

THE LOST EURYDICE.

24TH MARCH, 1878.

[The mother of a young officer, seen at the helm when the frigate capsized, was waiting his return at Southsea.]

"Lady, she is round the Needles, now St. Catherine's Cape they sight: Now her head is set northeastward; 'fore the beam the Foreland light. Look, we see the light from South Sea"—and beyond the fancy goes. Where Eurydice e'en now is gliding under dark Dunnoose:

Swan-like gliding, as some cloud that dark below the storm wind's hue. Towers into silver summits, sailing o'er the tranquil blue.

O the change!—and in an hour!—when, swan-like, on the harbour's breast. Plunge fur'd and voyage over safe the gallant ship will rest!

—All the movement of the haven spread beneath her eyes in vain. At a window watch'd the lady, gazing o'er the sunlit main.

Thinking from the Foreland lightship they perchance e'en now might see. See the noble ship—my ship!—for brings she not my boy to me?

Drifted from the waves the splendour, from the sky died out the blue:

Yet the lady saw not: deep beyond herself her sight withdrew.

Sunshine glow'd within her bosom: happy music in her ears. Love in glory painting all the beauty of his youthful years.

"Fit for earth, and fit for heav'n," she thinks, "what e'er his destined lot!" —He is there already. Mother! Mother!—and thou know'st not!

Thunderbolts of icy storm-wind in its panting bosom piled. Sudden, towering angry back, a cloudy wall looks wide and wild.

Like a squadron at the signal forth the mad tornado flies. Robed in blinding folds of snow, together mixing seas and skies.

—From the window turn, lady, toward the lightship look no more. Happy that thou canst not see the darkening headland, chalky shore.

Thirty minutes since they watched her stately vision, jocund crew! — All beyond from outward witness hidden, lost to mortal view.

Voice was none, nor cry of horror: as when snow-drifts whelm the dead. Smitten slain at once, and buried, where the mad tornado fell.

Right upon her side she dipp'd, then turn'd, and went within the main: Only at her helm the last, the gallant boy was seen—in vain!

—Ah! the sun once more, uncaring, glitters o'er the hapless dead. Golden shafts through twilight emerald piercing to their cozy bed.

There above the foam-deck'd waters, dapping sails and shattered poles. Lift themselves, a desolate beacon, o'er three hundred English souls.

There the sun may blaze uncaring, there the ripples kiss and play. Chalky cliffs and grassy headland smiling to the smiling bay.

But within the lady's soul the music and the glow are gone. This alone is left to cheer her, Mother! Mother!—this alone:

Though her heart's desire on earth her longing eyes ne'er meet again. True to God and England, at the helm, she sees him—not in vain.

PAUL CHANTREY'S DAUGHTER.

She paused a moment and gazed furtively around—this Margaret Chantrey, beautiful enough for any king's daughter, with the peculiar something that most people admit to be the prerogative of birth and breeding, an indefinable air and grace, a certain sumptuousness, if the word is not too important to apply to seventeen, blossoming in the tender sunrise of youth.

She, with her elegance, and refinement, and rich attire; her dainty feet, that seemed too airy for the common stone flagging, the maid behind her. What could this bright and fortunate and brilliant girl have to do with that poor young woman on the other side the street?

Margaret saw her; saw the pale, worn face, the eyes that bore traces of weeping, the shabby attire. Should she pass her by?

"No," she said to herself, with passionate eagerness, choking down a great lump in her throat—"Lina was always so good to me. It would be shameful ingratitude."

Then, bidding the maid stay where she was, she flashed across the street, caught the cold fingers from under the coarse shawl, her own warm and rosy from their nest of ermine; and in a strong, sweet voice, cried, "Lina! Lina!"

"Oh!"—with a start of surprise and a look of consternation rid of the heavy blue eyes—"Oh! it is not you, Margaret!"

"Yes it is Margaret. Lina, I have not forgotten those old days when you and your mother were so good to us. I must forget papa before I can forget that."

"But you are—so different now," said Lina du Puy, drawing back in sudden delicacy.

There was certainly a great dissimilarity between them. Margaret Chantrey, in her silk, and velvet, and ermine, and the long white plume trailing from the hat that crowned her curls of gold; everything was, in short, most rare and elegant. The other, in her brown dress and plaid shawl, and shabby black velvet bonnet, with some faded leaves and flowers. As to the two faces they might have been a study for a painter wanting contrasts.

