

THE MONK AND THE BIRD.

ANCIENT LEGEND FROM THE GERMAN OF SCHUBERT.

The bright spring morn its sunshine cast
On field and streamlet gay,
When Petrus Speculator passed
From out his cloister grey,
And as he wandered through the wood,
He cried, "Lord, all Thy works are good!"

"In smiling spring with gem-like flowers
Thou dost adorn the ground;
With golden corn in summer hours
Thou pourest wealth around.
Fair pearls in autumn Thou dost shed,
And silver brightens winter's head."

"Oh Lord, what wonders manifold
Surround our earthly dwelling!
But when Thy saints Thy face behold,—
A joy all joys excelling,—
For ever thus,—from year to year,—
Will not the time too long appear?"

"Oh God, enlighten Thou my mind!"
This was the prayer he prayed—
When roaming on, he starts to find
A change where'er he strayed.
No well-known oaks and pines were seen,
Around were palms and myrtles green!

To one tall tree he turned his feet,
For midst its branches fair
A strain of music passing sweet
Filled all the balmy air.
Enraptured, to the spot he clung—
It was a Bird of Heaven that sung!

And oh how marvellous the lay!
It raised the soul from earth,—
Its theme—the Resurrection day,—
Creation's second birth;
When Heaven shall drop with golden dew,
And Christ the Lord make all things new;

When at the trumpet's solemn voice
The grave's dread chain shall part,
And saints and angels shall rejoice
With every ransomed heart!
The monk, entranced, stood listening long,
"Blest bird! I thank thee for thy song."

And now with gladdened soul he bled
Toward his home once more,
But change unlooked for he espied
Around his convent door.
The brook, the field, the woods were gay,
But dim with age that cloister grey.

He crossed the threshold wondering,
An unknown brother came,
"Stranger, you seem to know your way,
Declare your wish,—your name?"
"My way I ought to know," said he,
"Do you not Brother Petrus see?"

"Petrus!" exclaimed the monk, aghast,
In wild amazement lost,—
"A thousand rolling years have passed
Since, from our convent lost,
Petrus, 'tis said, went forth at prime,
And ne'er was heard of from that time."

Then Petrus, trembling, lifts his eyes
And lowly bends his knee,
And deeply gasps for breath, and cries,
"My madness, Lord, I see!
Oh fool! to think that Heaven's own joy
Could fall the heart to satisfy."

"And Thou hast sent a heavenly Bird
That bore my soul away,
When its enchanting song I heard
Of the Redemption day,
Nill tranced beneath its magic power
A thousand years seemed but an hour."

"What will it be—what will it be,
When that Redemption I shall see!
When on my Lord these eyes shall rest,
When in His love this soul is blest!
Enwrapped in fulness of delight
What heart can tell the seasons' flight?
Eternity like Time will flee
When once Thy children gaze on Thee!"

M. A. S. M. in the Leisure Hour.

FLORENCE CARR.

A STORY OF FACTORY LIFE.

CHAPTER XLVII.—Continued.

Poor Mrs. Barker might have remained longer in her crouching position, if one of the policemen had not aroused her with the charitable intention of getting her away from that painful scene.

"Eigh, what dost thee want?" she asked, with a vacant, silly expression on her face. "Go to be married?" she went on, with a sallow laugh. "Aye, aw'm ready. They say aw'm the bonniest lass in Owdham, but it don't matter. My John be the brawnniest lad. Eigh, what, oh, what is my Highland laddie gone?" And she began to sing odd snatches of songs, all horribly out of place in the presence of the untimely dead.

The policemen used as they were to scenes

of revolting crime, could not look upon one sister dead, the other crazed, and Frank Gresham stricken down by the sight and carried away like a man who would never rise in health and strength again, without being themselves affected, and with all possible expedition they got Mrs. Barker out of the cottage, hoping that fresh air, and the sight of other and familiar faces would help to restore her to memory and reason.

