

...entertain for him less of pity than contempt. The calamity is accepted as a dispensation, and nobody thinks it worth while to offer a syllable of comfort or advice, because experience has shown that the illness must at last be cured by indulgence, or die a lingering death in disappointment.

A woman, too, is liable to the same disorder, contracted even more unreasonably, and with less apparent cause. Her symptoms, if not so obtrusive, or troublesome to others, are none the less dangerous to herself. In some cases, happily but rare, they prove incurable. It is of men that the poet says "They have died and worms have eaten them, but not for love."

Nelly grew, whose life had hitherto flowed in a calm untroubled stream, little thought the gentle, scarce perceptible pleasure she experienced in a stranger's society, on the memorable evening when she addressed him for the first time, to thank him for his courtesy, while he helped her grandfather home, must soon grow into a hunger of the heart, that nothing but absolute reciprocity could appease. The second time she saw him she feared, third time she admitted, the fourth she gloried in her enslavement. They had known each other barely a week, when Nelly discovered and confessed that henceforth, if life was to be passed apart from John Garnet, she would rather elect to die. He, too, deliberated at discretion, or rather without discretion, as soon as the blue eyes opened wide. Wofully blind to his ruined prospects and false position, he abandoned himself to the happiness of the hour, forgetting the past, ignoring the future—Wart, Katerfelto, Lord Deanger, robbery, high treason, and Tyburn-hill, while he held Nelly Carow's hand, and looked lovingly in her delicate face under the apple-trees by Porlock Bay.

"I need not go to prison, and I need not die," he answered, lightly. "This is a secure lodging place enough. I should like to stay here for the rest of my life."

"It must be very dull!" observed Nelly, planting the hem of her apron. "I wonder how long it would take for you to weary of us all?"

There could be but one answer to such an accusation, and he was ready with it before she could explain.

"Weary!" he repeated, "weary of Porlock? weary of you, Nelly, from whom I never mean to part! How can you say such things? You know you did not mean it!" And again Nelly's disclaimer was uttered on hot lips.

"Besides," he added, gaily, "What can a man want to make his wife more than I have here? The sweetest girl in the world to walk with, and the best girl in England to dine with. I gave him a ten-mile stretch on the moor this morning, while you were fast asleep and dreaming. Were you dreaming, Nelly?"

"Never mind my dreams," she answered, blushing. "If I did dream of somebody, I'm not going to say so. Tell me about your ride."

"I met a strange old man," he continued, "so weird looking, that in the North we would have thought him uncanny, a Brownie, at least, or a wandering spirit of the moor. Not that he was a jack-o'-lantern nor was he the wisp, for he showed me the way out, instead of luring me into a bog, or I should have been there now."

"You must never go cross our moors without me," said Nelly, gravely, "or somebody who knows them well, to take care of you."

"Will you take care of me?" and "never mind, that is not the question now," were two necessary interpolations before John Garnet could proceed.

"The man knew his ground, every inch of it," he continued, "and offered to put me in the right way for home. His pony he said, was hobbled at the head of the coombe, but he seemed to think very little of walking ten miles out of his road, and he looked between seventy and eighty."

large dark eyes seemed to plead with Nature, the only mother she knew, and to demand, in mute unbraiding, why her punishment was greater than she could bear?

CHAPTER XVIII.

DUKE MICHAEL OF EGYPT.

A thorough gipsy bred and born, Waif so far resembled a wild animal of the woods, that, when sore stricken, she instinctively sought her home. Scarce knowing how, she sped back to the encampment of her people, swift and straight as the red hind, that neither fails nor falters, though she carries a bullet in her breast. It was not because she expected to find comfort there, nor relief, nor even a moment's respite from pain, but she felt constrained to keep moving, always moving, at the utmost speed she could command, though as she flitted lightly from moor to moor, it seemed to her benumbed and dizzy brain that she herself stood still, while the acres of heather she traversed passed like running water beneath her feet.

