

THE HALF SIR

By GERALD GRIFFIN

CHAPTER X.—(CONTINUED.)

"Friendship is but lightly grounded that will grow cold at sight of a friend's error, particularly if that error should be followed by a punishment so severe as hers. You thought her beautiful once, Mr. Hammond, but you would have been shocked to see the startling havoc that nine years of sorrow and of sickness had made with her loveliness, before I left France. This trinket was hers," Miss O'Brien continued, handing him a small miniature set in gold. "It is the same which you returned her on the morning of your departure from Dublin though some circumstances prevented its reaching her hands for a long time after. She wished that you would take it once more, as a token that you forgot and forgave. Look—this discoloring on the gold was made by her own tears. Does not that touch you? She added to herself, as he took the miniature coldly, and without looking on it placed it in his bosom.

"I have long since taught myself to consider the one as my duty," said Hammond. "For the other—but pray let us pass to another subject. Emily and I have had but a hard life here. Her suffering, I hope, are ended—and mine shall not be tamely fostered. I have long since discovered the error of my own mistaken hope, and found the cure too. I have entrenched myself in this hill solitude, where I once more breathe the air of content and freedom. I hang my peace upon the humor of no high born coquette. (You will forgive me for having learned to speak coarsely). I watch no beck. I court no smile. My heart does not, as it once did, start, like a coward's, at every sudden sound. I walk, or write or read the whole day long, or else sit at ease by my turf fire, and think what a happy man Adam might have been if it were not for the rib he lost in paradise."

"Yet," said Miss O'Brien, entering freely into the spirit of Hammond's thoughts, though she could have dispensed with the politeness of the last sentence, "if it be true that success you to turn anchorite, there is but little merit in this Partisan warfare. The world—the busy world has joys for the deserving as well as for the ingrate and the proud one. Why should we leave them the undivided enjoyment of those pleasures, when we might meet and share them in calm and steady defiance?"

"You should be wiser," replied Hammond, shaking his head. "You will forgive me saying that you are an enemy who must be fled—not fought with. In our strife with you we must keep our hearts out of eye shot. You made our ears the traitors to our peace—for there is a seductive and overwhelming grace in the very music of your accents. What? Duly you? Ah, no—I thought that once, and my head bled for it—and all that remains to me, as you perceive, is to use the privilege of a bawdy gamster—to revile and tax you with false play."

"I do not know, M. Hammond, whether I am to take what you said as flattery or the contrary, but it has a strange mixture of both," said Miss O'Brien, who felt really a little piqued by the bitter violence of his manner. "You say, you were once mistaken? Would you think," she continued more playfully, "that a general did his duty who would change his whole plan of warfare after one defeat? That is a brief experience. Besides, is it not possible that the hermit in his silent solitude, might sustain as painful a contest with the memory of the world as those who live in the midst of allurements with its real dangers? Does he not buy his safety with an enduring sameness of regret that make those dangers look most amiable in the comparison? Are there not moments of intolerable reflection when contemplation puts on even a stormier hue than action itself, when the brain is almost torn asunder by the violence of its own thoughts, and the heart is oppressed almost to breaking with the memory of past sorrows, and the scene of former loneliness. Must you not sometimes sit down and think on the hopes you once cherished—the vain and faded visions that made youth so sweet—the stirring ambition, that even the apathy of seclusion cannot subdue? Oh, I, for my own part, should fear the solitude that was peopled by my own memory—the silence that my own gloomy fancy filled with sounds long loved and lost for ever, far more than all the mischief that the laughing world in its worst malice could inflict upon me. I am no speculator in human nature," she added, reigning in the glowing torrent of enthusiasm into which she had been betrayed, and speaking in an humble voice—"but if I have erred, your experience will set me right."

"So far from it," said Hammond, who was much struck with the manner of his fair companion—"you have told me secrets of myself which surprise and startle me."

A pause here occurred—when Hammond, who already began to feel strongly prepossessed in favour of the lady's frankness and ready cordiality, petitioned for an ample detail of the circumstances of Lady Emily's life on the Continent, which was given with little hesitation. The conversation, as it had been long, now grew perfectly familiar, and the lady and gentleman talked as if they had been old acquaintances. The former, at length, ventured to become inquisitive in her turn.

"Pardon me," said the lady, "if I am intrusive. But you have already given me half a confidence, and it is on that I would presume."

"You will show me a kindness," said Hammond, "if you use no ceremony. Pray speak freely."