In vain, however. The terrible sight or the confirmation of some previously-formed suspicion, had produced an effect which not all the skill in the world could counteract.

When her son, somewhat later in the day, was with great difficulty made to comprehend the untimely death of his aunt, and the terrible calamity that had befallen his mother, his reply seemed foolish and incomprehensible, indeed, as though it had no connection with the subject. "Eigh, then all's safe," he muttered, and then he began, if possible to drink more deeply than ever.

But even drunken men have lucid intervals; periods, at least, when the tongue is loosened and secrets are half divulged, which excite suspicion, afford a clue, and often lead to the detection of the criminal.

That this would be the case, Bob Brindley, the vilest villain of the three, had clearly foreseen, and had also, he believed, provided against, as far, at least, as his own safety and the proof of guilt against himself were concerned.

Hence his object in dropping the stud marked with Sydney Beltram's initials, and allowing John Barker's hat to remain, when he might have taken it away and thus have removed all trace as to the identity of the murderers.

The sharpest and shrewdest people are very apt to overreach themselves, and this was exactly what Bob Brindley had done.

A hat and a stud are not the most definite clues to work upon, but many a crime has been traced out with far less to warrant its certainty.

John Barker's vague mutterings might only have been treated as the wanderings of a drunkard, had they not been taken in connection with the suspicious hat.

When asked by his companions where he had got so much money to spend, he replied, vaguely, that there was plenty more where that came from.

On the evening of the same day that the murder was discovered and before he, in company with Beltram, visited the captives in the coal pit, Bob Brindley had found John out at the "Cross Keys," and taking him aside, tried to sober and reason with him upon the imprudence of his present conduct, and the certainty of detection if he persisted in it.

But John was not to be persuaded; terror even failed to move him, and when Brindley, becoming angry and impatient, began to threaten him, the effect was to make him sullen and revengeful.

"Well, if thee won't run, thee'll hang for't," said Brindley, hotly, as he left him.

But he did not hear the threat returned. "If aw do hang, aw'll have company."

And even had he done so, it would have affected him but slightly.

He had taken his own precautions too carefully, he believed, to place his own neck in danger. Moll was the only person who could throw suspicion upon, or give evidence against him, and he had no doubt about managing her, for up to this time, be it remembered, he had not found out how very obstinate—firm, perhaps I should have said—Moll could be, and how much more difficult than he anticipated it would be to mould her.

His plans had all been laid to leave Oldham with Moll that very night, and with the blind infatuation peculiar to men who believe themselves to be irresistible, he could not, up to the very last, believe but that Moll loved him.

Originally his plan had been for his two accomplices and himself, with the two girls, to leave Oldham and England on the night succeeding that of the outrage, not going together or intending to meet again, but disappearing simultaneously; and, through the traces left behind, he calculated that suspicion would fall upon the two others, without even approaching him, and, as they would be far beyond the arm of the law before suspicion could fall upon them, there would be no danger of their trying to implicate him in the matter.

Very nice in theory, no doubt. But theories do not always look promising when reduced to practice, and Bob Brindley's notions, up to a certain point, had succeeded, then blundered, and signally failed.

Had John Barker been provided with a companion as scheming and worldly wise as Florence Carr, the sequel might have been different.

But, believing in his own security, neither threats nor entreaties would induce him to carry out the preconceived plan of flight, and while Brindley was waiting to urge him, and striving to bend Moll, the precious moments were passing away, moments in which their "hearts like muffled drums, were beating funeral marches to the grave."

The morning of the second day dawned, and still found Brindley and Barker in Oldham.

In fact, a power invisible, but like that exercised over a man when under the influence of nightmare, was upon the former.

Try as he would to banish it, a vision of the old woman as she struggled with her murderers would present itself before him, would follow him, exert himself as he would and did to reason or drive it from him.

It was not a pleasant sensation, and there was beyond it something even worse.

