

The young stranger would fain have inquired into the disquietude of his kind, good friend, but that he felt it would be intrusive.

The silence that fell on them in the darkening room was broken by a tapping at one of the low French windows. The Vicar started nervously, and half looked round.

"Who is it?" he asked, quickly.

"The child from the Manor," replied the young man; "come, I suppose, to say good-bye to me. She knows I am going to-morrow."

"You had better tell her all," said Mr. Grey; "Sybil is a sensible child—loving, earnest, true; her influence may work what ours never might."

There was a slight hesitation about the stranger as he listened to these words, but, by and by, when the Vicar looked into the drawing-room, on his way back from seeking his daughter, he saw the child and the wanderer sitting side by side in the bright firelight, the one listening wonder-struck to the long life-history the other was recounting.

But now Mr. Grey was again in his library, and again his right hand was folded over the same letter. Opposite to him sat Rachel—changed since the August morning, pale and sad-looking. The date on the letter was not recent—perhaps some two months back. The Vicar glanced at it nervously; then looked long into the fire; finally, fixed his gaze full on his daughter's face.

"We have been strangers, Rachel, for two months or more."

"Yes, father."

Then they relapsed into silence.

Awfully after, Mr. Grey spoke again; but his voice was low and trembling—

"You remember that I received this letter from Mr. Clivedon in September. You know its contents. The time that we took to consider on the matter expires to-day. Have you decided?"

All these sentences were uttered with extreme difficulty; and never once did the Vicar raise his eyes to his daughter's face, until her calm-toned reply fell on his ear—

"Yes, father, I have decided that your reply to that letter shall be a refusal."

A cloud seemed to pass off Mr. Grey's face; but, a moment after, it gathered more gloomily than ever; for, in the silence that followed Rachel's speech, he perceived that the shadow of a great sorrow had fallen upon his daughter.

"You love him, my child?"

These were the words that came from the Vicar's saddened heart; but they pierced the barrier of estrangement that had grown up of late between father and child, and made them one again. He rose, and walked over to where his daughter was sitting, with the great, unbidden tears falling over her clasped hands.

"Rachel, dear one! This has cost you much. Only tell me why you refuse?"

"For many reasons; one, that my acceptance would make you unhappy. But that is not the greatest. In following out the natural dictates of my heart, I must live for this world alone; I have chosen not to do so."

The Vicar gently passed his hand many times over the soft brown hair of his child, grateful that she had decided, of her own free will, as he had prayed she would—mournful, as he thought on the dreary life-struggle that lay before her.

"We are no longer strangers, Rachel; oh?" he asked softly.

"Oh, no, father; never again! I only felt I had better strive alone. Now it is all past. You will write to-night?"

"Yes. Some day, Rachel, when you are better able to bear it, I will tell you why we may both be thankful for the decision you have made to-night."

"You have learnt something about him lately, father—I am sure you have! and you like him none the better for your knowledge?"

"Have patience, child. Wait till you can listen calmly. I will tell you all then. You can wait, Rachel?"

"Yes, father."

Then she quietly passed from the room to her own chamber; and the Vicar took up his pen to reply to the Squire's letter.

Later on in the evening, when the child had returned to the Manor, not quite the same child as when she left it—for Sybil bore a woman's mission with her—the wanderer was once more standing by the library fire, talking to his benefactor.

"I am to come back at Christmas, you tell me," he was saying.

"Yes," returned the Vicar. "Yes; I have a golden dream for that blessed time, and you are one of the creatures that people it. You must not be wanting then; and—"

But the Vicar stopped, and a shade came over his brow—for there was a stern, dark figure in the picture he was portraying to himself that cast a great shadow over all that golden dream.

"You have told the child?" he asked presently, when the shadow on his face had passed away.

"Yes," was the reply. "Now, all we have to do is to hope and wait."

"And trust, and do our best," added the Vicar, gently.

Then they cordially shook hands, and separated for the night.

Sybil went home from the Vicarage with her heart full of a great work. Child as she was in years, she was yet old enough to comprehend, to their full extent, the difficulties that lay before her. Soberly was her little head puzzled how the mighty undertaking was to be effected; but,

long before she reached the Manor, her woman's nature told her that love must work it all—strong, patient, enduring love, that overcomes all obstacles, that coaches on, and never gives sight of the end from the very beginning. And it never occurred to her that her mission was to begin from the very moment she entered the drawing-room of her home.