"I know the cause of your retirement," said Miss O'Brien, after some more holding her peace for a few minutes. "Yet, if I should judge by the demeanour of Emily—and by my own heart, I should say that your stat-

was far happier than hers who wronged you."

"Why should you think it?" "I have played her part—and met her fate. As I see," said she, as Hammond almost involuntarily moved his chair farther from her—"I see that I have already by this single avowal forfeited the little interest which you have taken in my history. I am hateful in my own eyes, and must be so to all who know my guilt, and who cannot know my penitence."

"I beg pardon," said Hammond, "I hope—I have no reason to form a judgment. Played her part?" "A prouder, viler part than hers appears to you."

"It cannot be!" he said, with a vehemence that made her start. "You have not broken plighted—you have not given your promise to one, and your hand to another. Played Emily's part? You have not deceived, deceived, duped and blasted the heart that loved you, that lay for years at your feet in slavish fondness. You have not acted thus. You are not a fiend, a demon—a pardon me?" he added, suddenly arresting the loudness of his passion, as Miss O'Brien covered her face with her hands, and shrunk back in her chair. "The violence of my recollections compels me to throw aside the decorum that is due from me. I did not remember that you were her friend."

"Oh, sir," said the lady, "this is the very least that I deserve. I wish not to preserve a misplaced respect. My conscience is so galled with the burning weight of my errors—crimes I should call them—that I feel a dreadful luxury in avowing them, even though positive contempt and detestation must be the consequence. Hear me I entreat you. Since you have learned enough to hate me, let me tell you all. For you can serve me well. You know the person I have injured."

Hammond resumed his chair in an attitude half irresolute, half attentive, while the lady, retiring still further into the shadow thrown by the window curtains on the already darkening apartment, spoke in a tone of deep agitation.

"I was bound, as Emily was, to a young gentleman whom you know, and who, I believe, sincerely loved me. He was handsome, witty, accomplished, elegant in mind and manner—passionate, and young—but lowly born—at least it seemed so, comparing both our fortunes. Indeed, I may truly say, that love never was deeper than his for me."

"Pardon me once more," said Hammond, rising impatiently, "I cannot always govern myself. This is not a tale for ears like mine, that are wearied with the sounds of falsehood."

"You will not treat me so unfairly," said Miss O'Brien, using a gentle action to detain him in the chair. "Hear all that I would say. I wish not to escape your just reproaches, if you should think me worthy of them."

Hammond, chafing under the restraint, returned to his seat, while Miss O'Brien continued, "We were betrothed—bound by a registered contract, and still more by the intelligence that subsisted between our hearts—but yet, united as we were by anticipation, it was my hourly sport to play upon his sensitive nature—to awake his jealousy—to see him watch me with an anxious glance through the whir of the ball and rout, where I had smiles and quips for all but him—and pretty sentences strung up like pearls for every ear but his."

"Must I hear this?" said Hammond, struggling violently with himself—"Fit companions! Worthy friends! Pray, madam—let me beg—"

"I loved to see him," Miss O'Brien continued, not heeding Hammond's impatience, "when he afterwards crept to my side with a pale and fretful brow—and a gentle and reproachful eye—I loved to point out to his notice the various members of the youthful aristocracy that passed us—to speak admiringly of their wealth—their titles and high birth."

"Judge," she again faltered some seconds, "judge by your own heart, sir. If she whom you once loved, Emily Barry—prayer forgive my boldness—but if she were now living to—"

"Peace!" Hammond exclaimed sternly. Then with a grave and gentle tone, "She's in her tomb, young lady—there let her rest. Her fate is long since in His hands, in Whose eye the titles and distinctions of human society are nothing more than the holiday sport of children in the thought of serious manhood. And yet, if that great change of being can purify the earthly nature, and make the soul once more white as the snow, and moist with tears, to heaven, "can read the heart it blighted—she does not see the silent agony of that heart more clearly than its full forgiveness and affection." And here, as if to compensate to his heart for the privation which he had before so coldly inflicted upon it, he drew the miniature from his bosom, and gazed at it long and fondly upon it, while the lady watched him with an emotion which almost bordered on tumultuousness.

"I ask not of the dead," she said, at length, looking fixedly and solemnly upon him. "I ask of that Emily whom, living, you have loved, and who, living, wronged you. Suppose she lived yet. Do not start nor wave your hand in scorn—such things have been. To a grave has yielded forth its contents, and shrouded though they were—buried men have sat again beside their living friends—the sea has given its half-devoured prey to life and light once more, in a relenting mood—mothers have taken to their bosoms their children long thought dead—wives, husbands—fathers, sons. Might this not be again?"

