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URIEL; Or, the Chapel of the Holy Angels.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE AUSTRALIAN DUKE; OR, THE NEW UTOPIA," ETC.

CHAPTER XXIV. SUNSET.

The return to Merylin seemed to have a reviving effect on Uriel's health, and for a week or two he gave hopes of regaining some degree of strength.

As long as the improvement lasted he used it to go about the place, so dear to him, driving sometimes to his farms and cottages, seeing the old people who remembered him as a boy, saying a kind word to everyone, and always thinking of something to be done for their comfort or benefit.

So April blushed and budded into May, and every day Aurelia's hopes grew stronger. "You will see," she said, "as the warm weather comes he will lose his cough: Naples must really have done him good after all; we shall keep him with us a little longer."

But, alas! as so many have made sad experience, the warm weather when it came only stole away each day a little more of Uriel's strength. Gradually the fallacious promise of improvement faded; it had been but the result of his joy at returning home, and in a week or two he had slipped back to his former level, and the wan cheeks looked more transparent than ever.

The drives had to be given up now; he could only take a few turns on the terrace that overlooked the sea, and to this spot at last his out-door life became limited. At one end of this terrace was the door of the chapel, which, coming and returning he never failed to visit; at the other, well sheltered from the sun and wind, they placed his couch, where he lay sometimes for hours, quiet and silent, gazing at the sea, as it broke in snowy foam over the rocks below, and listening to its music that he had ever loved so dearly.

"I like it better so," he said, "than calm and motionless, as it was at Naples; those dancing waves, with their joyous voices, they are like old friends, old comrades."

They seldom or never left him alone, unless it were at times when he called his little Uriel to him, and spoke to him in words which the child in all his after years loved to cherish and remember. Sometimes he liked to have them all around him, "his brothers and sisters," as he called the four; and though he could not speak for long together, he would look from one to another with his sweet kind smile, and tell them again and again how glad he was to have them with him.

When he did speak his words were gathered into their hearts like treasures, for they bespoke a soul so utterly dead to all human desires or regrets, that to him, it was plain, a longer life would only have been a longer exile. Nothing seemed to enter there that could disturb the profound tranquil peace of one who was simply waiting for his summons. So thankful for the past, so grateful for the present, for the circle of loving hearts that surrounded him, so well content that for him on earth there should be no future, nothing to

drag him back to hopes and deceptions, which had long been to him as dust upon the balance. Every day one or other of them took it by turns to sit by him and see to all his wants. They were all welcomed with loving courtesy, but it soon became evident that none knew so well what was needed in tending the invalid as Geoffrey.

Waiting on the sick is a gift, and Geoffrey possessed it in perfection. It required a strong arm to lift and support the gigantic frame which could do so little now to help itself; but Geoffrey's arm was as strong as his touch was gentle. Very soon his presence became almost a necessity to Uriel; he would look wistfully for his coming, and depend on him with the trustfulness of a child in the hands of its mother, and if any service had to be done which required peculiar dexterity one and all would generally agree to "leave it with Geoffrey."

One day when the others were away, and Julian was sitting alone with Uriel, he remarked that the latter was looking grave and thoughtful, with an expression on his face more nearly resembling anxiety than he had been used to see there. He scarcely seemed to hold what Julian said, and had the air of being absorbed and preoccupied.

"Julian," he said, at last, "I have been thinking about Aurelia; what will she do when I am gone? A lonely life for her, poor girl, in the old castle."

"Never fear for her," said Julian; "Aurelia is not like other women. Wherever she is she will make for herself a noble life, be sure of that. There is a pillar of strength within her."

"I know it," said Uriel; "still, I wish—." And here he paused.

"You wish what, dear Uriel?" said Julian; "it is so seldom you seem to have a wish."

"Not often, indeed," replied Uriel; "all my wishes in this world are granted—all—save one."

"And that is?"

"O, Julian, you must guess, you must see it—Geoffrey and Aurelia. If I could but see them as happy as you are, you and Mary; I am sure about Geoffrey, but he will never speak. I can't be so certain of Aurelia, yet who else could ever be worthy of her?"

"If I could but leave her in his care I should, indeed, be happy."

Julian reflected. "I have long felt sure there was something of that sort," he said; "Paxton gave me a hint about Geoffrey, and you know he has the eyes of an Argus. What are we to do? A team of horses would never drag Geoffrey forward in such a business."

"Why not?" said Uriel. "Why, if Geoffrey has anything to say, can't he say it?"

