

briefest snatches, was astir early. She breakfasted with her boy and the nurse, and was unusually gracious to Mrs. Tringfold, whom she thought it might be well to conciliate.

"I haven't so much as heard you say where we are going to, my lady," said Mrs. Tringfold, emboldened by this condescension; "and it's rather wearing to the mind to feel oneself travelling and not know what one's coming to."

"Didn't I tell you, Tringfold?" exclaimed Sylvia, with an innocent wondering look, "how odd that I should forget it. We are going to Antwerp on the first stage of our journey up the Rhine."

Mrs. Tringfold looked insufficiently enlightened. "Antwerp," she repeated, "might that be any wheres in the Highlands, my lady; I know Scotch travelling is all the rage with the aristocracy."

Lady Perriam explained that Antwerp was not in North Britain. Mrs. Tringfold was grateful for the explanation, but expressed some horror at the idea of going among nasty, dirty Frenchmen.

Lady Perriam made good use of the interval between breakfast and half-past ten o'clock, at which hour the fly was ordered to convey the travellers to St. Katherine's Wharf. She went in a cab to a central telegraph station, and sent the following telegram to Edmund Standen, at the Hotel Peter Paul, Antwerp.

"Yes, a thousand times yes. I am on my way to Antwerp, and shall answer all questions for myself."

This done Lady Perriam drove to Jager-street, Bloomsbury, where she was fortunate enough to find Mr. Ledlamb just arriving from his country retreat, whence an early train had brought him to his surgery.

That gentleman looked not a little surprised at the appearance of his patroness.

"Are you about to honour us with a visit to the Arbour, Lady Perriam?" he asked rather anxiously.

"Not just yet, Mr. Ledlamb. I am on my way to the Continent, for a little change and rest. On my return I shall come to see your patient, and hope to find that he does honour to your care. I thought while in London I might as well call here and ascertain from your own lips that all is well."

"Nothing could be better," answered Mr. Ledlamb glibly. "Our poor patient has been somewhat sullen and querulous; but on the whole we have got on charmingly. Mrs. Carter, the nurse, has been of some service in soothing him. He has a curious fancy about her, and sometimes—"

"My dear Mr. Ledlamb, I have begged you not to torture me with details. So you found Mrs. Carter useful. It has occurred to me that as the patient likes her, it might be as well to retain her services for some time to come."

Mr. Ledlamb's countenance fell somewhat at this suggestion.

"I should, of course, make an allowance for her maintenance—say fifty pounds a year."

Mr. Ledlamb brightened visibly, then looked thoughtful—finally brightened again.

"It might be so arranged, Lady Perriam, if you desire it. It is somewhat against my rule to receive any patient's former attendant. I prefer attendants of my own choosing. But in this case I will strain a point. Mrs. Carter shall stay with us—she shall share the tranquil repose of our secluded home."

"I have been thinking that you might be glad of a payment on account, Mr. Ledlamb."

"That is very considerate of you, Lady Perriam. I admit that some small advance would not be unwelcome."

Sylvia gave him a hundred pounds in notes, which she had prepared for that purpose, and took his receipt for the amount in a thoroughly business-like manner.

Two hours afterwards she was standing on the deck of the Antwerp steamer, watching the low shores of Essex glide slowly by, and dreaming of a happy future.

Not a thought of the lunatic in his strange abode—home in name, in reality a prison—no regret for the mother whom she had condemned to share his dismal doom, stole like a dark and menacing shadow across Sylvia Perriam's sunlit day-dreams. She was a woman who lived for herself—whose fears, hopes, desires ever tended towards one perpetual centre.

She was hastening to meet her lover, and she was happy.

CHAPTER LX.

MR. BAIN IS WORSTED.

Mr. Bain mounted his horse, Pepper—a sleek, deep-chested animal, which he kept for the saddle—and rode forth gaily—or as gaily as so young a widower might ride with the eye of his townfolk upon him—just about an hour after Lady Perriam had been borne away from St. Katherine's wharf on the Antwerp steamer.

