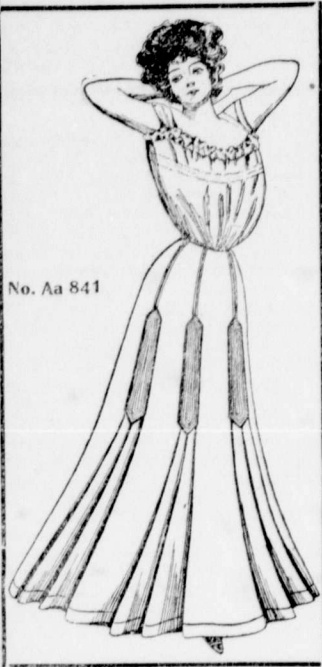


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Here is an opportunity for everybody. Whether you ever got a real bargain or not, the one we offer here never was and never will be equalled at. **\$3.45**



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No. Aa 925

ADDRESS THE ROBERT **SIMPSON** COMPANY, LIMITED TORONTO, CANADA

THE HALF SIR

By GERALD GRIFFIN

CHAPTER IX.—(CONTINUED.)

"I will never be done again," replied Mr. Hunter, "and it was then rather the result of indolence than actual fear. However peace be with politics! Let us talk of something else. You have some fine paintings there."

"A few," said Hammond.

"That is a good copy of Poussin, only (if my memory serve me right) a little more piquant than the original."

"I have heard it said (for I am no critic myself) that that was a general fault of poor Barry's coloring. You see I am a patriot in my pictures."

"All fair, sir, all fair. I like Barry myself. But if you're fond of historical paintings, I should recommend you to look at some of Allen's. Ah, sir, that will be a brilliant fellow—you'll see."

Hammond, while he could not avoid smiling at this piece of nationality in his northern friend, promised to avail himself of his suggestion, on the first opportunity.

"That is a bonnet which you wear which you have the green curtain drawn," said Hunter.

"Only a portrait," said Hammond, in a careless tone, blushing deep crimson at the same time.

"Now that you talk of portraits, sir," said Hunter, suddenly recollecting himself—"you remind me of a commission which my wife gave me, when she knew I was coming to see you. There is a cousin of hers lodging in your neighborhood at Mr. Falahoe's, a Miss O'Brien."

"I have heard of her," said Hammond, "but I have no suspicion that she was a relative of Mrs. Hunter's. Even the identity of the names had escaped my recollection. She had a fever lately, I believe?"

"She had—almost immediately after your convalescence. It was a most extraordinary circumstance how she could have taken the contagion, for though she was attentive to the people about her, she never went in danger of the disease. However, she has, it seems got some message for you, which she longs to deliver in person."

"From—from whom?" Hammond asked, hesitatingly.

"From a friend of ours, with whom she spent a considerable time on the continent. Excuse me, my dear sir," he added, laying his hand on Hammond's arm, as he observed his head droop suddenly, and his cheek whiten—"I am intruding strangely on matters of so deep an interest to you, but I am a mere agent—yet no cold one either."

"Pray, do not use ceremony with me," said Hammond, still trembling with an agitation which he could not command. "Talk of Lady Emily and her friend, as you would of indifferent persons. My heart is interested in what you said, rather from a long and bad habit in which I indulged it, than from the positive existence of any strong feeling, one way or another."

"Since you permit me to use the privilege of an old acquaintance already," said Hunter, "I will tell you that Lady Emily, after the death of her husband, of which you must have heard"

(Hammond bowed)—"expressed in a letter which she wrote to my wife, a strong wish to see you—in order to explain some mistake, which had at the first occasioned the misunderstanding that led to your separation. That wish she again expressed, more recently, to our friend Miss O'Brien."

"I understand you," said Hammond, with firmness, "but my answer to this is brief. When Lady Emily rejected me, and married another, she exercised a deliberate judgment, and I did not seek to obtrude my vexed and disappointed feelings upon her. I forgive her sincerely—fully—but I never will—never can, see or speak to her."

"And yet you forgive her! Ah, my dear friend, that is not the language of forgiveness. It is not the forgiveness which is required from us, in return for the pardon which we all need for our own transgressions. How would you feel, if when you solicited that pardon from the Being Whom all offend, more or less, the answer returned from the seat of mercy, 'I forgive you—but I never will see you—leave my paradise for ever.'"

"Your rebuke is just, Mr. Hunter—but admitting that it is so, of what use could it be to renew an acquaintance that would only bring back intolerable recollections to both parties? Our hearts and our persons are both changed now. I suppose I should scarcely know Emily, nor be known by her. For myself, I am conscious that the world and my own—ill temper, perhaps—have altered me strangely; and where Emily might expect to find some remains of the warm and enthusiastic nature that she once said she loved, she would only be shocked to meet a dark and morose temper, a furrowed cheek, and broken spirit in her old love. Let us not meet, then, to give pain to each other. We are not very far, perhaps from the close of all our anxieties; let us then step quietly from the world. Let us not vex the fallen evening of our days (since fate has made us hurry through our noon) with storms which are only the right of youth and youthful passion."