Hammond dropped the portrait from between his hands, and remained staring on the speaker in an attitude of awe and stillness, as if her eye had been Medusa's, while she continued: "Suppose, I say, Eugene Hammond, that Emily Barry lived again, would your hatred revive her? Suppose," she continued, panting heavily, and wringing her extended hands, "say that she stood before you now, here where I stand, her form thus drooped in shame and penitence, her hands uplifted thus—"

"Yes," Hammond said hoarsely, his eyes still riveted on hers, "if she spoke in such a way as this is a meaning in those words, wild as they are. Is not earth, earth? death, death? Does not the grave-stone press heavily where it has been laid? The tomb is not so merciful. It is impossible."

"You have not answered me," said the lady, bending low before him. "Suppose that she did more than this—that she washed the earth before you with her tears—poured out the gushing pent-up of her heart—and thus in her agony of sorrow—"

"Ha! hold! Stand back! Avoid me!" Hammond almost shrieked in a tone of hoarse anger and horror. "You are not she—'tis false!—Alive? What! living? Near me! Speaking with me! Once more, I bid you in mercy tell me who you are—give me but a word—a sign. My heart is bursting—speak, your name, and I will forgive it, Hammond, Emily!"

"Uttering a burst of loud, delirious laughter, Hammond extended his arms, but his strength failed him in the action, and he staggered, groaning heavily, to a chair, while Emily, mistaking the action for one of repentance and disgust, threw herself again at his feet.

Do not spurn me, Hammond, nor look so dreadfully into my eyes. You have already pronounced my pardon. Do not retract your word. I have suffered deeply, Hammond—I have sought you in toil and danger—I have watched you for your sick bed hour after hour—do you not know this face? Did it not ever mingle with the phantoms of your delirium? Oh, do not do this to me, leave you this instant, and never vex your sight again; but let me for once, from your own lips, be assured that I am forgiven."

While she spoke, Hammond gradually recovered, and muttered, while he gazed steadily on her—"Merciful Providence! It is, indeed, her form—warm, living, and real! The eye is dimmed with tears, but it is the same—the cheek is paler and colder, but the same soft relief is there still—the same high forehead, he continued. "I have been cheated many years with a dream of misery, and here comes my eye's happiness, waking and bright. Let me go!" he added, as the echo of her words came back upon his memory. "Oh, let me lift you from the earth, and place you on the throne where you only were resigned as a queen since we first met—my own dark and desolate heart. My own dear Emily!" he continued tenderly, "my resentment was not so dear to me as you are. Nay—nay—no more imploring looks, you have my heart's forgiveness now."

"And I will treasure it more heedfully than your first confidence, Hammond."

"Hush," said Hammond, "I hear a footstep."

quarrel before strangers again." Hunter was only less delighted than his wife at the success of their common stratagem; and the evening was worn pleasantly in mutual explanations—that of the letter, and the fair hand that ministered to him (like the prince in the tale of the White Cat) in his midnight fever, not being forgotten.

"I have only one quarrel yet remaining against you, Emily," said Hammond; "and that is, that you should have trusted so little to my own sense of justice, as to suppose that any thing more than these explanations was required, to reconcile me to all that has taken place since we parted. But you have duped me into happiness—and I should be an epicure indeed in good fortune, if I took exception at the means. I do so only so far as my own Emily's sufferings are concerned. But I will take care to compensate to you for those. I do not know, notwith standing the many years that have been long to me at least, why we should not still live happily. We have our experience in return for our suffering—the fervor of our youth is cooled and subdued—but there is the less danger that the flame of our affection may waste or change. We will love as well though more calmly than in younger and simpler days, and live the happier for our saddened recollections."

"And advise our neighbors to take warning by our tale," said Emily, "and to be convinced that they can be all that true Irish men and women ought to be; that they may retain spirit—Irish worth—and Irish honor, in all their force, without suffering their hearts to be warped and tainted by the vapors of Irish pride."

Whether the anticipations of the lovers were fulfilled—whether their old contract, so unhappily broken, was now again respected—or whether they were content to wear out the remainder of their days in the quiet enjoyment of a steady esteem and friendship, are questions in which, probably, the reader may never have ceased to take an interest. I will intrude yet so far upon his time, nevertheless, to tell him that Emily Hammond soon became (what all Irish houses are, with few exceptions) the abode of hospitality, and (what all Irish houses, alas! are not) the seat of happiness and comfort. The traces of a female hand and taste soon became evident in the improved appearance of the little demesne; the hay and woodshed—the avenue was cleared and weeded—the bundle of newspapers was no longer permitted to act as deputy for a window pane—and the economy of the establishment was no longer so confined, as to involve Remy in such degrading implications as that thrown out by the wrong-boy at the commencement of our tale.