It was a bright August noontide, with just a pleasant westerly breeze to fan the leaves of the young trees that had been planted in the front gardens of those smart-looking villas which had lately cropped up, like a fringe of brick and mortar, along the road just outside Monkhampton—agreeable indications of the prosperity of "our ever-increasing town," as the Monkhamptonians called it in the local paper. Mr. Bain, secure in his square, red brick dwelling-place, whose freehold his father and grandfather had held before him, looked with an eye of contempt on these toy-shop villas—little more substantial than those pasteboard Swiss cottages and rustic savings banks in which juvenile hoards are wont to be garnered. The people who occupied these newly built habitations were people who had newly begun housekeeping—people of the mushroom race—young couples with small children and very young maid-servants—nothing solid or old-established about them.

Gaily rode Mr. Bain past the mushroom villas, more gaily as the road grew more rural, and there were only birds and butterflies, or the ruddy kine in the fat meadows, or lazy old horses looking over a field gate to mark the brightness of his eye, or the half-suppressed smile upon his firm lip.

He was going to ask Lady Perriam for her answer—and he told himself that answer would be favourable. He had considered the matter from every standpoint, gone into it deeply, and he did not believe she would dare to refuse his offer of marriage, unexpected, or even repugnant, as that offer might have been.

Granted that her heart was given to her first lover, Edmund Standen. She would conquer that fancy as she had conquered it before, when she married Sir Aubrey Perriam. Granted that her heart could never belong to Mr. Bain, any more than it had belonged to Sir Aubrey. Shadrack Bain could do without her heart.

"I have never had a particular fancy for hearts," the land

steward said to himself, "but I want those outlying lands—the lands my father and I have put together—land bought judiciously, and improved so carefully that it yields four and a-half per cent. I want to be master where I have been servant. I want to hand over my office to my son and my head clerk, and wash my hands of Monkhampton and drudgery. I want to sit down upon my own acres, and have a pretty wife to head my table, and ride to hounds three times a week, and be called squire instead of lawyer."

These desires were the sum of Mr. Bain's ambition, and he fancied that he was on the threshold of his commonplace Paradise. It was his conviction that Lady Perriam dared not refuse him anything.

"First and foremost, and there lies the main spring of my machine, there is a secret, a secret connected with Sir Aubrey's death. What it is I hardly care to know. Perhaps better not to know it. My power is the same, so long as she believes I know it. Secondly, poor old half-witted Mordred Perriam has some inkling of her secret, and that's why she has kept him so close, and has taken such care to keep me from seeing him, and would have very little objection to shut him up in a lunatic asylum if she could do it safely. Thirdly, that Mrs. Carter, who I believe is a poor relation of Lady Perriam's, is in some manner concerned in this secret. Between the old man and his nurse I might unravel the mystery, I dare say, if I set about it. But there's no occasion for that. Lady Perriam's face told me enough the other day. Whatever her secret is, she gives me credit for knowing it, and fears me with all her heart and soul; fears me so much that she will marry me, and be ruled by me for the rest of her life. If not out of love, out of fear."

Thus mused Shadrack Bain as he rode to Perriam Place. The woman at the lodge swung open the gate and dropped her lowest curtsy as he entered the avenue. All the servants at the Place felt that Mr. Bain was more or less their master. He had taken upon himself the duties of house-steward since Sir Aubrey's illness, and had contrived to retain those duties even after Sir Aubrey's death. He paid the servants their wages, and they believed that they would have to part at his dismissal.

Occupied as he was with his own schemes, Mr. Bain remarked the lodgekeeper's profound reverence, and felt the sweetness of power.

"A nice sinecure that woman has," he said to himself; "nothing to do but mind her own children, and open and shut that gate half-a-dozen times a day. That's one of the evils of a large estate. There are always more cats than can catch mice."

Perriam Place looked its grandest in the broad midday sunshine, the parterres in the Italian garden ablaze with flowers, the statues and marble balustrade of the terraces steeped in sunlight.

"A fine old house," thought Mr. Bain, "nothing of the mushroom about that. It would be something to inhabit such a place, even if one were but a tenant on sufferance."

The hall doors stood wide open, but the sleek footman who was wont to lounge in the vestibule was not visible to-day. Mr. Bain had to ring the bell for some one to come and look after his horse, whereupon, after a pause of some three minutes, during which Mr. Bain rung a second time, the well-fed servitor made his appearance, with something of a guilty look.

