

MEMORY AND HOPE.

Ab, Memory, all potent is thy spell!
How many a lonely life thou makest bright!
Aided by thee, how sweet it is to dwell
On vanish'd youth and childhood! Thy pure light
Flung down the vista of receding years,
Hallows and softens hours of bitter pain,
Brings back our brightest days, till Life appears
So fair that we could wish to live again.

And Hope's bright presence was most kindly given
To chase Despair with her celestial ray—
To show us glimpses of the promised heaven,
And turn our thoughts from present griefs away.
Yet Memory, thou art very dear to me,
Though oft thy tenderness is mixed with pain—
Hope shows a picture which has yet to be,
But Memory keeps what cannot be again.

The fairest hopes of earth too often fade
As we approach them; Memory is true,
For by her hand are faithfully portrayed
The joys and sorrows that we have passed through.
She sings again the carols of our youth,
Restores the fragrance of our withered flowers,
Gives to the Past reality and truth,
The guardian angel of departed hours.

Earth has much beauty; and in joy or sorrow
Let us thank God for these two angels bright—
Hope that looks forward to a glorious morrow,
And Memory that cheers us through the night.
For Memory gives us something here to love,
The careful treasurer of transient bliss;
And Hope points upward to the home above,
And leads us to a better world than this.

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TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

A NEW NOVEL,

By the Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "Strangers and Pilgrims," &c., &c.

CHAPTER L.

SYLVIA IS DISAPPOINTED.

After that moonlight meeting in the churchyard, Lady Perriam looked upon her lover's subjugation as a settled thing. He would come to her next day, he would declare herself her slave for ever, and they would only have to settle between them how soon they could decently marry.

Not until a year after Sir Aubrey's death—that delay seemed inevitable. However she might sigh for Edmund's companion hip and protection, for the sense of security that there would be in that union, she must needs conform in some measure to the usages of society. Not until after this year was dead and gone, and a new year's snowdrops were gleaming whitely in the shrubby borders could she be Edmund Standen's wife.

He might repent and forsake her in the meantime.

"Forsake me," she exclaimed, with a little laugh of triumph, "No, he will hardly do that. I know my power over him now. He fought his hardest against me last night, but I think the struggle is over. He will never try to break his fetters again."

All that day, the day of Edmund Standen's journey in the Monkhampton express, Lady Perriam watched for her lover's coming. She had no doubt that ere the day was done he would be at her side. He would not pause to calculate the effect of such a visit, the possibility of gossip or even scandal arising therefrom. He would come, full of a lover's rapture, reckless of all the world, come to ratify his impassioned vows of last night, come to set the seal of certainty upon their re-union.

He would come early perhaps, even before noon. He would hardly stop for conventional hours. She scarcely touched the dainty breakfast, not set forth in the solemn state of the dining-room, but neatly spread on a low round table in her boudoir, a table garnished with a low wide centre dish of biscuit-china full of summer's loveliest flowers, roses, seringa, Australian clematis, velvet-petalled geranium.

Breakfast, an idle dawdling meal with the widowed Lady Perriam, was over at last. She turned over half-a-dozen books and could read none of them, so wandering were her thoughts. She looked at herself in the glass and wondered if the change that Shadrack Bain had presumed to speak of were visible in her face to-day. No, it was all beaming, radiant loveliness. Triumph and hope had renewed the old lustre. Happiness was the true Median bath. It had made her young again.

The day waned. Luncheon, a meal at which Lady Perriam tried to be maternal and sacrificed comfort to baby worship, succeeded the long blank morning. The young heir of Perriam ate his morsel of boiled fowl, minced to suit his budding teeth, cried a little, said mam-mam, was kissed and sent back to his own domain of the nursery. Lady Perriam dismissed him with a yawn.

"I do believe she cares less and less for that blessed little lamb every day of her life," said nurse Tringfold to Nurse Carter, in an indignant outburst, when the latter crept into the nursery to hang over the child's scrib for a minute or two, and bless him as he slept.