"If you knew the circumstances under which she expressed her wishes," said Hunter gravely, "it would not be so difficult to prevail on you."

Hammond looked keenly into his eyes.

"You are aware," the other continued, "that her health had been suffering for many years?"

Ever ready to anticipate the most gloomy posture of affairs, Hammond now listened with a suspense approaching to agony. Hunter, too, seemed to pause as if affected by some unusual emotion.

"The fact is," he resumed, "part of my commission is conditional; and as I have the liberty of reserving it to myself, in case you should consent to come and see us, I am anxious to prevail on you—for it is of a nature that I had rather trust to other lips than—" Hammond here interrupted him.

"If all this, Mr. Hunter," said he, speaking in a hoarse low voice, and almost sinking with apprehension—"if this has been only a preparation to let me know that Emily Bury is—that the worst possible calamity in this world has befallen me—it would be better, perhaps, that the conversation should rest here."

"I will only confine myself to my

commission," said Hunter. "Our cousin has a message for you."

"I understand," said Hammond, endeavoring to command himself while he gazed on the other with an absent and dreadfully ghastly eye. "I thank you, Mr. Hunter—you have discharged your part well and feelingly."

"I will not leave until you promise to meet Miss O'Brien at our place."

"Well, I will, but not now,—O not now."

"In the next month then?"

"Be it so," said Hammond, rushing out of the room.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Hunter, as he rode away, "it will be a long time to keep him in pain—but the women will allow nobody to meddle with matters of this kind but themselves."

CHAPTER X.

If thou be'st dead, why dost thou shadow
Sure 'tis because I live; were I but certain
To meet thee in one grave, and that our dust
Might have the privilege to mix in silence—
How quickly should my soul shake off this burthen!

—The Night Walker.

We now find ourselves in the position in which our tale commenced, when, as the reader may remember, we let Mr. Charles Lare seated at Mr. Falahoe's fireside, and expecting the entrance of their fair lodger. In a few minutes the lady made her appearance, prepared for the excursion which she meditated, and in a very few more, she and Mr. Lane were on the road leading to the house of Mr. Hunter, where she proposed spending the remainder of the day.

Whether it was that the lady did not feel pleased with her company, or that she had some secret cause for anxiety, her young squire observed that she was more, far more than usually meditative after they left the house—so much so, as on two or three occasions to have paid no attention to observations which caused him no slight degree of labor in concealing. They rode by Knock Patrick (a hill which is said to rise by a gradual ascent from Dublin), and he pointed out to her with his switch the chair of rough stones, near the ruined church, in which the great patron, St. Patrick, had rested, after his apostolic toils, including all the western district, in one general benediction he showed her the well at which the holy man had nearly escaped poisoning, and related at full length the legend of the Munster Dido, the foundress of Shanet Castle, a singular and striking fortification, which occupied the whole summit of a craggy hillcock towards the south. But all his eloquence was in vain. Miss O'Brien said "no" when he expected her to say "yes" laughed when she ought to have been shocked, and used an exclamation of really appropriate horror or compassion when politeness should have made her laugh at some piece of barbarous joke-slaughter. He was perfectly satisfied, nevertheless, that this inattention could not be the result of pride in Miss O'Brien; for though she was no favorite of his, he always remarked an almost too acute anxiety in her manner to avoid the slightest possibility of giving pain by any assumption of superiority. Indeed, she sometimes carried her condescension to an extent that young Lane would have thought a step too low for himself, and was very careful to observe and

acknowledge, with the ready sweetness which is so peculiar to high rank and intellect, the homely courtesies of the poorest peasants that passed her on the road. Mr. Lane, too, was quicksighted enough (although he was a kind of blockhead in his own way) to perceive that this eager humility was an assumed or engrained portion of the lady's character, and that her natural temper was directly opposite to it.

They parted, at length, at Mr. Hunter's door (the young gentleman not half satisfied with the impression he had been able to make of his own cleverness on the lady's mind), and Miss O'Brien entered the house of her friend. The lady of the house was alone in her drawing room.

"Welcome, a thousand times, and a hundred thousand Irish welcomes, my own darling friend," she exclaimed affectionately, as Miss O'Brien entered. The latter endeavored to speak, but could only fling her arms about Martha's neck, and weep loudly and bitterly.

"Is he come?" she at length asked, in deep agitation.

"Not yet—but we expect him every hour. He renewed his promise most earnestly yesterday evening."

"Oh Martha, I fear I have miscalculated my firmness. I could find it in my heart to turn back this moment, and run into some secret place, and die at once, and in silence. My heart shudders when I think of what I have undertaken."

"Ah, now, what weakness this is, my dear friend! 'Tis but an hour's exertion, and consider what peace of mind it will purchase you. For the sake of my poor friend Hammond too, I would advise you to sacrifice your own feelings as much as possible. Do, now, love!"

"I will, Martha—but I fear—I know how he must feel. However, I will try to exert myself."