"Have you all grown deaf?" asked Mr. Bain, with stern reproof. "Take my horse, and tell Morris to make him comfortable. I shan't want him for an hour or so. You needn't announce me; I know my way to Lady Perriam's morning room."

Mr. Bain pushed past the dumbfounded servitor and mounted the stairs. He had not given the man time to answer, nor could the man follow Mr. Bain to give him any information, for he had the horse's bridle in his hand, and knew not what manner of brute that quadruped might be, or whether it might not career off and rampage across the Italian parterre, and knock down a statue or two, if haply let free.

So Mr. Bain mounted the stairs, with the lover's impatient footsteps, and went straight to Lady Perriam's morning-room—which he found empty.

There was utter silence in the corridor, no murmur of the youthful St. John's voice, which was wont to be audible, either in plaint or rejoicing. Mr. Bain went on to the day nursery, a large, airy room, not far from Lady Perriam's apartments. The nursery was also empty, and had, moreover, an orderly look; everything in its place, swept and garnished, the look of a deserted nursery.

Mr. Bain stared round him aghast, and then rang the bell vehemently.

It was answered by the chief housemaid, a vinegar-faced person who had been accustomed to wait on Lady Perriam before Sir Aubrey's death, a person who had been superseded after that event by Céline, the French maid.

"Goodness, gracious, sir, how you did startle me!" exclaimed the housemaid, "ringing that precious bell. The house seemed as if it was haunted, Mrs. Tringfold being gone, and this room empty, to the best of my belief."

"Mrs. Tringfold gone! What do you mean, woman?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bain, my name is Betsy Dyke, and I should thank you to call me by it. You may be ever so surprised, and I grant it's natural you should feel surprised, but I don't like such an epithet as that flung at me."

The "epitaph" was the generic term "woman" which Mr. Bain had hurled at the damsel somewhat roughly.

"Do you mean that Mrs. Tringfold has gone away, left Perriam Place," he asked, without noticing the reproof.

"Yes, sir, left yesterday evening by the London train."

"Then who is nursing Sir St. John?"

"Sir St. John left too, sir, yesterday evening by the London train."

"What did they go away for, where are they going, who sent them?" gasped the steward, breathless with angry agitation.

"Nobody knows that but Lady Perriam. She arranged it all, and she went with them."

"Lady Perriam has gone to London, has she?" said Mr. Bain, slowly recovering self-control and composure. "She has gone away for a little change of air I suppose, as I recommended her to do, ever so long ago. She has gone rather suddenly at last, and that's just a lady's way of acting. There's nothing so difficult as to get a woman to make up her mind; but when she does make up her mind, she always does it in a hurry. Did Lady Perriam tell any one, the housekeeper for instance, where she was going, and how long she meant to be away?"

"Lady Perriam didn't tell anybody anything, sir. She was

always a lady to keep things close, and she has been closer than usual lately. Mrs. Tringfold and that blessed child was whiked off at an hour's notice—things packed anyhow. One would have thought Lady Perriam was running away from some danger."

"An impetuous way of doing things, certainly," said Mr. Bain, now completely master of his emotions; "but I daresay, after such a hurried departure, Lady Perriam will not be long absent. And now I'll go and speak to Mrs. Carter. I have a little bit of business to arrange with her."

"You wanted to speak to Mrs. Carter, sir? Didn't you know that she had left the Place?"

"Mrs. Carter! What, has she left too?"

"Yes, sir. She went away with Mr. Perriam and a strange gentleman, the day before yesterday."

Mr. Bain questioned the housemaid closely, and heard the story of Mordred's removal, so far as Betsy Dyke could tell it. How a strange gentleman, who looked like a clergyman or a doctor, had come to the Place in the afternoon of the day before yesterday; how he and Lady Perriam had been closeted together for an hour or more; and how the order had then been given for the carriage to be ready at seven o'clock; and how at that time Mr. Perriam had been led down to the hall between the stranger and Mrs. Carter, and those three had gone off together in the carriage, which took them to the Monkhampton station and there deposited them.

