

BLUE AND GOLD.

I.

Grizzly-bearded, swarthy, and keen,
Sits a Jeweller, cunning and cold;
Spectral-eyed, like a Bedouin,
Counting his gems and gold.

II.

Counting his chaplets of Syrian jet,
And odorous amber steeped in the sun,
The golden circlets, turquoise set,
A dowry every one;

III.

Blood-red rubies, pearls like grapes,
In clusters of purple, black, and white;
Cameo girdles for exquisite shapes,
Diamond drops of light;

IV.

Jewelled masks and filigree fans,
In carved cases of tropical wood;
Aspic bracelets, buckles, and bands,
Clasps for mantle and hood.

V.

Dreaming a dream of sordid gain,
The merchant, keen-eyed, cunning, and cold,
Smiles in thought of a yellow rain,
Ducats and sequins of gold.

VI.

Trailing her robes of velvet and lace,
Through the luminous dimness glows
Viola's form of girlish grace,
And face like an Alpine rose.

VII.

She comes to look at the baubles new,
To look at the rubies and strings of pearls,
With light in her eyes of turquoise blue,
And light in her golden curls.

VIII.

She fans herself with the filigree fans,
Opal-handled, with flame and dusk—
Giving the palms of her slender hands
The scent of attar and musk.

IX.

She tosses the chaplets of Syrian jet
And amber by, with a careless air,
And looks in vain for a jewelled net
For her beautiful golden hair.

X.

Grizzly-bearded, with spectral gleams
In the merchant's keen eye, cunning, and bold,
Through the long day he sits and dreams
Of mingled blue and gold—

XI.

Counting his wealth of baubles and toys,
Of the hoarded coin which his coffers hold,
A snare for the eyes of blue turquoise,
And net for the hair of gold.

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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 LVIII.—(Continued.)

Then he turned back, benched off, and explored the line in another direction. He spent more than a fortnight in this manner, roaming through Germany like a modern embodiment of the wandering Jew—writing to his son every night; and appointing the post-office to which his letters were to be sent, and thus continuing to keep himself tolerably well acquainted with the progress of his business, and able to give detailed instructions upon all work he had in hand, so that although Mr. Bain was in Germany, it was not the less Shadrack Bain's intellect which ruled in the Monkhampton office. His clients could hardly feel impatient when his chief clerk read the clear and sharp sentences in which Mr. Bain gave his instructions for the conduct of their affairs.

"Upon my word he's a wonderful man," they said, "he never forgets anything. Such a clear head."

He had entered upon the third week of this fruitless search—had driven and walked to and fro in the scorching August heat, amidst the blinding glare of the white dusty streets—passing, a stranger, through curious old towns, and taking no more interest in the various pictures that passed before his weary eyes than if he had been amidst Sahara's arid waste. He was sick at heart, and he felt as if he had been wandering up and down this foreign land, by road and rail, for months instead of weeks. The strange diet disagreed with him—the unknown tongues, that sounded thick, fierce, and guttural in his ear, worried him. The sense of failure was the sharpest torture of all. Never till now had Shadrack Bain been beaten.

"I hold the secret which will make her my slave, if I can find her before she is Edmund Standen's wife," he told himself, "but if I am too late—if she is married before I can overtake them—what then? Why then—" mused Shadrack Bain, after an interval of deepest thought, "let me remember how she

has cheated me. Revenge is sweet. Sir Aubrey was a good friend to me. It would be hard that I should let his death go unavenged."

Mr. Bain had even consulted the police—had taken the professional opinion as to his chances of success. But the chief of police to whom he applied shrugged his shoulders and gave the applicant no encouragement.

"In the first place," he said with official dignity, "This is a matter in which we could not possibly concern ourselves. But as a mere word of friendly advice I may as well tell you, that were I in a position to help you, such a search would be utterly hopeless. When you left Antwerp you had already lost the trail. You had no certain knowledge that the people you want had come on to Cologne. When you left Cologne you were completely at sea. The time you have spent since is time lost. Your friends may be in France, in Switzerland, in Italy, or they may have even gone back to England."

"Gone back to England." That sentence struck upon Mr. Bain's ear like the vaguely worded counsel of a Greek oracle. "They may have gone back to England."

A sudden idea struck him. He was a fool in these wretched German towns, voiceless, almost mindless. Better to fight with weapons he was used to handle. The dogged stage-by-stage pursuit had come to nothing. He had spent money, wearied himself to no end. He thanked the German police officer and started that night on his return to England.

But not to Monkhampton. Beaten and baffled as he had been so far, he had no idea of abandoning his search. He meant to find Lady Perriam.

There was, of course, little doubt that she would eventually return to the Place. She had too much at stake to turn wanderer over the face of the earth. She would go back to Perriam by and bye; but Shadrack Bain firmly believed that when she did return there it would be as Mr. Standen's wife. This was the contingency which he had to prevent.