Possibly Margaret Chantrey had as good blood in her veins as the proudest dame can have. Her father was that brilliant, successful artist, Paul Chantrey, who, in rare moments of boasting, would say that he traced his descent backward through generations. He was just a Bohemian, as are many other artists; perhaps their want of success makes them so. He did not paint many works. Those few were rare and beautiful; yet the public did not appreciate them until the daisies had blossomed above the grave in which lay the poor, worn man. Then fine judges said, "Here was, indeed, a genius! If he had been more persevering, or ambitious, or industrious—anything but idle, and poor, and proud." But Paul Chantrey was not idle, he painted and sold when he could find buyers. But he never asked a favour of any man. He was too gentle, and sensitive, and delicate to push his way through the turbulent crowd rushing up the hill of success; and then came his lingering illness and his death.

His wife was a noble and impoverished Italian lady. She went upon the stage for support, having no means, and no friends to help her. Mr. Chantrey lost caste when he married her, though she was lovely as a poet's dream, and inherited the grace and culture of generations of refinement. Her tenderness to him failed to ennoble her in the eyes of strict, pure souls who never knew cold or starvation, or hunger, or that worst of all agony—the lingering death of loved ones, when a tittle of the gold lavished by us upon a single luxury would have saved them. Being nothing but a stage singer, of course she was quite beneath the notice of well-bred people.

She was brought home one night to Paul himself then long an invalid, with a face of ghastly whiteness, and a small scarlet stream issuing from the pallid lips. During her exertions that evening, dancing for the sick husband and that was at home, and the poor little child, she had broken a blood-vessel. Paul sold the picture in which he had interwoven the love and ambition of his whole life, for a mere pittance, where-with to give her decent Christian burial. Some kind, humble friends came to take care of Paul then—Mrs. Chantrey's French friend, Madame du Puy, and her daughter, Lina, Bohemian, also, for Lina was a dancer on the same stage.

From that time Paul Chantrey never did a stroke of work. He was not able to do it. But he must live. Good Madame du Puy, who had nothing but her daughter's earnings, could not keep him much. It was decided that the little Margaret should go upon the stage, and dance too; and for twelve months she supported her father. Madame du Puy nursed him, for it was a long, lingering illness and death, and Margaret earned the pittance that kept them. The girl went to and fro with Lina, who was some years the elder.

On the very night that was Paul Chantrey's last, one whom he had known well, but had not seen for years, chanced to find him out—Richard Ashburton. He had gone very late to college, and then made nearly the tour of the world; while unsuccessful Paul was starving and dying. "You'll save my child, my darling, Dick?" he said, in the tremulous death weakness. "I know I shall find her mother an angel in heaven, and Margaret has been an angel here."

So Richard Ashburton carried the poor girl home to his mother, who had once loved Paul Chantrey like a son.

Yet it must be confessed that she shrank somewhat from this little dancing girl, whose mother had been a stage singer. "If Paul had but married wisely!" lamented Mrs. Ashburton.

However, they carried away the girl to their country house, and educated her, and brought her up to wealth and refinement. That was three years ago. Margaret was seventeen now, but older than her years, the result of her early Bohemian life. Just now they had come to town for a month or two's sojourn, and Margaret, chancing to be out alone, met Lina.

Margaret came out of her momentary trance. She was wondering whether anything besides wealth made the difference between herself and dear, noble Lina, whom she had loved with a child's fervour.

"But I'm glad to see you—so glad," with a long, quivering breath. "And you are in trouble—you have been crying? How is—Granny?"

"That is my trouble, Margaret," answered Lina, and the tears flowed afresh. "I've been to beg off, but couldn't. To-night is Mademoiselle Arline's benefit, and they will not give me up. Oh, Margaret, thank God every day of your life that you are not a dancer. We must dance, even if it be on the graves of our kindred."

There was a passionate anguish in the girl's tone. A sob that shook her light frame.

"Then Granny is—"

Margaret could not finish her sentence, but looked at her friend with an awe-stricken face. She had always called good old Madame du Puy Granny.

"Granny—my poor mother—is dying," said Lina. "I have been, as I tell you, to get ex-

cused to-night, and cannot. It seems that I would give half my own life to stay with her till she dies."