"I never did see such a mother. She looks at him sometimes as if she didn't see him, and if he frets and whimpers a bit,—in this gentle manner did Mrs. Tringfold gloss over the bantling's shrieks and yells of rage when his infantine wishes were for the moment crossed,—"she shivers and looks as vexed as if he was somebody else's baby."

"Lady Perriam is very young," said nurse Carter, apologetically.

"If she's old enough to have a baby, she ought to be old enough to care for him," answered Mrs. Tringfold snappishly.

As the afternoon lengthened Sylvia grew too impatient to endure the restraint of the four walls. She felt that Edmund Standen must come very soon now. The conventional visiting hour had arrived. If he wished to be strictly within rules now was his time. Her impatience over-mastered her. She put on her bonnet—the widow's little crape bonnet, which she rarely touched without a shudder of aversion, took up her black parasol and went out. She went down the long avenue, where

the monkey trees spread their spiky arms above the smooth bright grass. This way was the only ceremonial approach to the house, the only carriage way. Edmund Standen would drive most likely, and would come this way.

More than once she had thought of his employment at the Bank. It was just possible, after all, that he might not be able to come till the evening—just like a shopman at Ganzlein's, who could only get out when the shop was shut. The idea was humiliating. He to be bound by any such restraint—he who had once been so grand a gentleman in her sight.

She walked all the way down the avenue—looking straight before, between those two stiff lines of interminable monkey trees—the tall elms rising grandly on either side behind them shutting out the world beyond Perriam. She looked straight before her for distant dogcart, or pedestrian, but there was nothing—nothing but the spiky branches, the soft spreading greenery of the elms, the grass, the long straight road diminishing to a point in the distance, the blue warm sky.

Yes, there was something human in the remote distance. A few minutes ago he might have looked like a robin redbreast, with that spot of scarlet on his neck. Now he had developed into a distant boy. A telegraph boy, evidently, with those patches of red which enlivened his garments.

"Who would send me a telegram," thought Sylvia, alarmed; not Edmund certainly. There was no telegraphic communication between Heddingham and Perriam—no railway—no public conveyance—nothing but the rustic high road. The modest meadow path. The short cut by wood or corn field.

The boy came up the avenue whistling. What matter if he sometimes carried tidings of ruin or death? To him his avocation was commonplace enough. He had no idea that he was a kind of spurious Mercury, messenger of gods and men.

Lady Perriam stopped him as he came up to her.

"What message have you there?" she asked.

"A telegram for Lady Perriam."

"Give it me. I am Lady Perriam."

The boy looked at her suspiciously.

"I'm bound to deliver it up at the Place," he said, "and get the time wrote on it. I beg your pardon, my lady, but I must stick to rules."

"I've a pencil," she said, "will that do?" emphasising the question with a fat clean shilling—not an attenuated worn-out button of a coin, but a full-bodied shilling.

"Pencils don't do in general," answered the boy, "but I'll see if I can make it do this time."

Lady Perriam filled in the hour—4-15—more than time that Edmund should have come, and dismissed the boy.

Then she read her telegram.

"From Edmund Standen, London, to Lady Perriam, Perriam Place, near Monkhampton." "Edmund Standen, London!" Were the telegraph clerks mad to write such nonsense?

"I have left Heddingham, for an indefinite time, on my way to Germany. After what happened last night it is my only course. I could not face home difficulties, and thought it well for all interests that I should be away. More by letter."

"Coward," whispered Sylvia, with a serpent-like hiss, "is this what his love is worth, after all. His love, for which I have hazarded so much."

CHAPTER LI.

RANDOM SHOTS.

The receipt of that telegram was a blow that struck home. Sylvia had brought her lover to her feet as she firmly believed, and behold, at the moment when she felt most certain of his allegiance he had been able to leave her for an indefinite period! Was this the love that had made him so weak a slave last night in the moonlit churchyard? Had the cold light of day so completely restored him to reason?

