

## COR CONTRITUM.

What is this heart of ours  
Throughout the dusk, dependent years?  
A garden rank with faded flowers,  
An urn brimful of bitter tears:  
Our life with its proud record of high deeds  
Is choked with weeds.

We rise and then we fall,  
We stumble over veriest pebbles in the way,  
We hate and yet we love the thrall  
Of sinful joys and idolatries of clay;  
And our poor hearts can never firmly cling  
To the one good thing.

We faint upon the road,  
Our finger near cool fountains in the sensuous shades,  
Or else we strain against the good  
That spurs high souls unto immortal grades;  
And oft in sight of the celestial gate,  
We halt or deviate.

PERCEIVE! when the veil  
Of night is gathered o'er our couch of rest,  
PERCEIVE! must we humbly wait,  
With bended head and hand upon our breast,  
Another day has circled o'er our path,  
And we have reaped God's wrath.

Aye! and his forgiveness:  
Despond not, O my soul, nor be cast down—  
Though He is angered sore, yet none the less  
Will He forgive thy penance and relax His frown;  
If thou dost weep, He will condone thy sin,  
And make thee clean.

Thick as the mists that dance  
In the slant sun-beam—thick as the stars that shine  
In heaven—thick as the silken points that glance  
On the moonlit beach—or as the grains of brine  
That simmer in the unfathomable sea,  
Though thy sins be,

Yet, He will pardon all,  
Vea! and will take thee to His breast again;  
The Father loves the wandering prodigal,  
When he returns in penitence and pain;  
He that attends the plover's querulous cry,  
Will heed the culprit's sigh.

A heart contrite and lowly  
The pitying Master will not wholly spurn,  
The silent pleadings of deep melancholy,  
The bitter, bitter thoughts, the tears that burn,  
The low prostrations at His altar, move  
The bowels of His love.

Blest spirit of compunction!  
Sentiment of remorseful sorrow that imparts  
Unto our souls a vital union,  
A saving grace unto our sinful hearts,  
Do thou, like holy olives, heal  
All my soul's ills.

Good Friday. JOHN LE-PERANCE.

## LADDIE.

COMPLETE IN TWO NUMBERS.

## CHAPTER III.

(Continued.)

"I'll tell them to get some tea," he said, "you sit still and rest." And then he rang the bell decidedly and went out into the hall, closing the doors behind him. He had never felt so self-conscious and uncomfortable as when the man-servant came up the kitchen stairs and stood as deferentially as ever before him. He felt as if he had not got entire control of voice, eyes, or hands. His eyes seemed to avoid looking at the man's face in spite of him, and his voice tried hard to be apologetic and entreating of his own accord. That would never do! He thrust his obtrusive hands into his pockets, and drew up his head, and looked sharply at the man straight in the eyes with a "fight you for 2d." expression, or "every bit as if I owed him a quarter's rent," as Hyder said afterwards, and he spoke in a commanding, bullying tone, very unlike his usual courteous behaviour to servants, imagining that by this he conveyed to the man's mind that he was quite at his ease, and that nothing unusual had happened.

"Look here," he said, "I want tea at once in the dining-room, and tell cook to send up some cold meat. I suppose it's too late for cutlets or anything like that?"

"Is the lady going to stop the night, sir?" The words stung Dr. Carter so, that he would have liked to have kicked the man down the kitchen stairs, but he luckily restrained himself.

"Yes, she is. The best bed-room must be got ready, and a fire light, and everything made as comfortable as possible. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir." The man hesitated a second to see if there were any further orders, and Dr. Carter half turned, looking another way, as he added, "She is a very old friend and nurse of mine when I was a child, and I want her to be made comfortable. She will only be here this one night."

He felt as he turned the handle of the consulting-room door that he had really done it rather well on the whole, and carried it off with a high hand, and not told any falsehood after all, for was she not his oldest friend and his most natural nurse? In reality he had never looked less like a gentleman, and Hyder saw it too.

They say a man is never a hero to his own valet. I do not know if this includes men-servants in general; but certain it is that up to this time, Dr. Carter had kept the respect of his servant. "I know as he ain't a swell," Mr. Hyder would say to the coterie of footmen who met in the bar of the snug little "public" round the corner; "but for all that he ain't a bad master neither, and as far as my experience serves, he's a good a gent as any of them, and better any day than them dandy, half-pay captings as looks up their wine and cigars, and sells their old clothes and keeps their men on scraps, and cusses and swears as if they were made of nothing else."