"Do you mean—dying now? To-day?" "The doctor thinks she will last till evening."

"Oh, Lina, Lina, take me with you. I must see her once again."

The young girl clung to her friend. She was not afraid of her silks, her velvet, and costly ermine being contaminated. For somehow the old life was strong upon her, and these three years of luxury were the dream.

"But Margaret—Miss Margaret, I ought to say—what will they think at home?" "Nothing; they won't be angry. Mrs. Ashburton may wait for me for one moment."

Running across the street to the maid who waited, Miss Chantrey told her to go home, that she was going to see a sick friend, and went back again to Lina.

They hurried along. It was noon—a bleak, dreary March day. Upstairs in a foreign-looking place, just ready to fall into decay, late in the garret room, lay Madame du Puy.

"She liked it better because there was no one to make a noise over her head," apologized Lina.

The house had been built by some aristocratic man who had a Dutch taste. Even this upper garret was large. It had two great dormer windows, one of which was filled with vines and flowers—a perfect greenery. The place was scrupulously neat, though the furniture was old and worn. A bright fire burning in the stove an atmosphere of warmth and faint perfume, an air of quaintness unusual. Margaret paused in astonishment.

In the bed, under a snow-white cover, lay a wasted, shrunken figure. But Margaret knew it at once, and was kneeling beside the couch a moment later, her great eyes full of tender pity, her own fair face flushed and tearful, and her plump, warm hands clasping those shadows that had nearly lost their hold on life.

"You don't know me, Granny, but I'm little Rita Chantrey. You used to call me Rita you know. I have never forgotten you, nor how you held poor mamma in your arms all that long night, and how you brought some white roses to put in her coffin."

Granny looked wistfully out of her sunken eyes. "You're a grand lady, now, we hear," breathed the dying woman.

"Not so grand that I've forgotten you, or ceased to care for Lina."

A sweet steadfast smile shone on the face. "Poor Lina! she has so few friends now. None I think."

How the feeble voice quavered through the words—Rita's heart was full of tenderest sympathy.

"Child!" touching Lina, "you are going to stay with me this one evening? You may stay."

The slowly-moving eyes questioned so hungrily that the pale girl wavered for a moment. How could she bear to tell her mother the truth.

"I am so glad, so thankful," murmured Madame du Puy. "No, I knew they would not grudge just the last evening to your dying mother. Rita, I am going—to the far country. Will there be any place for a poor old woman like me?"

"There will," said Margaret, clearly and earnestly.

"I sometimes think—but I never could understand all their doctrines. A parson comes in sometimes, and the prayers are sweet. But looking back on my life, I can see that I have done many wrong things."

"Granny," said Margaret, "you have fed the hungry and sheltered the homeless. You did not give a cup of water only, but the best you had, and sometimes all you had. Do you think God will not remember it, and be merciful?"

"Be merciful! That's it. Merciful to me a sinner! Ay, ay. He was so merciful that he sent His Son to die in our stead. Can't you say a little prayer, Rita? Our Father. That was His prayer. You know."

Margaret clasped her hands and repeated it, in a low, faltering, reverential tone.

After that she seemed to doze. Lina and Rita went over to the window and had a talk to themselves, interspersed with many tears.

"She has not suffered for anything," explained Lina. "Only since she got worse, when she feared that she might die at any moment. This going away of mine twice a day has been dreadful. Once or twice I have got off the rehearsal. But I couldn't get off the other. It breaks my heart to leave her alone to-night."

Lina broke down sobbing convulsively.

"And they would not—"

"No, it spoils the piece. I am a good dancer, you know, and have to take a chief part. But, oh! to think that while I am dancing she may be dying. Not to hear her last word; not to kiss the poor lips as the last breath of air flutters out of them!"

"Let me think," said Margaret. She looked steadily over the grey sky for many moments. Sometimes her face flushed, sometimes it was almost as pale as Granny's in yonder bed. It seemed to her one of the wrongest and saddest and cruellest things that Lina should have to leave her dying mother at the closing hour.

"Is there no one at the theatre who can take your place for one single night, Lina?"

"No one. At least, they say there's not, so it comes to the same. It is but an old dance, either—one you must remember, Rita."

"Describe it to me," said Margaret. Your part especially."