They remained silent for a few minutes, Martha Hunter (so like the liberty of retaining the familiar relation of her youthful days) holding Miss O'Brien's hand between both hers and turning towards her a face which was filled with the sweetest interest in the world—a face in which the sedateness of the mother and the wife had not, in the slightest degree, overshadowed the beaming affection of the girlish enthusiast—a face as clear, open, and serene as a summer forenoon, while her eyes felt any stormier changes than that with which it was now gently clouded—the grief of ready sympathy for a dear friend's woe. But Martha had passed through life without a care or disappointment of any serious kind.—She was born to a moderate fortune—she met a young gentleman whom she liked for a husband, and she married him—she longed for children, and she had them—three boys—then she was left a widow, and a girl appears—everything, in fact, had run on so limberly with her, that if it were not for some rogue's tearing down her garden fence on one occasion for frigate—and that the drawing room window was three inches too high to enable her to see the Shannon from the sofa, she might be said to be a happy woman.

To judge, however, from the appearance which she now felt any stormier changes than that with which it was now gently clouded—the grief of ready sympathy for a dear friend's woe. But Martha had passed through life without a care or disappointment of any serious kind.—She was born to a moderate fortune—she met a young gentleman whom she liked for a husband, and she married him—she longed for children, and she had them—three boys—then she was left a widow, and a girl appears—everything, in fact, had run on so limberly with her, that if it were not for some rogue's tearing down her garden fence on one occasion for frigate—and that the drawing room window was three inches too high to enable her to see the Shannon from the sofa, she might be said to be a happy woman.

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once loved Emily—his first and last affection. This true lover had led a wretched life from the day of Mr. Hunter's visit; and all the exertions of his religious and philosophical mind were insufficient to suppress the rebellious sorrow that labored at his heart. The change that had taken place in his person, as well as in his mind, may, however, be most easily indicated, by introducing the reader into his apartment, as it appeared when Remy O'Leone entered it, kettle in hand, on the morning of this very day a few hours after the Wren-boys had departed.

Hammond was then seated at his solitary breakfast table, in the same dress which we have seen him wear on board the hooker—a blue frieze jacket and trousers, with a black silk handkerchief tied loosely about his neck—his hand clenched fast, and supporting his forehead, as he leaned upon the table. He suffered Remy to make the tea, lay the toast, and go through all the necessary preparations, without seeming to be once conscious of his presence. When he raised his head, at length, in order to answer a question put by the latter, the appearance of his countenance was such as made Remy start and gape with horror. His eyes had sunk deep in their sockets, while the lids were red, and the balls sunken and bloodshot—his lean and rather furrowed cheeks had assumed the pallid yellowness of death—his forehead and temples were shriveled, dry, and bony, his hair sapless and staring, like that of a man who has been long and severely afflicted with disease—his lips chipped and dragged—and altogether an air of desolation and anxiety about him, which nothing less than a luxurious indulgence of long sorrow could have produced. His voice, as he spoke to Remy, was rough, harsh, and husky, and the sharpness and suddenness of his manner showed as if his mind were in some degree shaken by the continuance of painful and laborious reflection.

"I will walk there," he said in reply to Remy's question. "Leave me now, and do not come until I send for you."

Remy left the room.

"Yes!" said Hammond, starting up from the table and making the door fast. "I will meet this envoy. A dying message—or dying gift, perhaps. No matter! Inhuman as she was, I can't forget that I have loved her—and her last thought and her last present will be dear to me, for they can never change. Oh, Emily, why did you wrong yourself and me so foully? When all the world left you—when you were lying on your death bed in a foreign land, did you remember old times? did you think of Hammond and his injuries with regret? and if so, why was I not apprised of your repentance? why was I not kneeling at your bedside, to commend her spirit that I loved with the words of forgiveness and affection? But no!" he added, stamping his foot against the floor, and setting his teeth hard in a sterner mood—"Let me not fool my nature. She died the death she earned for herself—the death of the proud and the high-hearted. Let me rather rejoice that it is so—for in her grave alone could she become again the subject of Hammond's love. I could not tell her, living, as I now tell her dead, that her image is still treasured among the dearest memories of my heart—that Emily Bury, the young, the gay, the tender, and the gentle, is still the queen of that blank and desolate region.

"My heart is worn, Emily," he went on, raising his outstretched arms as if in invocation of some listening spirit of its gentle decay had been accidental rather than natural. The contrast in the expression and appearance of both countenances was such as a painter, fond of lingering on the pictures of female loveliness and interest, might have seen with a delighted eye.

While both remained thus silent and motionless, indulging the long caress in the mute intelligence of old affection, they were suddenly startled by a knock at the hall door. Miss O'Brien rose from her seat.

"Do not be alarmed," said Mrs. Hunter, "perhaps 'tis only Hunter."

"Oh, it is he, Martha—the very knock—that hesitating knock—how often has my heart bounded to it!—but 'tis over—All is over now!"

"Be comforted, I entreat you," Miss O'Brien added, grasping at that arm rather than natural. The contrast in the expression and appearance of both countenances was such as a painter, fond of lingering on the pictures of female loveliness and interest, might have seen with a delighted eye.

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