"By heaven! she has made a clean sweep of it," thought Mr. Bain, when he had listened, with seeming carelessness, to this story, set forth at considerable length, and with much circumlocution, by the housemaid; "but she is not so clever a woman as I think her if she counts upon escaping me so easily. She can't leave Perriam Place, or my dominion, very long without leaving five thousand a year behind her—the dowry she perjured herself to win—and she'll hardly do that I fancy."

As yet Mr. Bain had heard nothing of Edmund Standen's departure. He, therefore, lacked the key-note to Lady Perriam's flight.

"I think there's a letter for you, sir," said Betsy Dyke, whose mind had been considerably relieved by the letting off of sundry spiteful insinuations against the mistress who had discarded her services. "I seem to remember seeing one on the chimney-piece in Lady Perriam's morning room, when I dusted it this morning."

"Seem to remember!" exclaimed the agent. "You might have remembered it a little sooner, I should think, if you had your wits about you."

He went in quest of the letter himself. Yes, there lay the envelope in Sylvia's clear bold handwriting, sealed with the Perriam arms.

Shadrack Bain tore open the envelope with fingers which, for this once in his well-ordered life, trembled a little. He devoured those carefully studied lines, glanced at the postscript with eyes which gleamed with anger, and then from between his clenched teeth there hissed forth a single word which was not good to hear—an epithet more objectionable than that against which Betsy, the housemaid, had protested.

"Does she think she can be so easily rid of me!" he said in his deep inward whisper, "knowing what I know, or suspecting what I suspect, which comes to the same thing. Does she count upon flinging me off as lightly as if we stood on equal terms? She avows her love for Standen—blasons it even! She could hardly do that if he and she had not come to an understanding, had not made their plans for the future. She dares to speak of Sir Aubrey, too—her esteem, her reverence, her gratitude? How did she prove these? It shall be my task to answer that question, ay, and to publish my answer to all the world, unless she is wise."

The postscript angered him even more than the letter.

"What a designing jade," he muttered, "to get me to give her the name of a safe tool, and then use him without my help. But I'll unearth this poor wretch Mordred, and wring her secret out of him, if, as I suspect, he knows it. First to follow her, though—hunt her down before she has put the barrier of a second marriage between her fortune and me."

What Mr. Bain suspected was a matter which he kept to himself, but whatever it was he was not unwilling to take Sylvia Perriam for his wife. She was the loveliest woman he had ever seen, and the wealthiest who had ever come within his orbit. He could manage to make light of a little peccadillo which with most men would have been a stumbling block in the rosy path to the altar.

"There are not many who would marry her, suspecting what I suspect," he told himself meditatively, as he thrust that crumpled letter into his pocket.

"But then most men are poltroons in their dealings with women," he argued. "I am no more afraid of her than those Indian snake charmers of the serpents they hang round their necks."

He went down stairs, saw the housekeeper, spoke very lightly of Lady Perriam's departure, as if it had been the most natural thing in the world, ascertained that there was no information to be had in this quarter, and left the place with his usual steady bearing. Yet the world was considerably changed for him, and he no longer felt sure of those outlying lands which he and his father had worked and schemed, with infinite astuteness and calculation, to add to the Perriam estate.

One thing, however, he did feel sure of, that if he did not get the outlying lands he could have revenge.

To be continued.

A system of optical telegraphy, somewhat like that devised in France and Italy, has been announced by Mr. Gustin, of Troy, who uses an instrument like a head-light to a locomotive, with a shield that fits over and shuts off the light. The operator sits behind, and an attachment, worked by the hand, lifts the shield, throwing forward the flash of light. A single flash stands for a dot, and a prolonged one means a dash. While the French and Italian systems have given very gratifying results, although not specially adapted for use in the field, Mr. Gustin's method, on the other hand, is designed especially for use at a moment's notice. Some objections have been made against it by the authorities at Washington, but the inventor thinks these have but slight foundation.

MARRIED.

On Wednesday, the 4th of February, 1874, at the Archbishop's Palace, St. Boniface, Manitoba, by His Grace Archbishop Taché, Quartermaster Joseph Hamilton Sommerville, of Canadian Light Infantry, son of Alexander Sommerville, Esq., of Kingston, Ontario, to Marie Charlotte Heva Leocadie, second daughter of Raphael Camirant, Esq., formerly of this city.