

"Then why not wait till then?" said Olivia, in a low and fluttering voice, as if she already anticipated the reply.

"Triffo not with me, dearest," answered he; "you know that in three days I leave Spain with despatches for the King. The Prince has chosen me to carry them to England, and I cannot explain to him the real cause of my reluctance. I must go: and how can I go without putting it beyond the power of fate to rob me of you? How can we tell what measures your father may adopt to induce you to accept the husband he has chosen for you?"

"And do you doubt my truth?" said Olivia, raising her eyes to her lover's face with a look that would have calmed the soul of Othello. But Listowel did not doubt. He had learned to know that death on the one hand, and the crown of Spain on the other, would never have tempted Olivia to break her plighted faith. Assurance on this point was not his object.

"Doubt you, dearest? no!" he answered. "But strange things are done in this country. Fathers have unlimited power, and sometimes but few scruples how they use it. Dearest, you must be mine before I leave Madrid. If not, I cannot go in peace—I cannot go at all. Yes," he passionately exclaimed, "I will forfeit everything—duty, friends, prospects,—rather than leave you, unless you are irrevocably mine."

Five short weeks before, and Olivia had never seen Sir Edward Listowel. He was now master of her whole soul; they had met daily. The hopes he had held out of his conversion served the double purpose of a pretext for these frequent interviews, and a veil that prevented Olivia from discovering, until too late, the real state of her feelings. Long before she had gained, as she devoutly hoped, a soul for heaven, her fate was sealed. She loved with a fixed unity of feeling, and overflowing tenderness, such as only a soul like hers could feel. And if the time that had sufficed to effect all this was short, remember, gentle reader, that time must not be reckoned by numerals only. The events of a day not unfrequently change the current of a lifetime; and the feelings of years are sometimes compressed into one hour's intense sensation. Well for you if you have never known the truth of this!

The work of proselytism now went forward rapidly, and her full confession of irrepressible love was made, as she fondly believed, to a Roman Catholic. Still there were many obstacles to surmount, and, but for that mission to England, she might have lived to look back upon these moonlight interviews as a romantic episode of her girlish days. But her lover's arguments were not altogether groundless, her faith with him was implicit, her father was stern and unapproachable, and the flowers had blossomed many times over the grave of the mother who might have saved her.

They were privately married. Two days afterwards, Listowel informed his bride that the journey to England was indefinitely postponed. Even the callous heart of this follower of Buckingham was touched by the delirious joy with which she welcomed his words, and a sharp though transient pang of unavailing remorse made him almost shrink from her fond embrace.

About this time the portrait was begun. Velasquez did not know who the lady was who came secretly to sit to him, and, satisfied with having to paint one of the loveliest faces that artist ever transferred to canvas, did not inquire. "It is only a head," soliloquised the great master, "but it is worthy of immortality, and it shall be the finest creation that ever passed from my pencil."

"What a radiant creature!" he exclaimed, as he stood gazing on his unfinished work one day towards the hour he expected her visit. "What a noble brow? What a glorious spirit lighting up the whole countenance? What life and brilliancy in those eyes! This must be love—and a love smiled upon by Fortune."

"The expression of the eyes was less bright to-day," thought the painter, as he contemplated the progress of the picture after the sitter was gone. "I did not much perceive it at the time, but I copied closely the expression that was there, and certainly the countenance is a little clouded. It may have been my fault; perhaps

it was my eyes that were dim. At all events I will be very careful next time."

Painstaking and careful indeed he was; but the change was now beyond a doubt. It was perceptible as she sat, and still more so in the portrait.

"The character of this piece is altering visibly," thought the artist. "At one time I thought it would have been the most radiant creature my art has ever embodied; but it will not be so now. It is beautiful still, perhaps more beautiful than ever, but the expression is saddened and subdued."

And thus it was, through faithfully copying the eyes of Donna Olivia, that those of the portrait grew sadder and sadder day by day, until they wore that look of mournful desolation so conspicuous in them still. Hers was the bitterest grief of all, more bitter than the grief of the bride who has lost her love while her faith was still whole in him—in him who has passed away in the flush and the hope of youth, like an air but just begun, the chords ceasing to vibrate while their tone was sweetest. She was beginning to doubt her husband's truth and love.

Soon after their marriage he began to tire of the perpetual hypocrisy necessary to sustain her belief in his conversion. The first moment that a doubt of this crossed her mind was perhaps the bitterest in her life. It is difficult for us to realize the exclusive spirit of Roman Catholicism, and the odium associated with the very name of heretic in the breast of a Spaniard, and above all, a Spanish lady—of that age. In Olivia's case, religion had been the only object her feelings had fed upon, until she had seen Listowel. Even the love now paramount in her heart had been entwined with religious thoughts and anxieties, and reached its climax with her lover's conversion. The revulsion of feeling was terrible, and to add to her misery she could hardly resist the conviction that he had played the hypocrite. "But no," she repeated, "he is too noble and too true to have acted thus. He thought he believed. He was blinded by his love for me!"

