

THE HALF SIR

By GERALD GRIFFIN

CHAPTER IV.

He was a white of high renown. And thou art but of low degree. The pride that useth this country downe— Man, take this old cloak about thee— Percy's Heir.

"That," said Hamond, leaning over the back of his chair, and seeming to speak half in soliloquy, as he remained with his eyes fixed on the door—"that is one of the peculiarities—the invaluable privileges of this polished world, which make it so miserable to me—that fiery of insult which makes resentment appear ridiculous, and yet does not leave the insulted free from the responsibility of meanness, if he should remain quiescent. You look fretted, Miss Bury," he added gently, but firmly, "at my humiliation but I shall not need your commiseration long. I am about to leave Dublin."

"Leave us Mr. Hamond!" said Emily, taken by surprise.

"Leave Dublin, I said," resumed Hamond.

"For any considerable time?"

"Yes."

There was an embarrassed pause of a few moments, during which Hamond seemed to experience a relapse into his natural timidity. At length mastering himself by a moment's reflection on the urgency of the occasion, he said:—

"If you think, Miss Bury, that we are not likely to be interrupted, I have something very particular to say to you."

Emily was, as we have before said, very young, and though she frequently listened without much emotion to the fashionable rhapsodies of those who thought it fashionable to be her admirers, yet this was the first time that she had been menaced with a methodical declaration: and from one, too, so tender, so delicate, and so sincere. She felt all the awfulness of the occasion. Her color changed rapidly, and there was a troubled consciousness in her laugh, as she said, in assumed levity:—

"No tragedy now, Mr. Hamond, let me entrust. I declare, I—"

"O Miss Bury," said Eugene, smiling, but with such seriousness of tone and look, "let me hear anything but trifling now. Hear me attentively, I beseech, I implore you. When we first met, I was on the point of being for ever from a world where I had experienced little comfort, where I found nothing but taunting looks, cold and repulsive words, and haughty indifference, even from those who, like that man who just now left the room, had nothing more to allege in justification of their unkindness than—no matter. I had satisfied myself that I was wrong in ever supposing that any circumstances could entitle me to elevate myself above the rank in which Heaven had placed him—"

"Oh surely you were not wrong, Mr. Hamond," said Emily, in a tone of bashful remonstrance, "there were circumstances—your talents—your education, I should say—"

"Yes," said Hamond, "this, Miss Bury, it was which detained me. I should have been long since in the retirement of my native village, but for the sweet words of encouragement with which you honored me. Your kindness, your condensation, and—your need not blush, Miss Bury, for it is true, or I would not say it—your beauty, too, held me back awhile, and enabled me to endure a little longer the inconveniences I have mentioned to you. I may have been long, nevertheless, in the motive of that kindness," he added more slowly, and with great anxiety of manner, "do not mistake me, Miss Bury. Dearly as I prized and treasured every word and look of kindness with which my heart was soothed, I am ready to take all the responsibility of my own interference upon my own hands. If I must do so, let me beg of you to speak freely. I love you far too well to wish that you should make the least sacrifice for my happiness—"

"I am sure, Mr. Hamond, I—"

"Let me entreat you to be convinced of this, Miss Bury, before you speak. Pray be confident with me. You may find that I am not selfish nor unworthy, although"—Hamond added, after a pause, "although you may think I stooped too low to win what you withhold from me."

The sincerity of the young gentleman's declaration had its effect on the mind of the lady. We have not learned what were the precise terms of her reply, but its meaning was evident from the conduct of Hamond. He flung himself at her feet, and suffered his ecstasies to expend themselves in certain antics and grimaces, which the respect due to his character and gravity of a hero forbids us, as his friend and historian, to expose to the public eye.

When Martha O'Brien returned, alone to the room where she had left her friend, she found the latter pale, trembling and thoughtful (in quite a different mood from that in which we have left her now accepted lover), her arm and forehead resting against the harp, in the manner of a weeping muse.

"Bless me! where's Eugene Hamond gone?" said Martha, casting a sharp glance at Emily.