Leaning against the mantelpiece, scowling darkly down into the glowing fire that was burning on the bright steel hearth, was the Squire, apparently not the most amiable of men just at that moment. Sybil went softly up to him to say good night, as was her wont, the unpleasant expression on his face seeming to warn her that that would be her wisest course at present, but she was startled when he said, suddenly, almost sharply—

"Can't you stay one minute with me? Am I an object of aversion even to you?"

"Oh, father! father!" cried the child, twining her arms round one of his, and speaking with all her heart in her eyes and words.

There was a magic in her thrilling voice. The glow passed off from the Squire's face. He took his little daughter in his arms, and kissed her.

"Sybil, you shall be a woman to-night. You shall sit by the fireside with me, and we will talk. We want no one else to make our home happy, do we, Sybil?"

"Yes, we do," replied the child, earnestly, looking into the glowing fire, and thinking of her mission.

"Yes, we do," echoed the Squire, in a low, and tone, also looking into the fire, and thinking of the Vicar's letter that had come to him that evening.

"Father," said Sybil, after a little while, "did you ever see the—the gentle—the poor man that Mr. Grey has been so kind to, that has been ill at the Vicarage such a long time?"

"Yes, I saw him once—the night he was found, I think it was. What about him?" And the Squire knitted his brow at the recollection of that night.

"Were you ever kind to him, father? Did you ever send anything to help him?"

"No; I never encourage vagabonds," was the cold, decided reply.

Sybil's heart fell; but she determined to try again.

"He is going away to-morrow," she said, "for he is strong and well now. And—father—he is not a vagabond!"

She looked so pleadingly at her father as she spoke; but again his hard words fell like cold water on her warm feelings.

"Going to beg about the country again, and impose on soft-hearted people, is he? or to the workhouse—what?"

"Oh, father!" and there was indignation in Sybil's large dark eyes; but she suppressed it in a moment, for her father had a right to say what he liked. "He is going to be honest and true," she said, simply; "and going to look for something he lost a long time ago. Don't you hope he will find it, father?"

The Squire gave a short laugh.

"I dare say he will find himself at Millbank or Portland before very long," he said.

"Father," said Sybil, after an interval of silence—branching quite off from her previous subject of conversation, and speaking with a sort of awe in her voice—"was mother very sorry to die?"

"No—no; not at all—not at all!" The Squire spoke shortly, but in subdued tones.

"Was I the only little child she ever had?" asked Sybil, with the same earnest manner.

"Oh, no; there were two or three others, but they all died long ago—long ago."

"Perhaps, then," said the child, tenderly, "she was very glad to go and live with them; but how could she like to leave you? I never should."

The Squire smiled sadly.

"Perhaps you will think differently some day, Sybil. I shall tell you more about her when you are older; you may think then that she was glad to leave me."

They both looked into the fire, lost in thought: Sybil puzzling herself how she was to carry out her undertaking; her father living in the by-gone years, with that haunting face his only companion, excluding all others—even Rachel Grey's.

Sybil felt she must go on now with her work; and, finding that talking of her mother seemed to soften her father's nature, she determined that she would speak often on the subject than she had hitherto done. She would not be only the petted child, she would be his friend, his companion; she would speak of the dear lost one to him, and so, in a manner, bring her presence back; and then, by degrees, he would become less hard and stern, and by and by he would listen to her mission. Thus the child reasoned with herself in her simple heart. She had no experience of human nature, no knowledge of the crooked hyacinth it so often takes to obtain its ends; she could only see, with the eyes of her deep love for her only parent, that keeping his sorrow to himself had made him cold and stern. Now she would share it with him, and then, perhaps, that grave would not seem so far away; and the mother she had never known might come nearer to them in spirit, and so would help her in her work.

With this resolve in her mind, Sybil rose to say good night. She would not say too much at once, she thought; and, besides, her father was beginning to frown again, for his thoughts had reverted to the Vicar's letter.

"Good night, my little one," he said, tenderly, holding her before him by her two hands.

"Sybil, child, you are all in the world I have to love."

"All, father?" said the child, inquiringly, the greatness of her mission overflowing her heart, and her soul in her eyes.

