BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

BY FRANK BARRETT.

Author of "Fertered for Life," "The Admirable Lady Body Fane," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I

"SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER."

The Lecture Hall and Literary Institute, Monkton a long, rectangular room, ht with six gas jets on hanging T shaped in tings, the drab walls decorated with half a dozen mais, the coloured representation in section of a very early steam engine; an ethnological chart, and other instructive ethological chart, and differ instructive works of art. At one end a small stage, opening 14 ft. x 5 ft., flanked by red curtains, and furnished with six footlights and a drop scene, showing Athens, the worse for many falls; a grand piano below the prosecutive by way of orcheters. The body of the half spread or margilled lines with red. sceniuri by way of orchestra. The body of the hall ranged in parallel lines with red cushioned rout seats, on which are closely pressed the relations and friends of pupils connected with Mrs. Vicary Shepherd's High School and Academy for the daughters of gentiemen. An overflow of bashful youths line the walls right and left. Three very warm-leoking gentlemen, each with a pack et of programmes in his hand and a white favour in his buttonhole, are endeavouring, with smiling assiduity, to find places for a with miling assiduity, to find places for a gang of late comers, while two more, similar by distinguished, are striving at the intrance to make an honest working man, slightly the worse for liquor, understand that he cannot possibly be admitted without a tick-et, these are the professors, who "have kindly volunteered their services as stewards on this occusion.

There is a general inspection of pink programmes, and a buzzing is heard. Even the professors speak in hushed tones, for the general effect of the hall, despite the stage, is that of a Methodist chapel. A lady ex-plains to a gentleman—who seems, by some accident, to have come there without know A lady exing why -what is toward:

'It's a High School, you know. Mrs. Vicary Shepher I-I'm purry to see that ahe's not here; she is indisposed, I'm told I hope it a nothing contagnous -is a lady of most advanced modern views, and this entertainment has been got up to demonstrate the advantage of the elocution and deport ment class."
"Oh, 2 see,"

'She wrote to the great tragedian _what "Soe wrote to the great tragedian—what is his name?—on the subject. Here is his reply on the lack of the programme It was he who suggested what should be acted."
"You don't say so? And what is the play he recommends?"
"She About to Congress. He had a Miller."

"She Stoops to Conquer My little Milly takes the part of Diggory She sonly twelve, you know Mrs. Vicary Shepherd assured me that, if she had only been a year or two older, she should have asked me to let her play old Marlow."

play old Marlow."

"Ale, indeed ! Then all the performers are—eli—young ladies?"

"Ohg ef course; and, naturally, Mrs. Vicary Shepherd has carefully revised the play for the use of her popils. Ah' that is Miss Tim-kleton, the music musicass it's economical acin now." m to f . gin now. con plays an elaborate sonata constant paralliant, but rather long, not practice of prangenth, or cursum. An in the confidence of panels of the confidence of panels of the confidence of the cursum.

ord commercials

tion, when a vociverous view balloo beyond the red curtain, followed by the brisk entrance of Tony Lumpkin or the scene, fairly gal vanises the audience into life. The entrance is clearly unrehearsed, for Nrs. Harucastic montinently forgets her part. What does that matter! Every one is occupied with Tony, and he has the sense to turn the silence to effect. There he stands a strapping black eyed young fellow with a red wig, standing astraddle, looking audacious ly at the audience as he cracks his riding whip and whistles through a long row of white teeth. Suddenly, as if recollecting an engagement, hesays, "I'm off," and cross is clearly unrehearsed, for Mrs. Hardcastle es the stage with an unseen wink to Mrs. Hardcastle, and a quickly whispered line that she is to take up. As he goes off hat thing stoutly with Mrs. Hardcastle at the end of the scene, every one in the audience consults the programme, and (in whispered Surely that cannot be es damation) Vanessa Grahame!" is on every one's lips. But it is, though Nessa herself, who, taking advantage of Mrs. Vicary Shepherd's absence, has determined to play the part as aucus Gralume! she concerves Goldsmith intended it to be played, and in defiance of Mrs. Vicary Shepherds express injunction int she should not disfigure herself, has painted her pretty face and especially her dainty nose with other and rouge, and hidden her pretty waving chesnut hair with a red wig sent down with the costumes from Bow Street. What is more, she has got hold of an unabridged copy of the play, and is de-termined to say every word of it, hig I's The second scene is set, and Tony is then