"Home, I believe," said the latter, seriously.

"Check-mated, I'll lay my life!"

"Nonsense, Martha, you'd be foolish now."

"Scholar's mate, after all!"

"I'll pish!" Emily said, pettishly.

"Well, how was it, Emily? What did he say to you?—do, do, tell me, and I won't say a word about the 'ripe peaches,' nor the 'little holiday,' nor the 'three moves, nor the 'drawn game,' nor—"

"Pooh! pooh! I really believe your little portion of common sense is going."

"Well, there! I won't laugh again—there, now is a sober face for you. Now tell me how it was."

"Oh my word, Martha, I hardly know myself. I scarcely know where I was when I don't know—but I believe the fellow asked me to marry him—"

"And you—but you look paler, Emily!—you are trembling—lean on me—there—I'm sure I would not have said a word if I thought—"

The strangeness of the scene which she had gone through, the hurried manner and intense passion with which she had been addressed, the importance and seriousness of the consequences which she had drawn upon herself, only now rushed upon Emily's mind, and filled her with agitation. She drew a long, deep sigh, and flinging her arms around the neck of her young friend, wept aloud upon her bosom. Many of our sensible readers shall wonder at all this, but every girl as young as Emily will feel that we are telling the truth.

There is a pleasure to those who are possessed of faculties microscopic enough for the investigation, in tracing out to their first cause the thousand impulses which govern the actions of that sex who are most the creatures of impulse—in winding through the secret recesses of the female heart, and detecting in the very centre of the "soft labyrinth" the hidden feeling, whatever it is, which dictates the (to us) unaccountable caprices we so frequently make to suffer under, and which does its work so privately that even the victims of its influence and the slaves of its will, seem almost unconscious of its existence. Few, however, are gifted with the fineness of penetration requisite for such delicate scrutiny, and we are too honest and charitable to wish to be among the number. Neither, perhaps, is precision requisite for our purpose, whose business is rather to trace out than with motive, and whose part it is merely to submit a certain train of results which are to be accounted for, and acknowledged or rejected, by the philosophy of the feeling, and the imagination of the reader. We shall not, therefore, attempt any labored analysis of the new causes of disagreement which speedily sprung up between the lovers, after every thing appeared to have been so smoothly arranged between them, after the consent of Emily's guardian had been obtained, and even Mr. O'Neill had begun to reason himself into a toleration of the young nabob. Hamond's ready talking had taken Emily quite by surprise; and it is pretty certain that if she had been left a longer time to deliberate, Hamond would have been put to a longer term of probation. She felt vexed with her own action, and a little alarmed at the inference her lover might draw from it. She had not done justice to her own value. Besides, Hamond's way of love-making was anything, she persuaded herself, but flattering to her desire of influence. He had not sufficiently kept her superiority in mind—he had been so impudently collected and sensible, so presumptuously self-possessed. She thought on the subject the more convinced she was of the necessity of impressing him with a proper sense of the honor he had obtained.

The means which she adopted to accomplish this, however, were not the happiest in the world. Hamond was not much struck by the pettish and sometimes rather cold manner in which she was accustomed to receive him, as there was nobody more disposed to make allowances for the influence of a peculiar education; but when he observed indications of a marked haughtiness in her demeanor, when she began to speak fluently of genealogies in his presence, to quote Marmontel and De Loime on the advantage of titles, to talk pathetically of ill-sorted matches, of poor Addison and his high-born dowager—he felt as if a new light were dawning on his mind, with the utmost caution, resolving to creep unawares and with a velvet footstep into the very centre of her character, and shape his conduct according to the conformation which would be there revealed to him.

"I begin to believe," said he, "that I was mistaken in supposing that there could even be an exception to the general position, that it is as easy to brush the shades of her phases from the moon's disk as to sift out of the draft of pride and coldness from high birth. My single lonely instance begins to fail me. I will try it farther, however."