Whatever that love might have been, it soon became too apparent that it no longer exercised such an all-potent influence. He became irritable and impatient whenever she urged the subject of religion, and in his heat would sometimes say things that stabbed her to the heart. The Prince's visit was drawing to a close, and Listowel began to talk of returning with him, and to urge the necessity of deferring the announcement of their marriage for some months. Strange to say, although Donna Olivia keenly felt the insult, she did not resent it. Her once proud spirit was crushed and broken. She had staked all upon a cast, and heart, hope, and energy, were lost together.

Still she could scarcely believe that her husband no longer loved her. "When I recall what he has said on this very spot, it is impossible. I have become depressed and anxious about his conversion, and so look at things in a gloomy light. Not love me! It is impossible he should not. I will come to a full understanding with him this night about this English voyage. If I do not go with him, I shall never live to see him again."

There was a path arched in with trelliswork that bent beneath the clustering vine, a path that led to a grotto where a little fountain sparkled and played in the moonlight, dear to Olivia's memory, often since. She had first listened in that spot to her husband's vows of eternal love; and when wounded to the heart by his neglect, thither had she gone to recall the looks and tones of happier times, hoping against hope, striving in the recollection of the past to disbelieve the present. She was waiting for him there.

"Impossible," said he, in answer to her trembling appeal. "The negotiations with the Spanish Court wear an unfavourable aspect. The Prince sails without his bride, and it is impossible for me to acknowledge a marriage with one of the bitterest opponents of the whole scheme. No; stay, Olivia, until the Infanta comes to England, then avow our union, and come over in her suite to join me."

"That will never be, Edward. He is, as I said, —as I said to you the first day we met,—he is a heretic. They will never come together."

"Accursed be the word!" said Listowel, who was latterly strangely irritable whenever his wife touched upon the subject of religion. "Heretic, as you call him, the Infanta would be only too glad to keep him in her net, and Don Phillip himself would renounce the Pope and all his works to call the Prince of Wales brother."

"Be it so or not," sadly answered Olivia, "the match will be broken off. Edward, I must go with you. How can I bear this concealment, which even now preys upon me so heavily, when you are gone? Do you think I could live?"

"It is wild and wicked, Olivia," returned he, "to talk thus of the effects of a few months' separation. It is absolutely necessary that I should return alone to England, but you can follow me ere long."

"A few months! I shall never live to see those months in Spain, Edward. Can it be true,—is it possible that you are willing to leave me, that you wish it? Oh, my husband!" she exclaimed, fondly clinging to him, "say that you will take me with you!"

Listowel's reply, as he shrunk from her embrace, was couched in the coldest terms. So true is it that when we have passed away, the endearments that once thrilled through the very soul become absolutely repugnant. Olivia felt the gesture even more than the words it accompanied. All the slumbering pride of the heart he had trampled upon burst forth into life and vigour. The impulse was transitory, but it impassioned her whole being for the moment, and, starting to her feet, she exclaimed,—

"Then hear me, sir, I will go with you. If you are so lost to all sense of honour and humanity, I will appeal to the Prince of Wales. He shall hear my story. He will tell me whether the wife of —"

"He will tell you, madam," interrupted Listowel, compressing his fury at this threat into a sneer a devil might have envied, "he will tell you that you are not my wife! He will tell you that I am already married!"

For a few seconds Olivia stood speechless and motionless. Then came the terrible, dissonant scream of human agony that passes human endurance, and she fell headlong to the earth. It was the last sound that ever passed her lips.

A TRUE BILL.

EARLY on the morning of the fifteenth of April, information reached the French police that the Baroness de C. was lying dead in her bed, strangled with a piece of ribbon. She had been married as a widow to Baron de C., and was about twenty-eight years old, very pretty, of engaging manners; and both she and her husband were known far and wide for lavish hospitality.

Three weeks before the murder the baron set out for Russia, where it was said that he inherited some property from a relative. During the absence of her husband, the baroness kept very much at home, with Ernestine Lamont, a beautiful girl of the most innocent and simple manners, who had been educated and protected by her. On the night before the murder, the baroness went to the Opera. Ernestine, who was not very well, did not accompany her; neither did she sit up for her, as the baroness had a private key, and did not wish the young lady to be disturbed. It was the custom that when the baroness, on awakening in the morning, rang her bell, Ernestine went first to her bedroom. When, on the morning after the murder, no bell was heard to ring, the servants wondered, and at last one of them went up to Ernestine's room to ask the cause. It was empty. Thinking that she was gone, as usual, to the baroness's bedroom, the servant went thither. There the shutters were still closed, and the night-lamp burning on a little table by the bedside. On the floor lay the lifeless body of Ernestine. The girl now screamed for help; the other servants hurried up-stairs, and on opening the shutters it was seen that the baroness lay dead, evidently strangled with a piece of ribbon, which was at once recognised as belonging to Ernestine, who was lying in a swoon on the floor.