What had taken place or was being enacted in that deserted working in the coal mine?

Hundreds of times this question presented itself to his mind, never to be replied to.

The men were out on strike.

But it was not of them he thought.

Moll was there, he believed—alive or dead!

This was what puzzled him.

He did not know, and he dared not go in person to solve the question.

He did not go to the mouth of the pit and question the man in charge of it, Jem's sweetheart, who was in his pay, and wholly in his power, and who knew but little, and never even guessed at the identity of the persons who had been taken down and brought up from the mine.

But the man replied, as he believed truthfully, that the old woman whom he had let down had likewise returned from her underground journey, and Bob Brindley made his way to the residence of Mother Black, the White Witch, expecting to hear the result of her visit, and the details of Moll's decision and fate from her.

Here again he was disappointed. Mother Black was not at home, Jem told him with a stolid, unreadable face.

And the deformed girl, after being questioned, admitted that she did not know what time her granny left the house.

It must have been early she thought, but she could not tell.

Her granny had sent her to bed the previous night, and she had seen nothing of her since.

Where she had gone she could not even guess, but she supposed she was all right, and would return in a day or two.

In any case it was useless searching for her.

Such, delivered in broad Lancashire dialect, was Jem's expressed opinion, and the disappointed man went away gloomily, feeling as though even the ground on which he trod was insecure, and yet, having risked so much, unwilling to escape, until he knew whether his prize was lost or won.

Even now the shadow of crime was upon him; it dogged his footsteps, peered into his eyes, was ever at his side, and he could not shake it off or fly from it.

Had he possessed his usual nerve, he would have gone down into the coal pit, have searched the part in which the prisoners had been hid, and have solved the fate of one of them at least.

But this, he dared not, could not do.

The sight of Moll's face, cold and white in death, would, he felt, send him raving mad, and if she were alive and still obdurate, he might, in a fit of frenzy and passion, kill her.

No, the wisest, the safest course would be to wait until the return of the old hag, and learn the result of her interview with the prisoner from her.

There could be no danger in such a trifling delay.

Suspicion had as yet settled upon no one definitely; it could not by any possibility fall upon him. Indeed, if John Barker were out of the way, there might not be any cause or necessity for his leaving Oldham.

Was it the very fiend that suggested this thought to him?

Who can say? But once planted in his mind, it remained there.

If John Barker were out of the way, if John Barker were dead—that is what it came to.

And the idea from which he shrank at first, became familiar to him, until it was not the question of the crime, but of the means of executing it, that he pondered and schemed over.

Still there was the same uncertainty about Moll's fate.

If she were alive, if she would yield and fly with him, the further crime need not be committed, since it would be useless, perhaps dangerous.

And the day, the same on which we know Moll was speeding on to London, to carry the glad hope of possible freedom to the dark prison; the day on which she fainted at the gates and was carried home by the detective, Barkup, passed on. Little or no light was thrown upon the dark tragedy, and one of the actors in it was already meditating upon another equally heinous crime.

As surely as night succeeds day, so does the commission of one crime occasion, I had almost said, necessitate the commission of another.

Like walking on a quicksand, the further you go, the deeper you sink, until the treacherous sand and water engulf and hold you in their death-like embrace, till the last earthly gasp and struggle is over.

Hours of agony, which seemed as though they would never end, had been that day to Bob Brindley.

No news of Moll.

No news of Mother Black.

He had been to her cottage twice with the same result, the same replies, from Jem; the third time he came, it was to find the door locked, the house in darkness, and the crippled girl gone.

This might not be an unusual or singular circumstance, but it struck him as peculiarly ominous.

If he had but the courage to go down into the coal pit, to try to solve the mystery himself, it might not be too late.

But he dared not—he simply dared not.

He who had condemned a helpless woman to a living death, dared not face the result of his

own work, and the question now lay between flight and the death of John Barker.

He had not previously felt any great love for the town in which he was born, though it possessed a horrible fascination for him now.