Three days' journeying by land and sea took him to London, where he put up at a private hotel in one of the streets out of the Strand—a comfortable, homely place enough, which he had been in the habit of using for the last twenty years whenever he had occasion to stay in London. He was known here and respected, and not overcharged. He had the entire use of a small private sitting-room—the landlady's own particular parlour, which she was too busy to occupy herself—without paying for that accommodation. The house was quiet and orderly, and remote from observation. Here Mr. Bain felt like the spider in his web. He could spin his airy threads securely. His first act was to send the following advertisement for insertion in the *Times* newspaper:—

"Mary Tringfold, widow, now, or lately, of Hilldrop Farm, near Monkhampton, may hear of something to her advantage by applying to Y., at the Post Office, Norfolk street, Strand."

"If Lady Perriam is in England, Mrs. Tringfold is in England also," Mr. Bain reflected, "and it will be strange if she doesn't fall into the trap I've set for her, and answer that letter. If she does answer it, the rest is easy enough."

Mr. Bain managed his little plan with the utmost nicety and discretion. Of course it would not do for him to show in the business. If Mary Tringfold answered that advertisement, and asked for an interview with the advertiser, a stranger must appear—a strange lawyer, who could tell her that a small legacy had been left her by a former mistress. She had been in service before she married, and Shadrack Bain had her history at his fingers' ends. It would be worth Mr. Bain's while to give a ten pound note for the information he wanted, and a ten pound legacy would satisfy Mrs. Tringfold that she had not been duped by the advertiser.

Before handing her the money it would be easy enough for a sharp witted young man to draw from her all the information she had to give about her mistress and Mr. Standen—where they had been—where they were—their actions in the past, and their plans for the future.

He had a handy tool for this business in the person of his landlady's son, a clerk in a lawyer's office, the modern type of fast youth, who, in his own more expressive than elegant phraseology, was ready for anything, "from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter."

CHAPTER LIX.

SECRET SERVICE.

Shadrack Bain, having issued his advertisement, waited, like the spider, for that unwary fly which he deemed must, sooner or later,—even if the fly should haply be still a wanderer in foreign lands—be enmeshed in his net. No spider, in the last stage of attenuation for lack of flies, was ever more anxious or impatient than Mr. Bain.

The advertisement had appeared three times, and he was beginning to think that his return to England had been altogether a mistake, and the absolute surrender of all his chances when triumph and hope came to him in the shape of a letter from Mrs. Tringfold; a letter addressed from Willoughby Crescent, Hyde Park. Now, Mrs. Tringfold was not likely to be residing in so fashionable and expensive a district as Tyburnia if she had been living at her own charge. It was clear that she was still with Lady Perriam, and Willoughby Crescent was Lady Perriam's abode; whereby Mr. Bain felt that the fly was almost in his web.

Mrs. Tringfold's missive was one of those composite documents, fluctuating between a note and a letter, in which her class delights. It ran thus:—

Mrs. Mary Tringfold's compellments to Mr. Y. Esq., wch advertised in The times paper, and I ham the Mary Tringfold mesahuned, wch my late husband was a Pharmar at lldrope pharm. I shall be glad to here off anythink to mi hadventeg. hand she wil caul hiff Mr. Y. wil saye wear.

Your obedient survent.

MRS. TRINGFOLD.

P. Hess.—I am in survus weth a Lady & can honely cum out hafter thes baby is gone to bed.

Y., or Shadrack Bain, by his willing agent, John Sadgrove, the landlady's eldest hope, made haste to answer this letter, by a telegram, appolating that evening at nine o'clock for an interview, at the Quayside Hotel, in Embankment-street, Strand.

That postscript about the baby gave Mr. Bain the delightful assurance that Lady Perriam was to be found in Willoughby Crescent. Weak as were her maternal instincts, she was hardly likely to separate herself from a son upon whom her future position in some measure depended.

"Go where she will, she'll stick to the boy," mused Mr. Bain. "The only question is, whether by this time she may

not be the wife of Edmund Standen. I shall know that before ten o'clock to-night, if Mrs. Tringfold keeps her appointment!"

The private sitting-room which Mr. Bain had the privilege of using at the Quayside Hotel, was a little bit of a three-cornered apartment on the first floor, cut off a landing, and opening into a larger room in which the landlady and her family took their meals. In this larger room Mr. Bain was to plant himself, close to the door of communication, which was to be left artfully ajar, so as to give him the opportunity of hearing Mr. Sadgrove's interrogation of the visitor, and even of giving that young man a whispered hint if he found him wandering from his brief, or not master of the situation. Mr. Sadgrove, to whose budding genius any little business of a secret and furtive nature was peculiarly interesting, flung himself heart and soul into the case. He had ever admired Shadrack Bain;—had sat at his feet, as it were, from time to time, during the west country solicitor's brief visits to the Quayside Hotel; and he felt proud to serve him, even without consideration of that modest pecuniary reward which Mr. Bain had promised him.