But as Hyder went to his pantry that night, he shook his head with a face of supreme dis-

gust. "That's what I call nasty!" he said; "I'm disappointed in that man. I thought better of him than this comes to. Well, well! blood tells after all. What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh sooner or later. Nurse indeed! Get along! you don't humbug me, my gent!"

There were no signs, however, of these moralizings in the pantry, or the fuller discussion that followed in the kitchen when he announced that supper was ready.

"Do ye have your victuals in the kitchen now, Laddie?" the old woman said. "Well, there! it is the most comfortable to my thinking, though gentle-folks do live in their best parlours constant."

Hyder discreetly drew back, and Dr. Carter whispered with a crimson flush all over his face, "Hush, we'll have our talk when this fellow is out of the way. Don't say anything till then."

The old woman looked much surprised, but at last concluded that there was something mysterious against the character of "the very civil-spoken young man as opened the door," and so she kept silence while her son led her into the dining-room, where tea was spread with, what appeared to the old woman, royal magnificence of white damask and shining silver.

"You can go," the doctor said. "I will ring if we want anything."

"He don't look such a baddish sort of young man," she said, when the door closed behind the observant Hyder; "and he seems to mind what you says pretty sharp. I thought as he was a gent himself when he opened the door, as he had'n't got red breeches or gaiters or nothing, but I suppose you'll put him into livery by-and-by."

"Now, mother, you must have some tea. And you are not to talk till you have eaten something. Here! I'll pour out the tea." For the glories of the silver tea-pot were drawing her attention from its reviving contents. "I hope they have made it good. Ah! I remember well what tea you used to make in that little brown tea-pot at home." It was very easy and pleasant to be kind to her, and make much of her now, when no one else was there. He enjoyed waiting on her and seeing her brighten up and revive under the combined influence of food, and warmth, and kindness. He liked to hear her admire and wonder at everything, and he laughed naturally and boyishly at her odd, little innocent remarks. If they two could have been always alone together, with no spying eyes and spiteful tongues, it would have been all right and pleasant, but as it was, it was quite impossible and out of the question.

"It ain't the tea-pot, Laddie, as does it. It's just to let it stand till it's drawn thorough and no longer. Put it on the hob for ten minutes, say I, but that's enough. I don't like stewed tea, and moreover it ain't wholesome neither. This is a fine room, Laddie, and no mistake. Why, the parson ain't got one to hold a candle to it. I'd just like some of the Sunnybrook folk to have a look at it. It would make them open their eyes wide, I warrant!—to see me a-setting here like a lady, with this here carpet as soft as anything, and them curtains, and pictures, and all! I wonder whatever they would say if they could see? I suppose now, as there's a wash-up or a place out behind somewhere for them servants?"

Dr. Carter laughed at the idea of Mrs. Treasure the cook, and the two smart housemaids, let alone Mr. Hyder, being consigned to a washhouse at the back, and he explained the basement arrangements.

"Under-ground. Well! I never did! But I think I've heard tell of underground kitchens before, but I never would believe it. It must be terrible dark for the poor things, and damp moreover, and how poor silly gals is always worrying to get places in London, passes me!"

Presently, when they had done tea, and gone back into the consulting room, when the old woman was seated in the arm-chair, with her feet on the fender, and gown turned up over her knees, Dr. Carter drew his chair up near hers, and prepared for his difficult task.

"Mother," he said, laying one of his hands caressingly on her arm, he was proud of his hands—it was one of his weaknesses that they were gentleman's hands, white and well shaped, and there was a plain gold strap-ring on the little finger, which hit exactly the right medium between severity and display, as a gentleman's ring should, "Mother I wish you had written to tell me you were coming."

She took his hand between both her own, hard and horny, with the veins standing up like cord on the backs, rough and misshapen with years of hard work, but with a world of tender mother's love in every touch, that made his words stick in his throat and nearly choke him.

"I knew as you'd be pleased to see me, Laddie, come when I might or how I might."

"Of course I'm glad to see you, mother, very glad; and I was thinking just before you came in that I would run down to Sunnybrook to see you just before Christmas."

