

(Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.)

TALES OF THE LINKS OF LOVE.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

GOING TO AMERICA.

IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

WELL-FLOWERING DAY IN IRIDALE.

RING the bells of Iridale. Swing the bells of Iridale. Sound out the peal in Irlam tower, this is the day of well-flowering. They come from over the hills. They come up, they come down the dales. They come in pairs, and in companies, trooping so gay, to be married in the dear old church of Iridale. Ring over Iridale; peal aloud in Iridale; this is Whitsun's well-flowering.

Yesterday at evening; at break of day this morning, wild flowers were gathered in the meadows by the river, and out in the copse by the lone wayside on the moor.

It is annual holiday in the mills, in the workshops, on the farms out in the open, and in gardens and parks of the squires. The deep, deep, dark coal mines to-day remain silent and unlighted. The colliers come to the well-flowering, dancing on the green.

Apprentices of carpenters encase the well structures in thin sparred frames. Green moss fills up the interstices. Young men and maidens wreath floral devices, and boys construct hundreds and hundreds of mossy bird-nests, which girls with nimble fingers and needle dot over with daisies. Fairy bowers and garlands are reared around the wells.

They are a joyous people in Iridale this Whitsun's holiday, all but the weavers of the old handlooms. Building trades have high wages erecting new factories. And colliers, in getting coals for steam. The mills already running bring fortunes to proprietors. Mechanics making engines and factory machinery have arisen to be aristocracy in the arena of labour. Their rise is the ruin of handloom weavers. They are a privileged, proud trade, forcibly, by combination against masters, excluding sons of handloom weavers from learning engine-making. They marry whom they choose of the maidens, selecting the pretty, the young, or the best dowered, while weavers who once wore silver buckles and dancing shoes, ruffles and silken waistcoats, taking choice of the girls of all Iridale, stand now apart gloomily in the lanes. In coarse wooden clogs, and working clothes patched and worn, they shrink from the dance and the gaiety.

There goes one of a troop of brides newly married, Bess o' the Barn, with her husband, Humfry Horn, inheritor in her own right of a house, a barn, and croft of five acres. Humfry is a thrasher, but was lately a weaver. Bess had promised to Abram Lud, but changed her mind.

"Is it that my uncle Simon Lud perished at York, sacrificed in the emancipation of labour?" he demanded.

"Not that alone, Abram; I am changed. You are still an infidel. Humfry is a believer and pious. Had your deluded relation been a Christian he might not have gone to the scaffold."

"Take care, Bess, lest Humfry Horn goes to the scaffold."

Bess dreads Lud and fears for Humfry.

Iridale is a town, distance of a weaver's walk from Manchester. A sick woman travelling with a child came last week, and was lodged in charity by Lud's mother. Now the stranger is dead. The body, by order of authority, is to be interred to-night, lest of pestilence.

The child, a fair-haired, blue-eyed boy, two years old, bears the red mark of a sword behind the shoulder. He replies to the name, Toby Oman. On the approach of death the woman divulged to Lud that the true name was De Lacy Lillymore. A reward might be obtained for restoration of the foundling at Lillymore Hall, Cheshire. Certain trinkets, and the birth mark, would identify him, but there was hazard in going there lest of prosecution. A larger reward might be had elsewhere, the place not named, on proof of the innocent's death. She had roamed about the country concealing the child from bad hands, yet afraid to present herself at Lillymore Hall.

Lud is aged about twenty-five, of middle stature, muscular, resolute, often generous. A self-sacrificing man in behalf of the weavers, and to promote any supposed good of other people. Three orphans of Simon who was hanged abide with him; their mother broken-hearted, went to an early grave. And now there is this small waif, Toby, competing for mouthfuls of bread.

Beside his silent loom in the old family cottage, once alive with the clack of shuttles and music of voices, Lud stands with arms folded, his head bent—the shaggy head of a lion. The rude coffin of Moll Fleck, the stranger, atop of the loom, awaits burial. The girl

Lissy, ten years old, caresses the poor foundling, and he taps taps on the coffin, beseeching in a hissing wail: "Molly, Toby loves Molly; come speak to me." Lud's thoughts concern this child.