She dragged her steps slowly back to the house. What a weary length of monotonous green sward she had to tread, with leaden lingering feet. She had come this way so gaily a little while ago, looking down the long vista for the figure she expected to see. She had felt so utterly sure of his coming, and instead of that dear presence, that strong hand clasping hers, there was nothing but the crumpled telegram in her feverish palm.

"I suppose Mrs. Carter will be glad of this," she said to herself bitterly, remembering the reproachful look that had obidden her wild talk of happiness.

"She would like to see me in sackcloth and ashes, or branded on the forehead with a red-hot iron," thought Sylvia, brooding upon her mother's reproaches of last night. "She would consider that for my good. No harder judge than you, penitent sinner."

The sun beat down upon her head, the fierce August afternoon sun, as she crossed the broad gravelled expanse before the hall door, and in this open sunlight she found herself face to face with that person whom of all others she dreaded, for no definite reason, perhaps, but with an instinctive fear which reason could not stifle.

Shadrack Bain met her in front of the hall door, whip in hand, the dust of a long ride upon his stout country-squireish boots. He had come to the Place by the servant's entrance, from a round of inspection on the home farm.

"They told me you were out, Lady Perriam," he said, as he shook hands with Sylvia, "but I could hardly believe it, on such a blazing day, knowing your predilection for closed venetians and a cool room."

"One must take a walk now and then," answered Sylvia, coolly. She made no secret of her indifference to any suggestion of Mr. Bain's; but the agent was not to be put down by those small tokens of disdain. He went on suggesting all the same, and could not see, or appear to see, that his interest in her welfare was unappreciated and unwelcome.

"Wouldn't it be wiser to choose the cool of the evening for your walk," asked Mr. Bain.

"If you were my doctor, Mr. Bain, I daresay I should ask your advice upon that point," retorted Sylvia, "but as you are not my medical adviser I prefer to consult my own inclination."

"If I were a doctor," repeated Mr. Bain, with a curious little laugh, "that's a singular way of putting it, Lady Perriam. If I were a doctor I might do a great many things that I don't do now. If I were a doctor I should want to see a little more than I do see of that poor half-cracked Mr. Perriam. If I were a doctor I might want to know a little more than I do know of the manner of Sir Aubrey's death."

That blanching cheek, which had been flushed by heat and anger a moment ago, told him that his shot had struck the mark.

"How white and tired you look, Lady Perriam. I am sure

that walk was a mistake. Come into the saloon and sit down for a little before you go upstairs to your own rooms."

They were in front of the saloon; the sashes of the long windows were raised, and the butterflies floated in now and then upon the summer air, and cooled themselves in the stately gloom of that disused apartment.

"I hate that room," said Sylvia, looking towards the open window with a shudder.

"Because Sir Aubrey's attack happened there. Yes, I can fancy the association must be painful to one so truly attached to him as you were. Well, we won't go into the saloon. You seem to like the open air better. We'll go on to the terrace. I want to have half-an-hour's talk with you."

"What can you have to say to me? I thought we settled all business matters yesterday."

"This is not exactly business—nothing connected with the estate, that is to say."

Lady Perriam walked by his side as far as the terrace, reluctantly, but with that feeling of helplessness which she always experienced in Mr. Bain's presence. She hated him, she feared him, and she always ended by submitting to his will—that will which had ruled Sir Aubrey in days gone by, which had awed the tenants into closest adherence to quarter days, and which had exercised itself in the vestry of Monkhampton, until it had made Mr. Bain a power in the sleepy old country town.

She sank down with a tired air upon a bench on the terrace, a broad marble bench, in an angle of the marble balustrade, and an ancient orange tree in a sculptured vase crowning the angle, and screening her from the fierceness of the sun.

"This is better than the saloon, isn't it, Lady Perriam?" asked Mr. Bain, as he seated himself by her side.

"It will do very well," she answered coldly.

