She had sailed some time previously for the west coast of Africa, but had encountered severe weather in the Bay of Biscay, during which she had sprung a leak and lost several of her spars; it therefore became necessary for her to put back to port for repairs, and to supply the requisite deficiencies.

This delay, as may easily be imagined, was very distasteful to Captain Jerrold, for he had hoped not to set his foot in England for many years.

The sight of the shores of his native land did not present the attraction to him that it did to many of his officers, who had left behind them happy homes which they longed to revisit.

At one time he would have been among the first to welcome the white cliffs, but now he had no ties to bind him to England, and nothing but painful recollections connected with the country.

The wife he had loved so dearly, he believed to have been unfaithful to him—may more, he had suspected her of a hideous crime.

Where was she now?

He could not refrain from asking himself the question, though he believed her in every way unworthy of the thought of an honest man.

Where was she now?

Lady Joyce was asking the same question.

Business took Captain Jerrold on shore, and routine prevented his speedy arrangement; so, after his visit to the dockyard, the Captain of the "Good Endeavour" went to the "Fountain Hotel," and ordered dinner.

The waiter handed him the newspaper to while away the time till his dinner was ready, and Captain Jerrold settled himself diligently to peruse it.

One of the first things which caught his eye was his own name.

With a violent exclamation, he started from his seat, for as yet he only saw, as he thought, that his wife had been still further disgracing herself. He flung the paper angrily from him, and sat for some time indulging in moody reflection.

Then, after a while, he resolved to peruse the whole affair, in much the same spirit as a child makes up his mind to swallow a nauseous dose of physic.

Piece by piece he read the evidence, which appeared to carry with it the overpowering weight of his wife's guilt; but what came to his astonishment when he read the evidence of Jabez Bourke.

He could not believe his eyes.

He paused several times, as if doubting his own powers of comprehension, then set himself to work to read the words a second time, but he did not wait to complete his task. Ere he had half finished he crumpled up the paper, thrust it into his pocket, seized his hat, and darted into the street heedless of the dinner he had ordered, and which was just making its appearance.

Hardly he ran through the streets to the private residence of the owner of the "Good Endeavour," and knocked at the door.

"Mr. Bolt," said he, "I must leave for London immediately."

"Captain Jerrold," said the owner, in the highest tone of polite surprise.

"It is absolutely necessary."

"It is very unusual to—"

"If I cannot go as 'Captain of the 'Good Endeavour,' I resign my command."

"It is a matter of such importance—"

"It is a matter of life and death."

"Well, then, so be it. Return as soon as possible."

But Captain Jerrold was down stairs, and out into the street on his way to the railway station before the last words were spoken.

Luckily for him a train was on the point of starting, for had he had to wait long, he would have worked himself into a fever; as it was, he chafed and fretted at the ordinary stoppages of the train till his fellow passengers thought they must be in the carriage with a lunatic.

But where was he to go on his arrival in London?

The newspaper furnished him with the address of Lady Joyce, and from the kindly feeling she had displayed throughout, he did not doubt but that she would be acquainted with his wife's address.

After the arrival of the train in London, a cab speedily conveyed Captain Jerrold to Park Lane. Lady Joyce was at home, and he followed the servant upstairs.

"Pardon me," said Captain Jerrold, "but will you oblige me with my wife's address?"

"May I ask you, sir, who your wife is, and what I have to do with her address?"

"Excuse me," said he, bowing, "but I am almost out of my mind with joy; my name is Jerrold."

"Captain Jerrold, of the 'Good Endeavour'?"

"Precisely."

"Then you have seen the account in the papers, and I can excuse everything? Have you come to impose the pardon of her you have so cruelly wronged?"

"Lady Joyce, what other object could I have in view? For heaven's sake, tell me where she is, and let me go to her at once."

"Captain Jerrold, I would give a year of my life to know where she now is."

"You do not know?" he cried, thunderstruck.

"I have no idea."

"Captain Jerrold sank into a chair, and, covering his face with his hands, moaned aloud.

"I'll find her!" he cried, starting to his feet with sudden energy—"I'll find her! I'll spend my life in the search. Heaven will not take her from me till I have had an opportunity of telling her of my penitence, and imploring her forgiveness. Tell me at what hour. Where did you first meet her? Where did you see her last? What direction did she take in leaving the court?"

"These questions he poured out with wonderful volubility; and it was not till he had rested a little, and recovered from his excitement, that he was able to attend to what the little Lady Joyce had to tell him, which might form a clue to his wife's whereabouts.

THE END.