And then he went on to explain how different London life was to that at Sunnybrook, and how she would never get used to it or feel happy there, talking quickly and wrapping up his meaning in so many words and elaborations that at the end of half an hour the old woman had no more idea of what he meant than she had at the beginning, and was fairly mystified. She had a strange way, too, of upsetting all his skillful arguments with a simple word or two.

"Different from Sunnybrook? Yes sure; but she'd get used to it like other folks. Not happy? Why she'd be happy anywhere with her Laddie. There, don't you fret yourself about me; as long as you're comfortable I don't mind nothing."

How could he make her understand and see the gulf that lay between them—her life and his? It needed much plainer speaking, a spade must be called a spade, and, somehow, it looked a very much more ugly spade when so called. How soon did she catch his meaning? He hardly knew, for he could not bear to look into her face and see the smile fade from her lips and the brightness from her eyes. He only felt her hand suddenly clasp his more tightly, as if he had tried to draw it away from her, and she grew silent, while he talked on quickly and nervously, telling her they would go together to-morrow and find a little snug cottage not far from London, with everything pretty and comfortable that heart could wish for, and a little maid to do the work, so that she need never lay her hand to anything; and how he would come to see her often, very often, perhaps once a week. Still never a word for or against, of pleasure or of pain till he said,

"You would like it, mother, wouldn't you?"

And then she answered slowly and faintly—"I'm awery, Laddie, too tired like for new plans; and maybe, dearie, too old."

"You must go to bed," he said, with a burst of overwhelming compunction. "I ought not to have let you stop up like this. I should have kept what I had to say till to-morrow when you were rested. Come, think no more of it to-night, everything will look brighter to-morrow. I'll show you your bedroom."

And so he took her upstairs, such a lot of stairs to the old country legs; but her curiosity overcame her fatigue sufficiently to make her peep into the double drawing-room where the gas lamp in the street threw weird lights and shadows on the ceiling and touched unexpectedly on parts of mirrors or gilded cornices, giving a mysterious effect to the groups of furniture and the chandelier hanging in its holland covering.

"'Tis mighty fine!" she said, but an unkind place to my mind; like a church-yard somat."

Her bedroom did not look "unked," however, with a bright fire burning, and the inviting chintz-curtained bed and the crisp muslin-covered toilet-table; the figure of the little old woman was reflected among the elegant comfort of the room, looking all the more small and shabby, and old, and out of place in contrast with her surroundings.

"Now make haste to bed, there's a good old mother; my room is next to this if you want anything, and I shall soon come up to bed. I hope you'll be very comfortable. Good-night."

And then he left her with a kiss, and she stood for some minutes quite still, looking at the scene reflected in the glass before her, peering curiously and attentively at it.

"And so Laddie is ashamed of his old mother," she said softly, with a little sigh; "and it ain't no wonder!"

As Dr. Carter sat down again in his consulting-room by himself, he told himself that he had done wisely, though he had felt and inflicted pain, and still felt very sore and ruffled. But it was wisest, and practically kindest and best for her in the end, more surely for her happiness and comfort; so there was no need to regret it, or for that tiresome little feeling in one corner of his heart that seemed almost like remorse. This is no story-book world of chivalry, romance and poetry, and to get on in it you must just lay aside sentimental fancies and act by the light of reason and common sense. And then he settled down to arrange the details of to-morrow's plans, and jotted down on a piece of paper a few memoranda of suitable places, times of trains, &c., and resolved to spare no pains or expense in making her thoroughly comfortable. He even wrote a note or two to put off some appointments, and felt quite gratified with the idea that he sacrificing something on his mother's account. The clock struck two as he rose to go up to bed, and he went up feeling much more composed and satisfied with himself, having pretty successfully argued and reasoned down his troublesome, morbid misgivings. He listened at his mother's door; but all was quiet, and he made haste into bed himself, feeling he had gone through a good deal that day.

He was just turning over to sleep when his door opened softly and his mother came in—such a queer, funny, old figure, with a shawl wrapped round her and a very large nightcap on—one of the old-fashioned sort with very broad flapping frills. She had a candle in her hand, and set it down on the table by his bed. He jumped up as she came in.

"Why, mother, what's the matter? Not in bed? Are you ill?"

"There, there! lie down; there ain't nothing wrong. But I've been listening for ye this long time. 'Tis fifteen year and more since I tucked you up in bed, and you used to say as you never slept so sweet when I didn't do it."