"Ah, you don't know him yet, if you say that," said Julian; "his diffidence in himself, or whatever you like to call it, is just monstrous. He would as soon or sooner think of aspiring to the hand of an empress."

"Rubbish," said Uriel; "I hope it is not all that senseless notion about the rank of the Pendragons; we should surely be ashamed of it by this time. Besides, if his sister is one day to be a countess, why on earth should not he be good enough for anybody?"

"It is not rank, merely," said Julian; "but our poor dear Geoffrey does truly and heartily believe himself to be such a dunce in mind and above all, such a hobgoblin in person, that I don't think he would ever find courage to propose himself for the acceptance of any lady, let alone your sister."

"Then I must find it for him," said Uriel; "I could not have imagined such a folly would have taken hold of a man of his sense. A dunce, indeed! why, he has the best head I know of; as clear as a crystal, with a princely heart, and as to his person, why, really, I don't see what's amiss. See here, now, Julian, we must not let this go on; if they really do care for one another, we must bring them together. St. Mary at Aurelia, and I will do my best with Geoffrey."

Acting in obedience to her husband's orders, Mary tried to open the ground with Aurelia, but found all her manoeuvres frustrated with a quiet dignity, which made all renewal of the attack impossible.

Uriel propped himself up, and was preparing to speak, when Geoffrey interrupted him.

"No, Uriel, not another word, if you please; I can't listen to it. I did not think you had any such fancies, and you must banish them. If you see what I never meant that any one should see, you will understand me when I tell you that the best thing I can do with myself, by-and-by, is to go to Manitoba. I must clear out of this, and begin life somewhere over again."

Last winter made me feel that to go on alone at Laventor, after all that has been, is more than I have strength for."

"Listen to me, Geoffrey," said Uriel, as soon as he could get in a word, "listen to me, and don't be a simpleton. Time with me is too short for such circumlocution. If you care for Aurelia, as I believe you do, tell her so."

Geoffrey shook his head. "Impossible," was his only reply.

"But do you care for her?"

"I fear so."

"Then why don't you speak?"

"How can you ask me, Uriel? It isn't kind."

"Look here," said Uriel, "should you think it kind, supposing Aurelia cared for you, to let her happiness go to wreck, as well as your own, and all for folly?"

"Care for me," said Geoffrey, "why, she'd as soon think of caring for a donkey. I wonder at you, Uriel."

"How do you know? Have you ever asked her?"

"Certainly not," said Geoffrey; "you need not have said that, Uriel."

"Very well, then, I shall," replied Uriel; "now, not another word, Geoffrey, you see I'm tired. Leave me alone to settle things my own way. I shall speak to Aurelia as soon as ever I see her."

History does not record what became of Geoffrey during the remainder of that day.

The next morning Uriel declared that the others must not tie themselves to the side of the couch, but must go for a stretch somewhere or other, and take little Uriel with them. If Aurelia would remain with him, that would be all he should want. Mary remembered that she had promised the child a clamber among the rocks, and declared that Julian must accompany them, to guard against their breaking their necks, or being swallowed up by the tide. They both understood that what Uriel wanted was an hour with Aurelia, secure from all chance of interruption, and had little difficulty in guessing how he would employ it.

"How Uriel is growing!" said Aurelia, as she watched the three set forth together; "I was afraid he promised to be more a fairy than a giant; but he is getting at last to look like a rosy-cheeked English boy."

"That is what I should like him to be," said Uriel; "national vanity is an odious thing, but, for all that, the English type is a grand one when you can get it."

"What do you call the English type?" said Aurelia; "it seems to me we all so different."

"But with something that is alike in our difference," said Uriel, "truth, fidelity, a sort of a sticking to duty—you see it in our very railway guards. It is something that wears better than a world of fine feathers."

"Very true," replied Aurelia; "I never cared much for fine feathers, as you know."

"Yes, I do know," said Uriel; "and I'm glad of it. And that just fits in with something I want to talk about Aurelia; will you listen?"

"What a question, Uriel! Listen to you? I should think so."

"Very well, then, don't be vexed if I come straight to the point; you know I haven't strength for a lot of preliminaries. It is about Geoffrey."

"What about him?" said Aurelia, in a voice in which an attentive ear would have discerned a tone of rather over careful tranquillity. Do you want him?"

"No, I want you just now, and no one else. See here, Aurelia, Geoffrey's future is in your hands; you are not going to throw him overboard, are you?"

Aurelia looked at her brother, and only said: "Throw him overboard! I don't know what you mean, Uriel; what have I got to do with Mr. Houghton's future?"