If John Barker were dead, all would be well, so he argued. If Mother Black returned he would be silent for her own sake; and when his nerves were a little stronger, when he had, in a measure recovered from the foolish fancies which oppressed him, he would go to that disused and extreme part of the pit, cover over, and hide or bury all that remained of the woman who had preferred death to his love.

He shuddered, even as he thus thought and planned, but his decision was arrived at.

John Barker was to be disposed of, without unnecessary delay, this very night if possible.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE CUP AND THE LIP.

The same day as that which passed so slowly to Bob Brindley, with such mingled doubt, and thoughts of evil—the same that saw Moll Arkshaw hastening with repressed excitement and anxious expectation to Millbank Prison, found Florence Carr with her gaoler, as she chose to term Sidney Beltram, in a quiet hotel near Charing Cross.

They had reached the metropolis some hours earlier than Moll, and had proceeded direct to this hotel, where their names had been entered in the books as Mr. and Mrs. Sidney.

Not a very loving couple did they seem, the lady especially paying little heed to her supposed husband's observations, and insisting upon having separate rooms, and a private sitting-room, in a tone and manner which brooked no demur or denial; although, the hotel being rather full, the clergyman had to content himself with an attic as a sleeping apartment.

"Well, she's a beauty, but I shouldn't quite like such a selfish Tartar for a wife," said the waiter to the chambermaid, as he repeated the order. "You're not so han'some, but you're a precious sight jollier, Polly," he continued.

At which Polly pouted, blushed, and tossed her head, expressing her decided opinion that—"It was like his impudence."

I am afraid that Florence Carr's temper had not improved with the experiences of the last eight-and-forty hours.

She had never been too sweet or over amiable, as poor Mrs. Bolton had she been living, could have attested, and it was only such a large-hearted, generous creature as Moll Arkshaw who could have overlooked her fallings, and submitted or been blind to her tyrannical and uncertain temper.

To do her justice also, she had been better behaved to Moll than to anyone else whom it had been her fate to come in contact with, although she had been the cause of casting such a cloud upon that poor girl's life and happiness that might perhaps never be completely removed.

There was no restraint placed upon her temper now, however.

She was savage, not as a she-bear robbed of its cubs, but as a tigress deprived of its prey.

You have already seen how she had made up her mind to marry Frank Gresham, for the sake of the wealth and position he could give her, and though she had no love for him, she was furious—simply furious at been balked of her prey.

As for Sidney Beltram, her feelings towards him were more than those of hatred, for they verged upon contempt. She literally despised him.

Despised him for the mad passion he entertained for her, and for the crime in which it had involved him.

It was an even balance in her mind even now, whether she would escape from, or marry him, and she made little or no secret of her sentiments with regard to him.

And yet, the more coolly, even contemptuously she treated him, the more abject and confirmed was his love for her.

Love such an overmastering feeling could not be called; it was passion, frenzy, delirium, anything but calm, truthful, honest, yet everyday love.

He asked for little.

To sit and look at her, be near her, hold her hand in his own, even to touch the hem of her garments, was happiness and bliss for him.

While even tolerated, he was humble and gentle, but the very fire which fed the flame could, if spurned and turned upon himself, become fatally dangerous.

Florence knew and saw this.

She had played too much with human hearts not to know something of their working, and how far she might stretch her power over him, without the cord which linked them snapping.

The very expression of his face had changed during the last six months, and even in his calmest moments there was a look of wild excitability in his eye, which too surely spoke of incipient madness.

Looking at him as he just sat near her, Florence read his face, almost his thoughts, and again the question which must soon be solved and answered, irrevocably rose in her mind.

Should she cast in her lot with his, or attempt to escape from, and defy him before it was too late?

But for the dark secret which overshadowed her life, and which belonged to the part of it spent before we met her in Oldham, she would have thrown all care or thought for Beltram to the winds, given him in charge of the police,