"A young lord, or heir of a lord, in my keeping. Strange! Could I substitute little Jonathan Lud, and get the reward for him. He is of the same age, hair and eyes not greatly unlike. Yet what better lord would a Lud make, by the time he grew up, than another? Be a man, Abram. This child loved that woman who was not his mother. See, how he taps the tiny knuckles on the coffin, lisping his liking for Molly, a gipsy who stole him, perhaps."

"That child is to be trained to love my mother, respect and like me. My mother is the one to make any living thing love her. Oo is made of kindness, nought else. I do not know much book religion, was never taught any. My mother, and right and wrong, and love my neighbour be my religion. But in getting Catechism for that child I may get some of 't mysen. Mayhap, who knows? Yes, Ise give him Church Catechism, so be when Earl of Royalfort, in possession of Lillymore Hall, may do me a good turn. But this is selfish. Cannot I rise to nobility of thought in this matter as in leading the weavers? In that I overtop other men. I go to London at head of the Blanketeers, as soon as the time is settled, knowing as a probable, or possible event, the hangman may get me."

A small Quaker boy, seven or eight years old, comes from Mr. Littlewood's school, gazes on the coffin atop of the loom, and at Toby, the desolate child; then beckoning Lizzy to the door, asks:

"Does thee clem of hunger? I have four sixpences given me to guard against temptation to evil. Take them. Buy bread for thyself, thy brother and sister, and the motherless stranger. Take the money, buy bread, cat, I depart, I have a mother, thee has none."

This is Eben Eaglefether. When home, at Conkey Shaw Moor, his hands in empty pockets, he stands by his mother's knee, entreating a kiss. By which endearment and the grave countenance of the young face, she knows her son has something to tell. He begins:

"Mother, thee loves Eben; forgive if I have not done a good thing."

"What hast thou done, my son?"

"The evil one tempted me, day by day, to spend the four sixpences thee gave to prove me in self-denial, but I did not fall. To-day I was moved to give the money away. Yea, mother, I was moved to give it to the poor orphan stranger and motherless children dwelling with Lud. They wept and were cleming. Mother, I was moved."

"I am not grieved, Eben, thee gave the money to the motherless children of Lud and the orphan stranger. Yet, thou wast disobedient."

"Pardon me, O mother; I was moved to give the money away. Indeed I was moved."

"It is pleasing to me to know thy tender heart, Eben. Yet, thou disobeyed thy parents in going where thee should not. Well, so be it. Embrace thy mother, she loves Eben, child of her joy."

The funeral comprises a hand-truck wheeled by Lud, drawn in front by a weaver in rope harness, a scant following of other weavers and the orphan children. All plash, plashing through pools in their clogs, Lizzy carrying Toby.

Instead of the curate, the Vicar is present at the long steps, and reads beside the coffin to testify he does not fear infection, hoping by example to restore the people to their wonted kindness for one another. The burial completed, Abram Lud remains with the Vicar.

"If I could believe thee in earnest I might now and again come to church."

"Is my officiating now no proof of earnestness, though knowing how you revile me at radical meetings?"

"Thou be well paid, Vicar, for thy work, I be poorly paid for mine,—that is what we revile and denounce. Steam-power looms be putting hand looms out. Great factories and cotton kilns be ruin to hand-loom weavers. In one sense, Vicar, I like thee for coming here to-night, so be thou means kindness. But I most fear thou comes nobit to say thou did this, that, and tother for Lud. For Lud the leveller, as folk call me."

"Abram, all men are equal in the eye of the Master I serve. All social ranks are equal to me. I discern only differences in moral conduct."

"I doubt thee, Vicar, as to equality of social ranks. I fear t' Squire and t' hand-loom weaver will never get on the same level."