Yet the sun was already down when she turned the head of a deep and lonely coombe which her tribe had chosen for her resting place, and caught sight of the little points of fire that dotted its heathery ridge, tuned down to dusky purple under the crimson flushes of the evening sky. Kettles were already simmering before the brown, weather-worn tents, and that happy hour of food and rest had arrived which seems to recompense the gipsy for all the hardships of his wandering lot, to make amends for toil and risk, rough usage, and coarse fare, the frown of justice, the ban of society, an outlaw's life, and, too often, a felon's grave.

To-night, however, more than its usual tendency to revelry and rejoicing seemed to pervade the camp. In the first place, this particular tribe were honored by the presence of their chief, a crafty old gentleman, who chose to call himself "Duke Michael of Egypt," doubtless in memory of that celebrated vagabond, who, early in the fifteenth century, led his ragged troop through Saxony and Switzerland, leaving behind him, if we may believe the old chroniclers, a better character than might have been expected for good behaviour and honesty—nay, paying in hard money for such articles as he required from the peasantry in the countries through which he passed, an example, it is hardly necessary to observe, scrupulously avoided by the Duke Michael with whom we have to do. This worthy made it a rule, no doubt, to deny himself nothing he wanted that might be had for the taking, and few matters, he often boasted, were too hot or too heavy for his conveyance, but he could not have been induced to give anything in exchange.

It was as natural for his Grace to steal as to shape a tent-peg, mend a kettle, or tell a lie. Yet in bearing and costume he varied probably but little from his predecessor of the Middle Ages, as that nobleman's likeness has been handed down in the woodcuts of the period. There was the battered hat with a coarse and dirty kerchief rolled round its brim, the pair of patched, ill-mended shoes, slashed at the toes and slipped at the heel, of leggings worn and stained with mud from every soil, the gaudy blanket rent and frayed to hide the greasy coat and tattered skin beneath, with many another token of dirt, vermin, and dishonesty to pervade the man from head to foot, and proclaim him an outcast from his kind. The lapse of more than three centuries had done but little to civilize or improve a Duke Michael of Egypt.

Yet the battered hat perched on those abundant locks now white as snow, once black as the raven's wing, covered a brain that might have served a statesman, for its keen perception, cool audacity, quiet cunning—above all, for its administrative powers,

and fine wrangling? "I'm not bound to tell you where I've been—when I go out—and when I come in. You're not my master, brother; not yet!"

She was sufficiently a woman to put just such an emphasis on the last word as changed his mood like magic. In a moment he was her slave again, ready to do her bidding, obey her lightest wish, no less eagerly than when he went bird's nesting for her in his boyhood, long years ago.

"But you'll tell me some day," he pleaded, bending his tall form to look in the girl's face. "You'll keep nothing from Fin, when we hang the kettle at our own tent-door in the camp of the *Vardo-mescros*, and my brothers troop in by scores to have a look at Fin Cooper's beautiful wife; you'll tell me of his words, deeds, looks, and actions. Truly, for Nelly, the pleasantest part of the whole delusion was even now at an end. To be on the brink is delightful, but to fall in love is more than uncomfortable; it is a process akin to pain. The fire looks bright and cheerful enough, but wisdom warms its hands thereat, while folly burns its fingers to the bone.

"I was thinking how comely you must look on the white pony with your hair blown about by the Exmoor breezes," said he; and Nelly seemed so pleased with his answer, that the rest of their conversation was carried on in whispers, too low to be overheard even by the "little bird on the green tree," but of which the purport may be gathered from the final sentence delivered by John Garnet, in a louder tone, as of a man who resolves to carry his point in defiance of all obstacles.

"Then I may come up and speak to your grandfather this afternoon?"

She acquiesced with a timid little nod and a bright blush, that she stooped her head to hide, retiring with swift and noiseless steps towards her home.