My master is delighted at the thoughts of Miss Emily coming to life again," said Remy O'Loone to his mother, as he sat darning his leg over the corner of the kitchen table one evening. "May be 'twould be another story with him after they're married a piece."

It was not "another story" with them, however. Hammond and Emily persevered in the benevolent course of life which both had adopted for some time before; and the condition of their tenantry, and of all the cottagers who came within the sphere of their good offices, afforded a pleasing proof of the benefits that might be conferred on even the most destitute portion of Munster cottagers by a single well-disposed resident proprietor.

Lady Emily Hammond was seated in a rustic chair, on a fine evening, near the gravel-plot before the hall door, while Mr. Hammond was walking down the lawn with Mr. Charles Luce and his young wife, who were now sober, settled bodies in their neighborhood. Looking on one side she saw Remy O'Loone sitting towards her in a half bashful way—now passing, and looking sheepishly at his toes—now pushing his hat up behind, and using more comical actions than I have time to describe. When he had at length approached within about a yard of his lady's side he made a grin, and with a half-laughing affectation of freedom:

"Why then, please your ladyship," said he, "if it wasn't making too free, ma'am, there was a little girl that had a sort of a rattler regard for—Nelly, you know, ma'am; 'dint living with you yet, still she'd be, ma'am, I wonder?"

"Oh! Nelly? she was married very soon after your master left Dublin, to a sergeant, Remy."

"Goudoutha! Wishan an' I never seen the peer of her. That's the way of it, Nelly? Wint off wit a sodger! Very well, why—"

"Indeed she was a foolish girl, Remy," said Hammond.

"Oh then—not contradiction your ladyship—not an ounce of foolishness was there upon her carcass. Ayeh, fool indeed! If you bought Nelly to sell for a fool you'd be a long while out of your money. Tis like all their doings—the thieves."

said Remy, with a toss of the head. "Ay, angels like them that they put upon hearse—all head and wings—with gingerbread gilding—an' death under—an' sorrow after 'em. That's all the angels I can see in 'em!"

The plot of the foregoing tale is identical with that of a drama, in two acts, sent by the writer to Mr. Arnold, late of the English Opera House. Subsequent occurrences induced the author to relinquish the desire of seeking an introduction to the public through the medium of the stage, notwithstanding the kind and pressing instances of the gentleman just named. The incidents are aware, entirely imaginary, but the manner in which they are treated still bears a strong impression of the mould in which they were originally cast, and it is probable that what might have aided their effect in scenic representation has a directly opposite effect in a calm and quiet consideration of the parlor fire side.

MRS. NOBERRY'S SUBSCRIPTION.

The front door was open, and the mistress of the house stood in the hall. "Go away!" she shouted to the little girls who were about to ring the bell. They spoke as if once: "We have come to ask if you would kindly give a small subscription toward—"

"No, I won't! Be off with you. There I always am one bothering for money. I won't be worried all day long by beggars at the door."

"But we are not beggars," replied the elder of the two small children, whose neat, plain clothes might have suggested that they came of poor but honest parents.

"I thought you said you wanted money," remarked Mrs. Noberry sharply. "A little subscription toward a home for orphan children," the child began. "People shouldn't have orphan children. I don't approve of them," interrupted the woman. She was unusually impatient and irritable that morning. The cook had just said that morning, her new dress was so tight it would not meet across the chest. Things seemed to be conspiring to annoy her. These begging children were the final straw.

"We heard you were a Catholic, and thought of course you'd understand," pleaded the elder girl. "Oh! I understand all right. Now run a way."

They hesitated still. A child's head had appeared beside the woman in the doorway. She looked a nice, kind old woman.

"If I have to speak again I'll set the dog at you," said Mrs. Noberry. "Spark!"

A fox terrier came dashing round the corner of the house. The younger child screamed, and clung to her sister in an agony of fear.

"Oh, please, please call away your dog!" cried the sister, who was trembling, but more with anger than with fear. "Edith is so dreadfully afraid of dogs."

"Go away, then!" shouted the woman, without attempting to restrain the terrier's investigations. The child of the house pushed past her and seized him by the collar. "Be quiet, Spark! He isn't savage; he wouldn't really hurt you," she explained. "Oh! I don't cry, please don't cry. I am so sorry."

tainly will not do that. I will send for Edith, Winifred is out riding with her father. But poor little Edith has not been very well lately. She had a bad cold soon after we arrived."