Hamond thus proceeded, hiding his apprehension of her meaning from her, and consequently drawing her out every day into more decided slight and answers. He had almost made up his mind on the subject, when one evening, as he was sitting by her side at a small party of friends, some of whom had come to town for the purpose of assisting at the nuptial ceremony, the conversation happened to turn on the comic peculiarities of our friend Remy O'Loone.

"O, he's the drollest creature in the world," said Emily.

He never troubles himself to inquire what the object may be of any acquirement that he receives, but just does whatever you ask him, like a clock, not out of stupidity neither, but merely from a wish to steer clear of any responsibility to himself. It was only a week since, Hamond told him, as he was going to bed at night, that he had wanted to send him here to Miss Bury in the morning, expecting of course that poor Remy would ask to know his message in the morning, before he set off. But Remy would not ask. Not he, indeed. He was here with me at the 'first light,' as he said himself.

"Well, Remy," said I, "what brought you here so early?" "What, I don't know, Miss," says Remy, "but the master told me he'd want me to step over to your honor to day mornen, so I thought most likely, Miss, you must know what it is all'ded him." Hamond was telling me a still more curious anecdote about him. He was sent once to a fair in Munster, the fair of Hanna—Venna—Shana—what was it, Hamond?"

"Shanagolden," said Eugene, bowing and smiling.

"O yes, the fair of Shanagolden. His mistress wanted to purchase half a dozen mug—hog—pig."

"Piggins, they were," said Hamond in reply to her puzzled look, "pi-g pig, g-i-n-s gins, piggins," spelling the word, to show how coolly and equably he took it. "A kind of wooden vessel used for drinking the coagulated resi-

dium of milk, called by the peasantry blisks, or skimmed milk."

"Yes," added Emily. "Well, his mistress desired Remy to purchase half a dozen piggins, and provided him with money for those as well as many other articles. She was rather an anxious poor lady, however, and fearing that Remy might forget his message, she wrote a dozen other friends, of hers, who were also going to the fair, to repeat it to him if they should come in contact with him. They all did so, as it happened, and Remy, determined to punish the good lady for her distrust in his talents, took each as a separate message, and came home in the evening as heavily loaded with piggins as Moses Primrose with his green spectacles."

After the merriment which was occasioned by Emily's arch manner and the exquisite imitation, which she contrived to introduce, of Hamond's native dialect, had subsided, some one asked who this Remy O'Loone was?

"O, 'pon my honor, that would puzzle the heralds themselves to tell you, I believe," said Emily, rapidly and lively. "Who is he, Hamond? No relation of ours?"

The moment she had uttered the words Emily contributed to it than any other Hamond addressed himself, during the remainder of the evening, to Martha O'Brien, while young E— took place by the side of Emily, and succeeded in persuading himself, notwithstanding her occasional fits of absence and indirect answers, that he had made more way in her estimation on this night than on any other since he had achieved the honor of her acquaintance. His assiduity, however, was absolute torture to Emily, who was anxiously looking out for an opportunity of doing away the unkindness she had blundered upon. None occurred. Once only as she glanced towards him she met Martha's eyes, who compressed her lips, raised her hand slightly, and tossed her head, as much as to say, "You have done it!" to which Emily's frightened smile as plainly responded—

"Done what?"

The company at length separated. Hamond shook hands with Miss O'Brien, bowed formally to Emily, and hurried out of the house, appearing not to notice the slight action which the latter used to detain him. This indication was too palpable to be misconceived. Emily clasped her hands, there was nobody more disposed to make allowances for the influence of a peculiar education; but when he observed indications of a marked haughtiness in her demeanor, when she began to speak fluently of genealogies in his presence, to quote Marmontel and De Loime on the advantage of titles, to talk pathetically of ill-sorted matches, of poor Addison and his high-born dowager—he felt as if a new light were dawning on his mind, with the utmost caution, resolving to creep unawares and with a velvet footstep into the very centre of her character, and shape his conduct according to the conformation which would be there revealed to him.