But whatever passages of folly between these young people may have escaped notice from the "little bird on the green tree," whose own love-songs must seem to it so much more rational than "what he is saying, what answereth she," there crouched behind the hedge of the orchard one whose dark eye and tawny ear missed not the lowest whisper, the lightest gesture—whose tameless heart quivered and throbbled with every syllable, every caress, as at the stroke of a knife. If women are all jealous, even in the silks and satins and conventional fetters of civilized life, what must be the jealousy of a savage nature unreclaimed by education, untamed by principle, untaught by the selfishness this is so essential a constituent of respectability and good sense? It is possessed by a devil, who tears and rends it, refusing to be cast out.

Waif, or Thyra, as she was called by her own people, had journeyed with them into the West-country nothing loth, for she knew they were following in the track of the man she loved. Restored to her tribe after an absence of many years, her familiarity with the habits of the Gorgois rendered her an exceedingly valuable acquisition. She had the knack of duffering, or telling fortunes, with a tact that brought in handfuls of silver, and many a "balanser" in the red gold; therefore she came and went unquestioned in the tents, could be absent at all hours, and for as long as she pleased. Nor, as soon as she found herself within reach of John Garnet's retreat, was she slow to take advantage of her liberty.

A dozen miles aloft, across the moorland heath-land and along the sweet-scented Somersetshire lanes, was an easy journey to waif's supple frame and light nutting tread. The honest carriers, leading their string of pack-horses, looked after her in open-mouthed admiration, with blessings, homely but sincere, on her strange swarthy beauty, so well set off by the short scarlet cloak and the gold in her raven hair. A housewife possessing the old faith would cross herself perhaps, or her gossip, a Primitive Methodist, would mutter a charm against witchcraft as the

light of the man she loved within three hundred feet.

Why did her color fade, her breath come quick, her blood run icy cold? There was a white dress by John Garnet's side, and that unaccountable intuition, swift and subtle as the electric spark—that instinct of the heart, which never hesitates and is never mistaken, told her the truth. This was the meeting for which she had so longed, to compass which she had cajoled Fin Cooper, deceived her people, and travelled afoot across the hither all these weary miles! Waif trembled and her knees shook, for the first time in her life she turned sick and faint.

That cruel pain of hers though was not of the kind to gain relief from insensibility. On the contrary, all her faculties seemed preternaturally sharpened, while she writhed her slim body, like a snake through tufted grass and broad dock leaves, and the luxuriant vegetation of the adjoining meadow, to a hedge that fenced the orchard, where, parting the tangled branches in her noiseless hands, she peered through, with the eager, hopeless gaze of an outcast spirit looking on the paradise it has lost. Not a smile, not a glance, not an unwise gesture of that fond, foolish pair escaped the watcher. When John Garnet stooped to kiss Nelly's brow, it seemed as if moulton lead had dropped on her own and scared it to the brain. Then it was with the white teeth clenched to keep keep back a little piteous cry, and the numble fingers stole to her knife as though she must needs bury it in his breast, whom she loved, or hers, the rival's, whom she hated, or, better still, deep and quivering to the very half, in her own!

But strong as is the passion of jealousy, it is not, especially in the female breast, without an element of curiosity that is stronger still.

To scream, to stab, to make any over-turbance, would be to declare her presence and debar her from hearing more. Waif bit her lip till the blood came, and nerved herself to listen. Thus, as the lovers paced to and fro, taking short turns, after the manner of their kind, and stopping altogether to often-repeated pauses, for the in-all your secrets then, Thyra, won't you?"

"Perhaps!" answered Waif. "In the meantime, will you tell me what makes this stir and noise amongst our people? They are swarming down yonder like bees about a hive."

"Duke Michael came in at noon," answered Fin, "and the kettles have been anging in the smoke ever since. He brought the cart and the donkey and both his wives from the cudgel players country" (Cornwall), "and never halted but once to do a bit of tinkering on a moorland farm till he turned the head of the coombe here in our very midst. The women were so tired, that Laura would have fallen flat to the ground if I hadn't caught her in my arms, and lifted her out of the cart. Old Maggie was little better, though she boasts that the Bosvilles of the Border want neither food nor rest if they can get enough to drink; but the Duke tossed off a coro of brandy, pitched his tent, lit his fire, swung his kettle, and went into business at once, as if he were thirty years old, instead of getting on for ninety! There's been eating and drinking ever since. Not a Romany will he down sob r to-night, Thyra, but me, and I've you to thank for it!" He spoke in the plaintive tone of one who has sustained injury from a beloved hand, but relents and forgives.