"We cannot think who the woman was," said one of the other visitors. "I've been trying to find out for you ever since."

Mrs. Noberry looked puzzled. The other visitor explained: "Some brute of a woman set her dog at the children when they were out collecting for their orphanage, and poor little Edith, who is a timid, delicate little thing, has been having nightmares and a screaming in her sleep. How lucky I never can understand and, it seems to me an altogether uncalled for humbug, but she has extraordinary views on the subject of holy poverty, and I believe she considers that begging for the poor is a necessary part of a training in holiness. I don't approve of it myself. However, as I was saying, Winifred Edith nearly went out begging. I'd like to set a lion at her, and see if she'd be frightened, of what Winifred said when she came back; but Edith is the most wonderful little saint already, and if you can believe it she prays every night and morning to St. Vincent de Paul to soften that woman's heart."

Maggie listened with open eyes; but whatever remark she was about to make was checked by the appearance of Mrs. Noberry's youngest child. It was a plain white flannel frock, with a pink, no hair ribbon, her hair hanging loose about her thin, pale face, she stood in the doorway taking a survey of the strangers before entering the drawing room. When her large dark eyes rested on Mrs. Noberry she gave a scream and rushed to bury her head against her mother's shoulder.

"It's the woman who set her dog at me!" she gasped. "Impossible!" cried Mrs. Noberry. "Sparely there must be some mistake," said Lady Mary. "Of course it was entirely a mistake," said Mrs. Noberry; "the beggars about here are so very tiresome, and how could I guess for a moment that those were your children?"

"Then do you mean to say that it was you?" asked Lady Mary, surprised and shocked. "You know in any case that they were somebody's children," interposed the other visitor. "I cannot conceive how any mother could have been so cruel!"

Lady Mary rose. "I must ask you to excuse me," she said. Edith was still trembling and sobbing. She took her hand and moved toward the door, Maggie sprang forward to open it, and threw her arms round the little girl's neck.

Lady Mary stooped and kissed her dear," she said. "May God reward you for your kindness."

This might have been the end; at any rate it was an unfortunate beginning. "There is no chance of any intimacy with the Castle now," said Mrs. Noberry, when Maggie begged to be taken over again.

Great was her surprise, therefore, at finding Lady Mary's card upon her table a few days later, when she returned from a shopping expedition. An invitation for Maggie to go to tea with the little Stuarts soon followed, and the children became fast friends. No one minded Maggie dropping her hat and putting them in again in all sorts of wrong places.

"She has a good heart," said Lady Mary; "that is the great thing."

Winifred and Edith showed her all their treasures, and told her stories of "our friends the Saints."

Their large French picture book delighted her. She has never seen so beautiful a drawing of St. Francis of Assisi and the birds before. "St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Vincent de Paul are our favorites," Winifred explained; "Edith prays to St. Elizabeth about your mother every night, because her relations couldn't understand her being so devoted to the poor. And we both ask St. Vincent de Paul to look after our orphanage."

to be afraid of him retrieve his mind. Toward the end adding up their account found that the year's subscription. "Mother, what asked."

Lady Mary could not think that it for you and your berry, if you were subscribe again."

"Oh, no!" "Then you were Maggie's mother."

"Yes, rather."

"Well, I feel And even if she to you, that is Offer it for the So they went Mrs. Noberry says up the garden. How do you say Maggie was you."

"If you please as to give a home for orphan of God?"

"The tears start eyes. Her voice as she said, me again!"

"Please don't help the orphan. How much whole amount; not think of as that."

"Edith and ago that we year to keep to and father give but we have to the rest."

"I know, M it, and she was organ too. She keep a child I Twelve pence. She took drawing-room shillings from pennies from writing table."

"That is t tion. I had an paper book, sheet, and children was standing with blotted it, fo envelope and "This is she said; must thank her for gift Bullock's W senger."

A MARTYR In no time the fire of ly than in t the beginning. No wonder was then le as they were every kind was on the special ma heretic wra Nero did no pleasure o Christians to light the our English drawing, a lic Bishop country a passed at the the statu government money to t the eloque grate the they in which "the per he mild fierce on Church of laws we n entitled Further l owed im "An act Clergy."

Their o in ob most, if got the number Hegarty this ske "Forty Father and many o reside u ned u gardening, and advanc tempo partici cruel by the even we le born i was at a siste occasi Dohen the p of th of th born.