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ware wit' a look, while you'd be thinken o' nothin, and thinken they wor thinkin o' nothin, but 'tis they that would all the while, but it's only fair, poor cratur," he added with a compassionate and tolerating tone—"as they're wake one way, they ought to be strong another, or else sure they'd be murdered intirely. They couldn't stand the place at all for the boys, at they hadn't a vacancy at 'em that way in 'cutness, inwardly. Murder murder! but it's they that does come round up in one way or another—An! the girl in the gap, an' duck o' diamonds you wor," he added, rapidly changing his manner, as Nelly re-entered with the needle and thread—"Talken of you to myself I was, while you wor away, I'm so fond of you. Imagin your peckur; to myself, as it were, in my own mind, while he took off his coat, for the more convenience, he proceeded with Nelly's assistance to incarcerate the precious epistle.

In a few minutes a line of circumvallation was drawn around the tortured receptacle, and Remy having satisfied himself that no possible point of egress or ingress was left undefended, took a moving farewell of Nelly, and hastened to acquit himself of the responsibility which he had taken upon his shoulders. We shall see how he acquitted himself in the next chapter.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE EXTRICATION OF PATRICIA.

BY M. T. WAGMAN.

I could never be a nun," cried Patricia, with an air of audacious decision, as she proceeded to peruse the Bishop's book belittled study. Her immense gray mut was deposited on the desk, where it totally eclipsed a stack of statistics on divorce.

"I could never be a nun," she repeated; "no community would keep me. They'd vote me out even before they felt the need of praying for light; besides, everybody seems to think I ought to get married to some one."

"Everybody?" interrogated the Bishop, the humorous lines around his keen eyes skimming with the austere angles about his mouth.

"Oh, that was simply secular exaggeration—not at all according to Roddiger," she answered requisitely.

"I didn't know you were an authority on 'Christian Perfection';" then, with premeditated irreverence, he added, "I suppose you think that great and gorgeous get up of yours is—is—most attractive."

Patricia frequently had qualms regarding her rashness as to raiment, which qualms she was wont to put to rout by precipitate extravagance with her orphans, incurables, and other pauper people. She felt that this was one way out of remorse, if not the most courageous.

She loosened her silver fox stole and adjusted a rebellious fether as she seated herself on an ecclesiastical looking chair.

"Of course I know my Paris gown is becoming—that's not vanity, but merely an appreciation of truth—"

"And beauty," broke in the Bishop.

"You are either a flatterer or a tease—both are equally criminal. Plainly, I am not the proper person to advise me—and then love affairs are such a bore at best."

"Bishops must expect to be bored," remarked Patricia's uncle with delectable resignation.

"I feel somehow or other that you don't approve of me. Why don't you tell me so?"

"I'm averse to making superfluous statements," replied the Bishop smiling.

"Your disapproval goes without saying. Well, just unravel your reasons please—I wish to know the worst—you must admonish the sinner;" and Patricia forsook her seat and appropriated a diminutive stool.

"What a very imperious person I have for a relative! She reverences neither age nor episcopal potestas."

"One, two, three, four—an' a pound—Ave, six!—six three and nine penny notes, and a pound!" he exclaimed, as he stood on the brick floor of the servants' hall, counting the papers as he folded them, and buried them in the bottomless and sunless cavern of his livery pocket. "Now, Nelly, we'll be sayen something, yourself and myself. Would you have a pound of a needle and thread?"

"For what, Remy, honey?" said the young subrette, with the utmost graciousness of tone and manner.

"To put a stitch in the pocket of your coat then," said Remy, "in dread I'd lose the little writing she gave me out of it, ashora-machree, you wor! An' in indeed, it isn't the only stitch (Stitch—an' internal pain) I'll have about me, Nelly," he added with a tender smile, "I laid his horse, four—an' a pound—Ave, six!—six three and nine penny notes, and a pound!" he exclaimed, as he stood on the brick floor of the servants' hall, counting the papers as he folded them, and buried them in the bottomless and sunless cavern of his livery pocket. "Now, Nelly, we'll be sayen something, yourself and myself. Would you have a pound of a needle and thread?"

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