

Many a weary day, with many a pleasant hour, has passed since the time of which I write, but still, in dreary meditation, I feel as if but yesterday the circumstances transpired.

A drowsy, tired sensation had quiet possession of me as I awoke, and my heart lay heavily within me. As the day was breaking and I turned restlessly from side to side, my eyes closed, and in a dream I had stepped one foot over a bottomless precipice, and losing my balance, threw my hands half hopelessly out and suddenly struck the bed and was awake. When I dressed and went down stairs Werbletree was gone, and a vague loneliness came over me. I had still, however, something to occupy my mind besides the melancholy thoughts that his words had prompted. Arthur Drummel was still with me, and he had to be looked after. Werbletree had stated that he would be gone a day or two at least, and I knew he expected me to take charge of Arthur in his absence. But where had this strange man gone? Would he never come back? Why had he gone?

CHAPTER XII.

Talk not of grief till thou hast seen the tears of warlike men.—*Mrs. Hemans.*

THE hills and valleys and the winding stream about the miller's house were grander as the autumn days came on; and as the mellow sun looked longingly over the tree-tops, playing with the water as it trickled through the motionless wheel, the wanderer there must, from intoxication at the scene, have wished to end his days on that beautiful spot.

The miller sat and gazed idly out of his window at the after noon sun, and the ripple of the shadows on the wheel, as if unconscious of the grand effect. No; there he sat, and, wrapt in his own griefs and undefined fears, saw nothing there to cheer or to raise one from the care and vague uncertainty of fortune. There he sat with no one by him; and yet the heavy, stolid look upon his face showed that he was not alone. A host of frightful thoughts were haunting him. A flood of all the circumstances of his life dashed on him there, and even his hardened conscience cringed beneath it. Oh! sad reflection where guilt weighs on the heart.

The sun, after a long delay above the western horizon, as if loath to depart, had gone to rest; and still the miller sat unheeding in silent meditation. Suddenly he started at a sound, and scarce had reached the door, when a strong arm opened it before him and Richard Warbletree stood towering at the entrance.

Sweeman stood back in amazement and fear.

"You wonder at my coming."

"What brought you here?"

"You. I came on purpose to talk with you and am gratified to see you are alone and can, therefore, the more easily converse on matters that I want to speak of."

"But what right have you here?"

"There's lots of time to talk of that. The fact that I am here is enough just now."

"But I say it's not enough."

"Then let me tell you. Give me a seat and take one yourself."

The miller's first impulse was to resent this audacity with blows, but he was in too passive a state of mind for that now, and reluctantly led Werbletree into the room he had come from, where a light was burning, now, for it was after dark.

They sat facing each other across a small table.

"Now," growled Sweeman; "What is your business?"

"Take your time, I'm coming to that presently." And with complacency the audacious Werbletree threw one leg over the arm of his chair and gazed serenely at the miller, who showed signs of great uneasiness, and with anxiety awaited his visitor's words.

"I've followed you from Hazelgrove to have a chat with you, so just be patient and you'll hear what I came for."

The miller's signs of impatience grew more and more apparent.

"Do you wish to hear something of the boy, Tagberg—Drummel I mean. You understand the mistake."

The miller's face grew deadly pale.

"Don't be frightened, he's safe enough as yet away from his mother. Come cheer up I have learned well the history of your life, and not with prejudice do I condemn you. I

rather pity you, and curse the circumstances that have balked your hopes."

A heavy gulping sound, a sort of grunt, was all Charles Sweeman's answer, while an expression of gratitude, combined with the look of one asking for mercy, shone from his eyes.

"I suppose you failed as usual to see her."

"Yes; yes; of course I failed and if you pity me you must understand what that failing means. I have been crushing my heart with deepest pain in order to wound hers more. And she will never know it."

Here the great heavy-set man paused and the look on his face betokened an anguish seldom seen. A great, large man, weakened by foiled schemes, is indeed a spectacle for pity. He moved restlessly about, like many a man otherwise circumstanced, dreading what he was inviting, his visitor's critical gaze.

"Would you wish me to bring this woman to you?"

The miller looked up with expectant surprise and gave decided signs of assent.

"Well I'll do it provided I know what will transpire if I should; that is, at least, on your part."

The miller sat silent, and then essayed to speak, but only gasped inarticulately.

The powerful Werbletree with great compassion gazed long and quietly on the stalwart Sweeman weak with conflicting passions.

CHAPTER XIII.

If thou hast never sat as I do now,
Wearing thy hearer in thy mistress' praise,
Thou hast not loved:
Or, if thou hast not broke from company,
Abruptly as my passion now makes me,
Thou hast not loved.—*Shakespeare.*

THE second day from the events narrated in the chapter previous to the last an event happened which was calculated to change very much the aspect of affairs—an event which, though always thought probable, at any time for years back, came of a sudden at last.

Mr. Elson died, and a time of mournful quietness prevailed. Poor Nellie was left alone with the woman I hated, her mother. Seeing her in this situation during the weeks that followed, awoke my affection for her again and I forgot what I had considered as Jessie Harle's heartlessness, nor questioned why I had thus thought of her conduct.

But weightier matters than love—no; there are none weightier, none so grand,—more practical matters than love were agitating my mind, and when Werbletree at length returned he was more welcome to me than any one of the fair sex could have been.

I had pondered over the question of giving up my property to my lost brother, and indefinitely the matter was after all left unsettled in my mind. But Werbletree must tell me what he knew. This I was determined to find out and when he came I urgently questioned him.

"The time has come," he answered, "when I am enabled to tell you what I wished. It's a long story and will interest you much; for you may be connected with it in more ways than you think."

As I had often sat before, anxiously listening for every word, I sat before him then.

"I have just come from Shulton, where I left the poor miller a subject for pity."

I would have exclaimed, "a subject for condemnation," with perhaps a more commonly-used epithet to express my meaning, but for the tone of my companion, which made my hatred lapse into surprise.

"If you knew the circumstances of his life," went on Werbletree, as if guessing my thoughts; "if you knew the circumstances of his life you would pity him too."

A look of interest was my only answer.

"When Charles Sweeman was a young man he respected himself and was respected. His aspirations were, for the most part, of a noble nature, and but for a woman whom he loved passionately—loved with a fervor that called out his every energy and his best talents, but to kill them, he would have been a benevolent man to-day.

"Who was this woman?"

"She was the mother of Arthur Drummel."

(To be Continued.)