No tinge of colour had come back to her marble-pale cheeks. There was a dogged look in her face, the lips set tightly, the eyes looking straight before her, every feature accentuated by the fixity of her expression. She looked like a woman who had nerved herself to face some fatal crisis in her life.

"What do you want to say to me?" she asked, not looking at Mr. Bain, but always straight before her.

What a different interview this was from the one she had expected. She had hoped to watch the sultry close of that afternoon with Edmund Standen by her side; to have planned the future with him, and to have shown him the splendours of her house—her's for the twenty long years of her boy's minority—to have told him of her wealth, and that it should be his to spend as he pleased. Her smaller nature had never imagined Mr. Standen's probable repugnance to wealth so won.

"I want to talk to you about your own interests, your own reputation, Lady Perriam," said the agent, after a thoughtful pause. "I need hardly remind you that the world is censorious, or that a woman in your position is an easy mark for slander."

"What can any one find to say against me? Is not my life secluded enough to preclude the possibility of slander?"

"That is just the question. Your life is too secluded to satisfy the neighbourhood. You bury yourself alive in Perriam Place; and the malicious, who are always on the look out for sinister motives, begin to ask if you have any secret to hide, that you keep so close within yonder walls. From one speculation they have passed to another. As a man of business I get to hear these things. I may outstep my functions as your business adviser—your son's guardian—in broaching this subject to you; but, right or wrong, I consider it my duty to put you in possession of the truth."

"Pray go on, sir. What is your Monkhampton gossips' complaints against me?"

"It is not a complaint; it is no positive statement, your enemies—the grocers you don't deal with, the butcher whose rival supplies your household—can allege nothing against you. But people begin to wonder and speculate about the close restraint in which you keep Mr. Perriam. If he is mad, they say, he ought to be put into a mad-house; if he is sane, he ought to be allowed more liberty."

Lady Perriam's eyes, so long fixed on vacancy, shifted un- easily, and stole a look at the steward's face. The countenance of the man of business indicated little of the mind behind it. The face of a dutch clock could hardly have been less expressive.

"He has as much liberty as he cares to have," answered Sylvia. "It is his fancy to lead that dull, muddling life, pottering about among his books, amusing himself in his own way, and troubling no one, seeing no one but the servant who waits on him. He lives now exactly as he has lived for the last ten years."

"Not exactly. He used to walk in the kitchen garden daily, fair weather or foul. He never does that now."

"He is weaker than he used to be. The shock of his brother's death has shaken him."

"Then he ought to have medical advice. If he were to die suddenly some day like his brother, what would the world say? Might not the malicious say that both deaths were indirectly your work?"

"Mr. Bain!"

"Don't look at me so indignantly, Lady Perriam. I am not going to slander you, I am not going to doubt your kindness or your justice. If ever you should need a champion, you'll find me very ready to defy the world in your defense. I only wish to protect you from the consequences of your own indiscretion. But the people of Monkhampton have taken it into their heads that Mordred Perriam is kept under undue restraint—deprived of all natural liberty—and that this seclusion and restraint are your work. More than this, they go so far as to hint that you must have some strong reason for keeping your brother-in-law out of sight—that he has knowledge of some secret of yours. Pray don't be angry with me—I am only repeating vulgar gossip."

How deadly white the face is now—colourless as the marble balustrade against which Lady Perriam leaned.

"I do not wish to hear their gossip," she said, after a pause, and there was a dull muffled sound in her speech as if she could hardly articulate the words. "What does it matter to me how these stupid country people slander me? If I went to London, and spent money, and enjoyed my life, as many women would do in my position," with a faint laugh, "they would call me heartless. Because I live in seclusion they try to imagine some secret motive for my quiet life: Mr. Perriam leads the life that pleases him. Why should I drag his harmless eccentricities before the eyes of the world? Even if he is a little wrong in his head, he does no mischief, and Mrs. Carter is quite capable of taking care of him."

"Are you aware, Lady Perriam, that it is illegal to keep a