They part; the reverend gentleman concluding that to enter on controversy with a radical weaver, hungry—possibly hungry, is wasted time.

N. B.—The Squires and hand-loom weavers have come to the same level. By the most happy of revolutions the poor weavers of that day, and the pot-wallopers of Ecoloy borough also, are Squires in Canada this day. You would like to know how this came about? Read on.

The bells again, the bells again, the sweet bells of Iridale. Ring out peals in Irlam's tower. Again it is Whitsun, well-flowering. Companies in coaches arrive in the town to witness the annual ancient festivities. And thousands on foot come as before. The lovers, whose courtship is ripe, to be married in the grey old church, the dear old church, the holy old church of some of them.

There is one on foot, not to be wedded, but to pray at the altar when all else are gone. She enters alone. A fair young lady, spiritual witchery in the eyes, comely to look upon; wearing a crimson mantle, white garments of fairest linen, trimmed with black; boots with spurs on the heel, and rustic straw hat. She carries the crook of the sheep-fold in her right hand as a staff, a lamb on the left arm folded to her breast. Two yearling sheep follow close at her feet. She kneels and prays, then sings aloud in a clear melodious voice, softly wailing, anon joyous and rapturous.

The vergers comes, stares, and is astounded. He calls the clergy; they listen, and wonder, but do not disturb her, for one who has seen her previously, tells that she will soon retire. This is the Wandering Shepherdess. A lady roaming over the country looking for a lost lamb. The two sheep feed in the green lanes. And there the lamb she carries is put down to nibble grass and frisk and play. Nobody molests her. People say she is "touched" in the head.

She looks for a lost lamb. Who knows, but that is her lamb with Abram Lud!

To be continued.

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HILDA; OR, THE MERCHANT'S SECRET.

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

RETRIBUTION.

MR. BERKELEY sat alone in his private room in the counting-house in St. Paul street, reading a business letter with a deeply-troubled countenance. It brought him information of the failure of a mercantile house in Bordeaux, which would largely involve the firm of Berkeley & Son. This was a severe blow just now when their affairs were by no means prosperous. For the last year they had been embarrassed, but Mr. Berkeley had struggled manfully to stem the adverse tide which threatened to overwhelm him. Now, however, he felt inclined to give up in despair; it seemed as if no human effort could retrieve his affairs or avert the ruin which was looming up daily before him.

Gloomily he sat there trying to look calmly on the darkening prospect. The sun of prosperity which had shone on him so steadily through half a lifetime was shrouded; but a still heavier misfortune than the loss of fortune was hanging over him now; the hour of retribution had come at last; the avenger was at his door.

A step was heard; quick and determined was the tread; the door opened, and Stephen Osburne stood before him. The merchant started as his eye fell on that haggard, stern, wrathful countenance. No friendly greeting passed between the two men as on other days, when they stood in a different relation to each other.

There was something in the expression of Stephen's eye which silenced the words that rose to Mr. Berkeley's lips, and made him cower before him, he knew not why.

Striding towards him, Stephen placed the packet of letters—which he had brought with him by the advice of Armstrong—before the astonished merchant, demanding curtly if he knew that writing.

His countenance changed as he looked at these well-remembered epistles, written years ago in an impassioned style which belied the feelings of his heart, for love for Mrs. Osburne never had been experienced by him.

Struggling for composure, and not yet knowing the extent of Stephen's discoveries, he replied evasively that the writing was like his own.

"And the signature; you recognize that also?"

There was angry vehemence in Stephen's voice and manner.

"Yes, I do not deny it," he stammered forth, "but what of that? I am not the only man who wrote such letters in his youth," he added with a forced smile.

"No, but there are few men who have acted such a villain's part," broke from Stephen in a voice hoarse with passion.

"I do not understand such language in re-

ference to me; my character is well established for honourable dealings."

Mr. Berkeley affected a boldness his trembling heart did not feel. He hoped Stephen's knowledge of the affair was limited to the finding the love letters; they could not condemn him, he knew that.