Lina suspecting not the drift of the question, described her part minutely. After listening for a few minutes, the recollection of it came back to Margaret; she remembered it well.

Presently she went away promising to return soon; but there was a strange look in her large, purple-gray eyes and a peculiar expression hovering about her mouth. Calling a cab, she told the man to drive quickly, and was soon deposited at the elegant mansion that was the present abode of the Ashburtons, who had cared for her since the night of Paul Chantrey's death. They grudged her nothing, these Ashburtons: education, accomplishments, luxury; and only demanded that she should forget the old life utterly in return. They spoke of her father's genius and misfortunes; but they never made the smallest mention of her mother. If, by ill-luck, Margaret spoke of her, she was met by a frown. Yet these three years had been very happy ones to Margaret Chantrey. They could not sigh over any lack of grace or refinement, or lack of beauty; all that was returned to them. At times it really appeared as if Richard Ashburton took a warm and tender interest in her, but he never expressed it. There were times when poor Margaret felt like a waif stranded on some distant shore, steeped in exquisite beauty; when one chugging, blossoming vine would have been more to her than all these stately halls.

It chanced on this day that Margaret was alone. Mrs. Ashburton had gone to her sister's in the country, and Miss Marsh, the governess, had had a telegram in the morning to say her father was ill. Where Richard was Margaret did not know.

"Do any of you know whether Mr. Ashburton will be in soon?" she asked of one of the maids, Wilson.

None of them knew. Dinner was being prepared as usual; it was supposed he would be in then.

Taking something to eat, Margaret changed her attire for plainer things. Then she called Wilson.

"I am going to spend the rest of the day with a friend," she said. "Perhaps I shall stay all night."

"Oh, Miss Margaret, and not even Miss Marsh here to ask? I am afraid Mrs. Ashburton would not like it."

Margaret had thought of this also. Perhaps her remaining out all night might offend Mrs. Ashburton. But then it might be so late.

"But where is it that you are going, Miss Margaret? The carriage had better fetch you."

"No, no. I shall come all safe without the carriage. Good-bye, Wilson."

"I'm not quite sure that it is right," thought Wilson. "I wish I had asked her more. Yet the child would not do anything wrong."

She brought some jellies and luxuries, and made her way back in a cab to the dilapidated old house. Lina brightened at her coming, but Granny had changed strangely in those few hours. Now and then she muttered some wandering words, or smiled faintly in Lina's face. And so the night dropped down upon them.

"Oh! I can't go," she said with a cry of despair and pain. "And they will keep back my week's pay, and perhaps give my place to another!"

"Lina!" Margaret took the tearful face in her hands. "Lina, I have been resolving all the afternoon that you shall not go."

Lina questioned her with frightened eyes.

"You shall dress, and let me go instead."

"What?" exclaimed the wondering Lina.

"Yes. I can take it. I can do the necessary dancing. I remember the part as though I had seen it yesterday. I can, and will take it. I shall enjoy it too. It seems to me that the one passion of my life is dancing. You shall stay here and watch: I know all about it, and will not be alarmed at anything. I have ordered a carriage to come for me, and it will bring me back safely."

"Oh, Margaret, I cannot allow you to do this; indeed I cannot. I will give it all up first, theatre and all."

"Yes, you can. I am almost wild for a taste of the old life, just a glimpse of the light and glamour, and the long beats of the inspiring music. Why, it would be delicious—for this once only."

"But your friends the Ashburtons?"

Margaret was silent for a moment. "They may be angry, perhaps, just at first; only that. Where's the harm, Lina? Mrs. Ashburton and all the people we know go to see this dancing; if it be right for them to look on, will it be wrong for me to dance?"

"My head aches," said Lina, wearily. "When I begin to think of the right and wrong, I get confused. Some of the grand ladies do things that we poor girls would shrink from, and yet they fancy that we—"

"Hush, dear. Let me bathe your poor throbbing temples. No one expects me home until late, so do not give it a thought. I am going to dance for you to-night."

Margaret overruled thus all active scruples. She had such a pretty, imperious way; and to-night, in her glowing health and energy, she was stronger to conquer than poor grief-worn Lina.

She curled her golden hair in wavy ringlets; and it looked like a shimmering sea. Her eyes were luminous lakes, and her cheeks blossomed like the heart of a rose. Some strange enchantment inspired her. She was going to have one taste of the old life.