"All!" repeated the Squire, turning sadly away, and thinking of Rachel, and the still, dead face.

The snow clouds had come at last. They had been a long time on their journey—so long, that the last flower of autumn had faded and died away before they brought their shroud for the poor, weary earth. The first white flakes fell in the third week of December, just seven days before Christmas.

The time was drawing very near now for the Vicar's golden dream to become a bright reality or a painful delusion; for the child's mission to be fulfilled or dispelled; for the wanderer to find what he had so long lost, or to lose sight of it for ever; for the cloud of separation that had gathered between the Squire and Rachel Grey to be dispersed, or deepen into the darkness of a night that has no stars. Sybil had been busy, breaking up the hard ground of her father's heart; and any one that knew the Squire well—his, alas! they were few—might have seen that her work had not been in vain. Outwardly, he was unchanged; but the sorrows of his past life had lost some of their bitterness since his child had brought them from their hiding-place, and scattered away the roughness of their sharp edges. The Squire's heart, which had a sort of visible presence in the old Manor. She looked out of Sybil's eyes, and spoke in Sybil's voice. It was not his child sometimes, the Squire thought, that changed the harshness of his speech into more gentle language, or the scorn of his withering smile into a more genial expression of countenance; it was the spirit of his dead wife that spoke to him through Sybil, and stirred the faded leaves of better feelings that had long lain withered in his heart, until they almost seemed green again.

How such a nature as Ralph Clivedon's could love twice may seem incomprehensible, if we give the subject but a passing thought. We will, however, pause a few moments; and, looking down into the secret depths of the human heart, we find that two strong emotions in a lifetime are not incompatible with intensity of feeling. One may be formed when the spring-tide of life is over; in all its freshness, when the bloom and coloring on the fruits and flowers we gather delight our eyes; when we look on the world around us through a reflected light, and all its rays, golden—all bright, beautiful, and short as an April summer. There has been a great reality in this earth-vision, it has left its stamp upon us, whether for sorrow or joy; it comes back for a few swift-passing moments, when we toil through the noontide heat of life's steep high road; and is as beautiful, and as fleeting, as the last rays of sunset on a mountain top.

We descend into the valley. The shadows become gray and long; there is light still in our hearts, but it is not sunlight—that glided the pinnacles and minarets of the Palace of the Past our poor humanity raised fondly to ourselves; it set long ago, perhaps, over a cold, ungrateful, or worse still, over neglect, scorn, pride, misunderstanding!

We travel on; our hearts are weary—they are human hearts still; they pine for human love: it is not enduring, it is not satisfying, it is not perfect—but it cheers us on, helps us on. We look not so much to the outward beauty as to the inward spirit: we find it pure, calm, true. We are not dazzled; we see so plainly now, with that sober light that has surrounded us since the sun went down. We perceive the husks with the pure grain, the weeds and tares with the golden corn: we treasure the one; we are lenient towards the other. There is so much waste land in our own natures, that we do not seek for the highest cultivation in those of others. We are forbearing, yet we love strongly and deeply; for now, with our sight made clear, we can see the foundation of our affections; and so we build up a structure that lasts to the end: and thus the night of our second love becomes holier far in its calm starlight than that bright, warm sun-vision that went down while it was yet day. And thus with the Squire!

(To be concluded in our next.)

THE DOCTOR'S STORY.

BY ELLIE BREMER.

"Did I ever tell you, Haines, about that scrape I got into with the Hibernian population of this place when I first came here?" "Oh, yes!" And the doctor, after assuming the American position of absolute rest, feet elevated a few degrees above his head, and giving a few preliminary ruffs at his pipe continued—

"I was but a sprig of a doctor when I came here, armed with authority from a neighboring college to practice the 'cheating art.' Amongst my shingle, announcing that 'C. S. B. M. D., Physician and Surgeon,' was ready to wait upon the people, from the issuing of quinine and Dover's powder to the amputation of legs, and from that down to pulling teeth. I then sat down and waited for business. It did

not come very readily, occasionally an old fellow would come in and regale me with a long story of 'rheumatism,' and generally succeed in boring me till I gave him a prescription free to get rid of him. Now then someone would come in to have a tooth extracted—there was no dentist here then. That was about the extent of my practice. The people were not going to have young 'sawbones' trying experiments on them. Dr. Jones was here, and Dr. Jones was good enough for them.