"Honourable dealing!" exclaimed Stephen with intense scorn. "Yes, I know in the eyes of the world you stand fair, but your true character shall be made known this day, this very hour; you shall be unmasked, and people shall learn what a hypocritical villain Lewis Tremayne alias Berkeley is!"

"Sir, you speak in riddles!" broke somewhat haughtily from Mr. Berkeley. "What proof of my villainy is there in these epistles? If I did not choose to marry the lady to whom they are addressed, what is that to anyone?"

"But you did marry her," thundered Stephen. "Aye, marry and desert and rob her!"

He ventured on that last assertion from what he knew of his mother's affairs, supposing that the person who had embezzled her money was her second husband.

"What proof have you of this?" Mr. Berkeley asked, his voice trembling, the tones betraying great anxiety; the evil threatening him was greater than he had supposed.

"This! the certificate of your marriage!" and Stephen stood fiercely confronting the guilty man, the avenger of his mother's wrongs.

Mr. Berkeley sank back in his chair, looking more like a corpse than a living being. His sin had at last found him out; there was no use in denying it any longer; the proof of his guilt was in the hands of the son of her he had so basely wronged. And he was pitiless! that wrathful, stern face assured him of that!

As he had measured to others, so was it now meted out to him. He had felt no pity for the wife he had injured and forsaken. His heart was hard as a rock when he gazed on her lifeless form as she lay in that very room not many days since. When the shock of amazement, the intense agitation at recognizing him had deprived her of animation, his arm was not held out to prevent that fatal fall. When life was proved to be extinct, he had rejoiced, trusting that then all fear of a discovery was over. But vengeance, though it tarried, was sure. It had come at last! There was no escape from the disgrace, the infamy which was about to fall, not upon him alone—he might have borne that—but on his children. Fanny, too! the woman for whom he had sinned, the beloved one whom he had tempted to sin, would with him be hurled from her proud position in society into the depths of shame and humiliation. Oh, it was horrible the picture his imagination portrayed! even death would be preferable to the life now before him, with the finger of scorn pointed at him and his. The hand of retribution had him in its grasp. The sin of his youth—of his life must be atoned for now by the severest punishment that could befall him, the deep degradation of him and his family.

For a few minutes Stephen Osburne stood looking on the misery he had caused with cruel satisfaction. The remembrance of his dead mother, of her sufferings years before through the agency of that man whom his vengeance had stricken down, now rendered him perfectly callous—nay, made him rejoice in the despair he witnessed.

At length he turned away and left the room with the words, "I go to publish your guilt, to tell the damning tale," words which sounded like the death knell of joy in the ears of the stricken merchant.

Mechanically he rose and prepared to return home, the counting-house was no longer a place for him. He shrank from meeting the eyes of his clerks, the scorn of his fellow-citizens. He determined to fly, to leave Montreal with his family immediately. Leaving the counting-house by a private entrance he passed into the street, hailed a cab, and returned home, feeling all the time like one in a dream, not yet realizing the ruin that had fallen upon him.

In her pleasant morning room Mrs. Berkeley—as we shall still call her—was sitting with her daughter, Thérèse, and Hilda Tremayne, when the sleigh driving up to the door attracted their attention. Who could it be coming at this unfashionable hour? Surely no visitor.

Putting down her work Mrs. Berkeley approached the window and looked out as the driver dismounted and opened the sleigh door. She saw the man start back in alarm, then rush up the steps of the hall-door and ring the bell violently.

"Good Heaven! what is the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Berkeley in alarm, rushing to the hall-door.

Thérèse and Hilda had approached the window and were looking out, wondering. They saw Mrs. Berkeley start and turn pale as the cabman spoke to her, then rush down the steps, look into the sleigh, and turn away with a look of horror, while a wild shriek burst from her. Thérèse and Hilda, trembling with agitation, were soon at her side, and their faces blanched too and their hearts stood still with horror, for in the sleigh they