A fresh burst of laughter, with the chorus of a song, led by stentorian lungs, reached them where they stood. On Waif's strung nerves and weary frame it jarred acutely; but Fin turned his head to listen with obvious approval. "That's the Gorgio!" he exclaimed, "the mellowest voice and the best man of his weight this side Barnstaple, be the other who he may! If we'd known more about him, we'd never played him such a trick to bring him here!"

black James Lee, in honor of our old man's visit, and we've tied the Parson into the camp to see far. He knows the rules of the ring and keeps them all in his head as plain as print. He's the sort that would sooner ride fifty miles to a fight than five to a prayer-meeting. So he up and puts the saddle on, and down the coombe he swings at a gallop, as if he'd a spare neck in each pocket, and leaps off before old Michael, with his shovel hat in his hand. 'It's not every day,' says he, 'in our West country, that a parson comes to visit a duke. Let's have a drink,' says he, 'deep enough to do credit to both!' and with that he empties a half-pint horn of brandy, and throws it over his left shoulder for luck. There was a cheer you might have heard at Taunton. Our old Duke wasn't to be bragged at such a game as that. He answered fair and honest, gill for gill; so down they sat on a blanket by the tent-door, and they've been at it ever since. In the meantime, little Ryley he slips round over the moor and brings the church clock with him coop and all. It's a beautiful bird, Thyra. I'll show it you to-morrow as soon as it's light; but if I'd known the Parson could sing so good a song he should never have lost a feather out of its wing, for Ryley and me!"

Waif seemed thoughtful and preoccupied. Presently she looked up and said quietly, "I must go and show myself to our old Duke, Fin, before he's too far gone to see me. Will you come down to the tents? and, Fin, don't you speak unkindly, that's a good lad, and don't you take much notice of what I say and do. I've had a long walk in the hot harvest sun, and I'm not quite myself to-day, that's the truth!"

So she put her hands in his, and threading some half-score of tents, every one of which was deserted for the great attraction of the Duke's presence, soon reached an open space, with some thirty or forty gipsies, men, women and children, crouched round a scanty fire, laughing, drinking, smoking, and all talking at once.

It was a wild scene. Every now and then a gipsy would throw on another faggot and the pale flickering streaks of flame brought into shifting, shadowy relief the grotesque figures of which the circle was composed. In the background stood a common tinker's cart, though it seemed wonderful that anything on wheels could have arrived in safety at this remote and solitary nook, surrounded by leagues of moor; while the donkey that drew it, calmly browsed a meditated in the enjoyment of well-earned repose. Propping his back against the shaft, and raised some inches from the ground by his own and his wives blankets doubled beneath him, Duke Michael of England sat in state, with a short black pipe in his hand and a pewter measure containing gin and cider at his knee. Even Waif, accustomed as she was to many a strange sight amongst her strange people, marvelled as she gazed.

His dress, though ragged and filthy in the extreme, was made of costly materials and the brightest colors, his coat being of fine blue cloth dotted by spade-guineas instead of buttons; his waistcoat, faded scarlet, bound with tawdry gold lace; the very link that fastened his stained flannel shirt at the throat was a gold seven-shilling piece! It was thus that he loved to display the riches, of which he was as proud as if they were the fruits of an honest calling. At one extremity of this magnificence, stockless feet peeped through a pair of rent and clouted shoes; while, at the other, a woolen night-cap under a battered hat, crowned the snow-white poll that contrasted ludicrously with his swarthy face, tanned nearly black, and seamed with so many wrinkles that it looked more like morocco leather than a human skin.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]