"In consequence of all this, time began to hang heavily on my hands; but fortunately, just as patience was about to leave her monument, a bright idea struck me. I would procure a subject, and brighten up my anatomy. Happy thought! and I immediately proceeded to act upon it. I dropped a line to Ainsley, who was just across the river from me, engaged in the same laudable business as myself. Ainsley and I had been chums and 'unco thick together' in our college days, so I invited him to come over and take a part in the 'first resection.' That was on Monday, and on Tuesday night he came. An Irishman, of doubtful reputation in the neighborhood, had died a day or two before, and we decided that, inasmuch as said Irishman had been of no benefit to mankind living, he should now contribute something to the cause of science. Well, suffice to say, that about the witching hour of night, we 'raised' that Irishman, (of course we had a trusty friend to assist us), conveyed him to my office, put him on a dissecting-table improvised out of a large box, and were soon deep in the investigation of human anatomy. So far all had gone swimmingly, but a few days afterward it entered into the heads of Patrick's friends to raise a tombstone to his memory. Very well, thought I, raise a stone to the place where he recently was, my brave sons of Erin, but he's not there now, he's risen.

"However, it was not so funny when, on the evening of the same day that the tombstone was to have been put up, the friend who had assisted us came in and informed me that the Irish were rising, and that a guard had been placed around my office to prevent my leaving or conveying away the body. It seems that a few splinters of walnut had been found near the grave; this causing suspicion, they had dug down and found the body gone, and forthwith charged me with the crime. Things looked pretty bilious, for an infuriated mob is not pleasant to contend with, I can tell you. I had seen them before my friend left, he not being able to remember me any assistance, and I sat down to consider what to do. Clearly, I must, I thought, get out of the body in some way, and that quickly, how? I could not take it away, for they were watching, and there was no place in the building to conceal it. At last, after racking my brain in vain for a long time, a way, and the only way, suggested itself. The thought was repugnant, but my liberty, if not my life, was at stake, and who will hesitate at such a time. My friend had told me that the rabble did not intend attacking the office until daylight; in order, I thought, to make sure that I did not escape. So I had time to carry out my resolve. Spitting up my impromptu dissecting-table, I soon had a blazing fire in the stove, which fortunately for me was a large one, and then—I made a sacrifice of poor Patrick. I sat grimly by that fire till the gray dawn streaked the East, and just as the last vestige of anything that could criminate me disappeared, there was a loud knocking at the front door. Getting up, and opening it, there before me I saw the Irish in full force. Assuming a look of astonishment, I demanded the reason of their early visit, and why they came in such numbers.

"By the blessed Saint Patrick we'll show you," said an ugly, red-mouthed son of the Emerald Isle; "we've come to search your office for the remains of the gentleman, as we track from the graveyard the other night, and we'll do it, too, now we boys!" A howl of assent was given. Pretending to get angry, I ordered them to leave, every one of them, before I had them all arrested for molesting a peaceable, law-abiding citizen; and ended by telling them that they could not search my office with my permission. "Then we'll search it without your permission, and may the devil fly away with you, you murdering villain!" It's not, Tim, O'Bralligan will be after lavin' yo blackguard, till ye trot out Pat Murphy's corpse. Come boys, with that they poured into the room, brandishing their 'shillelahs,' and searched every nook and corner, but of course they found nothing.

"By the howly Moses, the doctor has told the truth," said the red-mouthed leader of the mob, looking somewhat abashed. "The corpse of the gentleman as ye seek is not here, as I, for one, at the doctor's pardon, and now, boys, would better be after lavin' it." "Yes," said I, "and the sooner the better, before I have you all arrested for forcibly entering my office." And they went, gliding not on the order of their going. "My adventure, my hear seemed in the ascendant. Practice began to come in, and since that, I have had plenty to do, and have had no desire to leave. What became of Ainsley? Oh, yes, poor fellow, he died about 10 years ago. Better fellow never breathed than Ainsley; a man among men!—would have made his mark in the world. He was ahead of us all morally, socially and 'tellectually,' and called away in the 'yig'—his manhood and in the midst of his usefulness. And the doctor, gazing abstractedly at the wall, went off in a fit of mysticism on the mysterious ways of Providence.