She made him lie down, and smoothed his pillow and brushed his hair off his forehead, and tucked the clothes round him, and kissed him as she spoke—

"And I thought I'd like to do it for you once more. Good-night, Laddie, good-night."

And then she went away quickly, and did not hear him call "Mother, oh, mother!" after her, for the carefully tucked-in clothes were

flung off and Laddie was out of bed, with his hand on the handle of the door, and then—second thoughts being cooler, if not better—"she had better sleep," Dr. Carter said, and got back into bed.

But sleep did not come at his call; he tossed about feverishly and restlessly, with his mind tossing hither and thither as much as his body, the strong wind of his pride and will blowing against the running tide of his love and conscience, and making a rough sea between them, which would not allow of any repose. And which of them was the strongest? After long and fierce debate with himself he came to a conclusion which at all events brought peace along with it. "Come what may," he said, "I will keep my mother with me, let people say or think what they will; even if it costs me Violet herself, as most likely it will. I can't turn my mother out in her old age, so there's an end of it." And there and then he went to sleep.

It must have been soon after this that he woke with a start, with a sound in his ears like the shutting of the street-door. It was still quite dark, night to Londoners, morning to country people, who were already going to their work and labour, and Dr. Carter turned himself over and went to sleep again, saying, "It was my fancy or a dream," while his old mother stood shivering in the cold November morning outside his door, murmuring,

"I'll never be a shame to my boy, my Laddie; God bless him."

## CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Dr. Carter opened his door next morning, he found his mother's room empty, and it seemed almost as if the events of the night before had been a bad dream; only the basket of apples, and the handbox, still tied up in the spotted handkerchief, confirmed his recollections, and when he went down, the pattern, still on his writing-table, added their testimony. But where was his mother? All the servants could tell him was that they had found her bedroom door open when they came down in the morning, and the front door unbarred and unbolled, and that was all.

"She has gone back to Sunnybrook," he said to himself, with a very sore heart; "she saw what a miserable, base-hearted cut of a son she had, who grudged a welcome and a shelter to her who would have given her right hand to keep my little finger from aching. God forgive me for wounding the brave old heart! I will go and bring her back; she will be ready to forgive me nearly before I speak."

He looked at the train paper, and found there was an early, slow train by which his mother must have gone, and an express that would start in about an hour, and reach Martel only a quarter of an hour after the slower one. This just gave him time to make arrangements for his engagements, and write a line to Violet, saying he was unexpectedly called away from London, but that he would come to her immediately on his return, for he had much to tell and explain. The cab was at the door to take him to the station, and everything was ready, and he was giving his best directions to Mr. Hyder.

"I shall be back to-morrow, Hyder, without fail, and I shall bring my mother with me." He brought out the word even now with an effort, and hated himself for the flash that came up into his face, but he went on firmly, "that was my mother who was here last night, and no man ever had a better."

I don't know how it happened, but everything seemed topsy-turvy that morning; for all at once Dr. Carter found himself shaking hands with Hyder before he knew what he was about, and the deferential, polite Hyder, whose respect had always been slightly tinged with contempt, was saying, with tears in his eyes, "Indeed, sir, I see that all along; and I don't think none the worse of you, but a deal the better for saying it out like a man; and me and cook and the gals will do our best to make the old lady comfortable, that we will!"

Dr. Carter felt a strange, dream-like feeling as he got into the cab. Everyone and everything seemed changed, and he could not make it out; even Hyder seemed something more than an excellent servant. It was quite a relief to his mind, on his return next day, to find Hyder the same imperturbable person as before, and the little episode of handshaking and expressed sympathy not become a confirmed habit. It was a trilling relief even in the midst of his anxiety and disappointment, for he did not find his mother at Sunnybrook, nor did she arrive by either of the trains that followed the one he came by, though he waited the arrival of several at Martel. So he came back to London, feeling he had gone on the wrong track, but comforting himself with the thought that he would soon be able to trace her out wherever she had gone. But it was not so easy as he expected; the most artful and experienced criminal escaping from justice, could not have gone to work more skillfully than the old woman did quite unconsciously. All his inquiries were fruitless; she had not been seen or noticed at Paddington none of the houses or shops about had been open or astir at that early morning hour. Once he thought he had a clue, but it came to nothing, and, tired and dispirited, he was obliged, very unwillingly, to put the matter into the hands of the police, who undertook with great confidence to find the old woman before another day was past.