found at the head of the table with a long found at the head of the table with a long churchwarden pipe in his neath. It is a real pipe and real tobacco that Miss Grahame smokes, too, puffing out the smoke in a cloud, and never choking once—though she was giddy and sick enough after it when she went off at the end. And here, to the terror of Miss Tinkletcu at the piano, she introduced the second verse in the song of the "Three Jolly Pigeons," which Miss Vicary Shenherd had cut out, without a moment's Shepherd had cut out, without a moment's heatation; and also restored the vulgar word "jorura" in the third verse, which had been changed to "goblet" by the careful lady. Moreover, she introduced a step dance in the final cheens of "Torroddle, torroddle, torrol," as if unable to contain the exubertorrol, as if unable to contain the manufance of her spirits. But that was not the worst. There is that dreading part about Bet Bouncer, and have no slapped her leg Bet Bouncer, and have on slapped he and winked requisity at the Rev. Ret Bouncer, and nure case and the Rev. Mr. Those who have not seen are called and winked requisibly at the Rev. Mr. Those who have not seen are called and winked requisibly to can hardly believe that it was she who play single out for that purpose; said when it ed. Tony. They expected to find her a red-came to describing the road to complise said, rounning, heavy sided tomboy; they Marsh, she put a particular complises on the and a pile faced young lady, dressed with words, "A damned long, dark, soggr, dirty, saking eleginos, whose every movement is dangerous way," as if "very dark, sie.," as general eyes, said there say mutaking those Mrs Vicary Shepherd had written it, was lag, feathers eyes, said that capital set of while tastle.

The act is finished, and Athena is once ore in view. There is commotion in the more in view. About and additional The Edites are shocked and additional. They cannot understand how Mrs Vicary Shepherd could allow such a performance to be given. Deportment and election were all very well in their way, and Oliver Goldsmith was, undoubtedly, a server excellent writer but really such language excellent writer but really such language. cuage. And how Miss Grahame, a young lady who, in a few years, would have a position in society, with three thousand year hopever sould she so forget herself. Little M. mamma is quite sure that Little Me mamma is quite sure that her daughter, would not have played the part in they dreadful manner. It is a most part in they dreadful manner. It is a most part in they dreadful manner. It is a most part in they dreadful manner. It is a most part in they dreadful manner. It is a most part in the most part

right possibly inhorace her right possibly inhorace her with attentive grav less displaced with sided ventures a few They have the control of the control

eyes. She has tried in vain to get behind the scenes by the one door, which is locked. the scenes by the one door, which is locked. No one would answer her knock. She feels that she will be held responsible for the terrible behaviour of Miss Grahame, which will certainly rum Mrs. Vicary Shepherd's reputation. What is to be done? The professors really do not know; but, as it is impossible to stop the performance, it is sapiently suggested that the wisest course is to let it go on. Miss Tankleton returns to the uiana and stremments or decayours to to let it go on Alias Tinkleton returns to the piano, and strenuously endeavours to restore the credit of the High School by the accurate rendering of another sonata. However, the wora is past, and Nessa inflicts no fresh shock upon the sensibilities of her audience. Audacious she is, but not indeli cate; certain expressions in the original she finds unspeakable, and adroitly avoids them; but she abates nothing of her boater ous abandon, and throughout the play sus tains admirably the part of Tony. The ous abandon, and throughout the pixy sus-tains admirably the part of Tony. The audience sits out the performance with something more than patience; the dash of impropriety in Miss Grahame's acting gives momething to think about and talk about when it is over; and the majority go away very well content. But there are some who never will forgive Nessa, these are the mannas of those young ladies whose light on the stage has been completely outshore her has been completely outshore.

They hear no name mentioned but that of Mass Grahame; and the fact that she is a born actress, and certainly saven the enter tainment from being immiferably tedious, is dwelt upon in tones intended for their cairs, and with malicious emphasis by those other mammas who had desired that their daugh ters might not take part in the play. There is not a word said about the youthful Milly in the part of Diggory, and her mamma taking the little darling home in a fury, and ing the little darling home in a fury, and not maintain the little darling home in a fury, and chiding her on the way for not speaking out zo that she might be heard, sats down the moment she gets in to write a note informing Mrs. Vicary Shepherd that she cannot permit her daughter to commence another term if Miss Vanessa Grahame remains in her establishment. her establishment.

Meanwhile, a couple of young scuttemen who have been madly in love with Nessa for the past two years, and three or figur others who have seen her to-night for the first time and have not that exense, loiter outside the hall to see her pass to the omnibus that is waiting to take her and thereat of the boarders to the school at Westham. She comes down after the small fry, with her arm linked in Miss Tinkleton's

The full moon is right overhead; its light glistens on her white teeth and sparkles in her dark eyes as she laughs. She is clearly trying to make the poor governess forget her trouble, and indeed succeeds in raiging a faint smile on her lugularous countenance. But though she is laughing and full of fun, Nessa is neither hoydonish nor vulgar. Those who have not seen her before to night

CHAPTER II.