"Everything Aurelia," he replied; "if you don't see how it is with him, you have no eyes; his happiness is in your hands, and you are not what I take you for if you can sacrifice it."

Aurelia paused for a moment, then she said: "I think, Uriel, one should be truthful and straightforward in these things, as in everything else. Mr. Houghton has never so much as hinted at such a thing as you imply. Once, indeed, and only once—it was when Julian and Mary's affair came to light—I thought he spoke a little unlike his usual self, but it was nothing, you know. He has never given me so much as a word or a sign, and, as you see, there is no more to be said about it."

"I beg your pardon, there is a great deal more to be said," replied Uriel; "he won't speak because—well, I really can't explain it—he seems to fancy no one would ever think of him. Most absurd, I should say, only you can't make him see it. But yesterday I forced it all out of him, and I told him plainly if he did not choose to speak, I should; so now, I want your answer."

But no answer came, and after a few minutes Uriel sighed, as one disappointed. "Ah, well," he said, "I see I was mistaken. I am sorry now I forced his confidence, poor fellow. Forget what I have said, Aurelia; it must not make a difficulty between us. To my thinking, he has the noblest heart in all England; but, I see how it is, he is not enough of a hero for a woman to care for."

"No, no, Uriel, you must not say that," said Aurelia, her marble-like reserve giving place to a warmer rush of generous feeling. "He is, indeed, a noble heart, and if all you say is true it doubly proves it. When he fancied I was thinking of another, his only thought was how to make me happy. He has never thought of himself, never. Geoffrey Houghton is the only living man I could call a hero. Not care for him, indeed! who else is there in the whole world I could ever dream of caring for?"

"Ah, Aurelia!" said a broken voice behind her. She turned, and beheld—Geoffrey.

He had approached them while she was speaking, and at a gesture from Uriel had remained standing, and had heard her last words.

"Now, heaven be praised that you understand one another at last," said Uriel sinking back on his couch, as one whose heart was relieved of a heavy weight. "My last earthly wish is granted, and now I can die happy!"

Uriel Pendragon lived about three weeks after the event we have recorded. In the prospect of his sister's future marriage with Geoffrey Houghton he saw the fulfilment of all his hopes, and a security both for her happiness and the guardianship of his little Uriel. His cup, as he said, overflowed with gladness, he could only count up his mercies, and give thanks to God and the angels.

As to Geoffrey and Aurelia, their great joy came to them sobered and chastened by the thought of their coming sorrow. Their long wooing, if we may call it such, had been but little after the fashion of the world; and his happy issue could never now be disconnected in their minds with the memory of the last weeks, the last days of Uriel's earthly existence. The solemn sweetness of those last days entered into both their hearts, and knit them closer to one another. It is a nameless pleasure, as a poet has sung "to watch the sunset with the eyes we love"; and as they sat beside the couch of their dying brother, one thought often filled their minds—that it was like a beautiful golden sunset.

For some weeks he had been unable to leave his room; all the rites of Holy Church had been performed, and from day to day they could only watch and wait—wait for the eyes to close upon earth and open in heaven. The ineffable sweetness of those days, each one of which they feared would be the last,—may be guessed by such as have known such a time of waiting; it is a sweetness unlike anything else in this world, and has nothing of this world about it.

One day he seemed to revive a little from the exhaustion in which he had lately lain, and greeted those who came to him with a smile that was almost gay. "So much better," he said; "I am longing for the terrace; I want once more to feel the sea air upon my forehead."

"But you are not equal to it, dear Uriel," said his sister.

"Oh, yes, I am; it is only this sick-room life I cannot bear. You remember that German story of the dying knight who called for his war-horse. The life-boat was my war-horse; I feel just now as if I could guide it among the breakers. Let me look at the sea once more, the beautiful sea!"

In order to save him the fatigue of mounting the stairs, they had arranged for his use a chamber on the ground floor; so that Julian and Geoffrey, taking him in their arms, found no difficulty in carrying him to the terrace. "Let him have his wish," they said, "why should we deny him?"

He looked his thanks, as, with the utmost tenderness, they laid him on his couch. "So glad," he murmured, "so glad to be here. Are you all here, too? Uriel and Father Adrian?"

Yes, they were all there, and the child, who had been playing on the terrace, came to his father's side, and nestled close to him, holding in his hands a bunch of roses he had just gathered.

"My roses, papa," he said, "won't you have them?"