The young man felt as important as an Old Bailey practitioner when Mrs. Tringfold was ushered into the triangular parlour, where he sat with an official-looking inkstand and a quire of foolscap before him.

The business of the legacy was speedily despatched. There was a certain Miss Harper, of Mostree, twenty miles from Monkhampton, with whom Mrs. Tringfold had lived ten years ago, as confidential maid and house-keeper, and whom she had nursed in her last illness.

"She didn't leave you anything, did she?" asked John Sadgrove, with a business-like air.

"Not a sixpence, sir, though it was expected by most folks as she would leave me well pervided for. The famby give me some portion of her wardrobe—she had a handsome wardrobe, had old Miss Harper, not having the heart to wear her things for fear of spoiling 'em, but hoarding of 'em like in her drawers and chests. The fall I have on this evening was Miss Harper's—real Spanish blonde, and everlasting wear."

"Well, I am happy to tell you that one of the late Miss Harper's relatives happened the other day to come across a packet of papers, and amongst them there was a memorandum in which Miss Harper stated her intention to leave you ten pounds."

"Well, sir, it isn't much, considering how faithfully I served her; but anythink comes welcome after so long."

"The memorandum was not a legal document, remember. Miss Harper's relatives were under no obligation to act upon it; but, with generosity that does them credit, they decided to let you have the whole benefit of Miss Harper's unfulfilled intention. I am commissioned by them to pay you the ten pounds."

"I'm sure, sir, I'm much beholden. Shall I write and thank the gentleman—or lady?"

"No, they require no acknowledgment."

"They're very good, sir; and I'm bound to say Miss Harper's famby always treated me liberally. The famby give me my mourning, everythink of the best, though not so good as the black I'm wearing now for Sir Aubrey Perriam."

"Sir Aubrey Perriam—the gentleman who married a pretty young woman shortly before his death," said Mr. Sadgrove carelessly, as if he had known all about it ever so long ago. "I suppose the widow is married again by this time?"

"No, sir, not married," answered Mrs. Tringfold significantly.

"But thinking about it, eh?"

"Thinking about it a good deal more than becomes a lady whose poor dear husband hasn't been six months in his grave! It's all very well to put up a marble tablet, and shut yourself up in your own room, and see no company, and call that grief!" said Mrs. Tringfold, sententiously; "but if you go and marry a young man you was keeping company with before-hand not six months after your husband's funeral, them as looks deep into things will think your marble tablet and your doleful ways nothing more than a blind. Blinds is made of a good many more things than calico at sixpence halfpenny a yard, sir," added Mrs. Tringfold, winding up with an aphorism.

"You can't expect grief to last for ever in young widows," rejoined Mr. Sadgrove, jauntily, "but I suppose Lady Perriam is hardly thinking of marrying just yet a while. Six months hence or so she might make up her mind. She'll show some respect for the 'conveniences,' as our French neighbours have it?"

"What would you say, sir, if I was to tell you that Lady Perriam is going to get married to her first sweetheart—which all Hedingham knows there was carrying on between them before Sir Aubrey took a fancy to her—to-morrow morning?"

"Nonsense, Mrs. Tringfold! I can't believe such a thing!"

"It's gospel truth, sir, whether you believe it, or whether you do not."

"Where are they to be married?"

"At St. Francis of Sissy, sir, just at the back of the Crescent; a new church, and very high, they say; though to my eye the steeple isn't as tall as the spire of our new church at Monkhampton."

"What time is the ceremony to take place?"

"At half-past ten, and it's to be strictly private, as it had need be. They're to go to the Lakes for their honeymoon, and then back to Perriam—to brasen it out, as I say—which Mr. Standen, being in the Monkhampton Bank, can't stay long away. Such a low match for a baronet's widow, and to give that precious boy a stepfather before he's out his double teeth!"

"They are to meet at the church, I suppose now," said Mr. Sadgrove in a conversational tone, after he had helped Mrs. Tringfold to a glass of sherry and a biscuit.

"Yes, Lady Perriam and him is to meet in the Vestry at twenty minutes past ten, and it'll be all over by eleven. Celine, her maid, is to be the only person with her, and me and my blessed boy are to start off to Brighton directly after the wedding, and stay there in lodgings that has been took for us in Rock Gardens till we get our orders to go back to Perriam. It's to be the dimallest wedding as ever I heard of."

"How long has Lady Perriam been in Willoughby Crescent?"

"Close upon three weeks. We came here straight from Brussels."

"Oh, you were at Brussels previously were you? Pray take another glass of that sherry, it won't do you any harm."