PETRIANNO FOR BATTLE

Mrs. Viency Shephord accepted only a limited number of pupils as hearders just as meny, in that, as needd be stowed away as many, in host, as round be storted away in the six round on the second floor of Foole. House. Among the many duties of a noore spirited rendom government. Miss Tinkleton had each night to see the young ladies in hed before retiring to her own. She had risited five of the rooms and suffering the light in them, when she came the best in the corridor. That was Assaul. Has in the corridor. That was Assaul. Has Inkleton passed a with a slight course and and went down stairs, News having longuage emancipated herself from a rule test were and wont down stairs. None having long-age emancipated horself from a rule text was only to be suffered by children. Five minutes later, the doors up the passage began to creak, and heads were cantiously thrust one, then the white robed young ladies, seeing the course clear, crept out, treading on their soft, have toes, clasping the wraps thown over their shoulders with crossed hands on their lossom, and made their wax noisefult towards the end course. their way noiselessly towards the end com on a cent to their heroine, Nessa. With in finite precaution, one turned the handle, while the rest clustered together his common support, and did their best to keep from ut-

tering audibly. But they ceased to giggle altogether when the door was opened, for there before them was the most unexpected spectacle to be found in this world of surspectacle to be found in this world of surprises. Nessa, who had never before been known to cry, was seated on her bed with a handkerchief up to her eyes, and her bosom heaving with stiffed sols. Her hat and jacket lay on a chair; but she had not begun, to undress. Two trunks were open, and her room, never too tidy, was littered from end to side with things taken from the open drawers and put down anywhere. "I can't help it," she said, brushing the tears away impatiently and heaving her breast with a long, fluttering sigh; "and now its all over, I wish I hadn't done it. I like Mrs. Vie and old Tinkleton. Oh, Hove yor-" and there anoone else in the world I care anything at all for, or any one who cares for me. I'm glad you have come. I've been trying to think what each of you would like best for a keepsake. Now you shall choose for yourselves. I know prises. Nessa, who had never before been Now you shall choose for yourselves. I know you like that pearl set, Dolly "She rose in you like that pearl set, Dolly " She rose in her quick, impulsive way to get the trinkets, but Dolly restrained her, and clinging to

her arm made her ait down again.
"You're not going away, dear," she said.
"Oh, no," murmured the others, echoing "Ob, no,

her tone of remonstrance.
"Yes, I am," said Nessa: "that's why I'm such a goose. I can't bear tothink of saying ood bye, it has been such a jolly term, asn't it ?" weel h

"Do you think Mrs. Vie will be so ery angre?"
"Of course she will. Tinkleton says I've ruined the reputation of the school

"On, but you can make some excuse."
"I never did in my life." Nessa said, istling up. "I will tell her I am very bristling up. "I will tell her I am very sorry and so I am; but that isn't making

'Oh, she won't let you go away.' "She cannot prevent my coing, and she won't try to. I'm not a girl now; I'm a woman, and it's time I left school. I know the profesiors can tell me; or at any rate all I choose to learn; and I'm unmanageable. How is Mrs. Vic to punish me when I do wrong 'She can't put main a corner, or send me to bed. And I always am doing

BI IDE. The voices mingled in unanimous dissent.

"Mrs. Vic says I am. She tells me I encourage those horrid little wretches who stare at me in church, and dog us about, and throw letters into the garden; and those professors are quite as bad—if she only knew it, worse. I hate them. It's an insult to make love in that cowardly way. I think all men are mean and horrid, don't you,

"Nearly all," Dolly admitted with reluc-nce. "Of course, papa is nice, and so are tance.

"And uncles," suggested another.
"And some courins," hinted a third
"Oh, they don't count," said Nessa. "I
cannot remember my papa, and I don't know
that I have a single relative in all the world "Not one "

"No. A step father is not a relative, and," she added, bending her pretty brows, "I'm ghdofit, because I hate him my with all heart "Oh. Ness: "

"I know he is a coward, and I believe he is as wicked a man as ever lived.

you only know "
"Couldn't you tell us, dear "
"Well, paps was a soldier - a general, you know, and he was killed in hattle when I know, and he was killed in hartle when I was quite a tiny little thing, and mamma who very young and very pretty, and very rick, because paps left her everything. And so when I was about six years old, she married again; and I believe Mr. Redmond only needed by the left has a little was a little with the little was a little was only nested her for iter tortune, and really gid not larte her at all. I know she was inhappy the whenever she or to see me at school, and exced over me as she held me in her stress. That made me cry too, and I med in each for to take me home with her. med to tak her to take me home with her, so that we might live always together has all abo could mive between her kines was all abo could mive between her kines was innered bloom days, love—one of these days. I remessable fast quite well. Though I was such a listly thing, I used to think about her, and cry, in the night, seeing her in least, he I tay her when she came to me She did not live two years after her second marriage; my step-father broke her heart. "Oh you don't know, dear" Tr. I do. I'm sure of it. I have seen Mr. Redmond, and he looks like a man who

Mr. Redmond, and he looks like a man who

would break a woman's heart.