Uriel took the roses, and thanked the giver with one of his bright, loving smiles, then he lay silent for a while, looking at the sea, as it lay stretched out before him, with its intense blue, studded over with sails and sparkling breakers. "The beautiful sea!" he repeated again; "how I have loved it! But I am going where there will be no more sea; only the crystal one before the throne of God, and the angel's wings reflected in it! *Angelo Dei!*" and his voice sank to a whisper, but they saw his lips moving, and in their hearts they had joined in the prayer he was uttering. Presently his countenance changed, and Geoffrey, who was supporting his head, looked towards the chaplain. Suddenly and quickly the last summons had come.

Father Adrian understood the sign, and began the prayers for the departing soul; whilst here and there Uriel seemed to join as though he was conscious of all that was passing.

It was a brief half hour, and then they all knew that his release had come, and their tears flowed fast as they beheld him lying with that wondrous smile of peace upon his lips; one hand pressing the crucifix to his breast, and the other still holding the bunch of summer roses.

Our story is ended, and what remains to tell will be supplied by the imagination of our readers. Uriel was laid to rest among the tombs of his fathers in the chapel of the Angels, and according to one of his last requests the union of his sister with Geoffrey Houghton was not long delayed. The question, however, had first to be decided as to their future residence. Was it to be at Laventor or Merylin? The little Sir Uriel was to be under their care, and it seemed as if he, the last heir of his house, ought to grow up to manhood in his father's home, and with all the associations of a Pendragon.

But Aurelia would not hear of it. "Geoffrey shall never be asked to live in any but his own home," she said; "Uriel wished his son to be brought up by Geoffrey's hand, and under Geoffrey's direction. He can only do that by his own hearth, and living in his own manner. Besides, I am longing for Laventor."

"My dear," said Mrs. Houghton, who was present at the family council, "I am afraid it will be a great change for you. What can you find at Laventor to please you Merylin?"

"For one thing," replied Aurelia, taking the old lady's hand, and kissing it tenderly, "I shall find—a mother!"

"Ay, Aurelia," said Geoffrey, "a mother and a home are not bad things to begin with. And you are right; I should not be myself anywhere but at Laventor. But how about Merylin? It must be shut up, I suppose, till Uriel comes of age, and that won't be for fourteen years. It will be dull for the old place. I'm sorry."

"I am thinking," said Julian, "here are Mary and I, homeless and houseless vagrants. Why should not we hire the place, and keep out of the owls and bats till Sir Uriel takes possession? We must live somewhere, and I should like no place so well. There I could still keep an eye on the life-boats."

"Aurelia at Laventor and I at Merylin!" said Mary, "what a strange idea! Do you remember, Aurelia, how you talked once, and declared you loved our little bird's nest better than all the towers of the Pendragons? How little we either of us guessed that we should ever be exchanging places!"

"I remember," said Aurelia; "it was the day I came to speak to Geoffrey about the chapel. And he asked Julian; and it was Julian's cartoon that found Uriel. How wonderful it has all been; but it all began with the restoration of the chapel. It is really true; all our happiness, from first to last, has come to us through the Holy Angels!"

THE END.

The Confessional.

The following words are taken from a discourse by the late Cardinal Newman:

How many are the souls in distress, anxiety or loneliness, where the one need is to find a being to whom they can pour out their feelings unheard by the world? Tell them out they must. They cannot tell them out to those whom they see every hour: they want to tell them and not to tell them. And they want to tell out, and yet be as if they were not told; they wish to tell them, yet are not strong to despise them; they wish to tell them to one who can at once advise and sympathize with them; they wish to relieve themselves of a load in order to gain a solace; to receive the assurance that there is one who thinks of them, and one to whom in thought they can recur; to whom they can betake themselves, if necessary, from time to time, while they are in the world.

How many a Protestant heart would leap at the news of such a benefit, putting aside all ideas of sacramental ordinances altogether! If there is a heavenly idea in the Catholic Church—looking at it simply as an idea—surely next after the Blessed Sacrament, confession is such. And such is it ever found, in fact: the very act of kneeling, the low and contrite voice, the sign of the cross hanging, so to say, over the head bowed low,—and the words of peace and blessing.

Oh, what a soothing charm is there which the world can neither give nor take away!

Oh, what a piercing, heart-sounding tranquility, provoking tears of joy, is poured almost substantially and physically upon the soul—the oil of gladness as the Scripture calls it—when the penitent at length rises, his God reconciled to him, his sins rolled away forever! This is confession as it is in fact, as those who bear witness to it know by experience.

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