

# THE BEAD WITNESS

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## HE THAT WILL NOT WHEN HE MAY.

BY VICTOR HUGO.

I had not thought of love and Rose:  
Rose walked among the woods with me;  
Of this and that we spoke, who knows  
How idle words may be?

I seemed as cold as stone; and still  
With boyish, listless step I went;  
I spoke of trees, flowers—what you will,  
Her sweet eyes wondered what I meant.

The dove had gifts to give of pearls,  
The chestnut tree had leafy veils;  
I listened to the mocking merles,  
Rose listened to the nightingales.

Sixteen was I, with sullen air,  
Twenty was she, with shining eyes;  
The nightingales made songs of her—  
Of me the merles made mockeries.

Rose, as an arrow straight was she,  
Her fair arms quivered in the light,  
Plucking a blossom from a tree;  
I did not see the flower was white.

A little stream through velvet moss  
A shining silver channel made;  
Nature and nurture, amorous,  
Were sleeping in the silent shade.

Rose took her sandals off, and set—  
I see her innocent shy air—  
Her fair feet mid the mosses wet;  
I did not mark her foot was fair.

I had no word to say the while  
I followed through the woods, but I  
Noted her lips a moment smile,  
A moment open to a sigh.

Until we left that quiet place,  
I did not know that she was sweet;  
"We'll think no more of it," she says  
Ah! now I always think of it.

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## THE BEAD WITNESS

OR,

## LILLIAN'S PERIL.

BY MRS. LEPROHON.

CHAPTER XVII.

ATHERTON PARK.

The carriage sent by Mrs. Atherton for Margaret Tremaine bore the latter rapidly on her way to Atherton Park, and it was with no small amount of trepidation and toward sighing that the shy, timid girl passed under its broad portal, and allowed the gorgeously apparelled footman up a broad tasselled staircase. The stately splendour of the mansion and its belongings, the scarlet and orange glories of the imposing looking men-servants who lounged in the hall, the glimpses of suites of rooms, brilliant to Margaret's unsophisticated eyes as visions of fairy land, added to her shrinking embarrassment, and as she remembered that she was about to face the mistress of all this splendour, she almost wished herself back again in the bare dreary chambers of Tremaine Court.

The man ushered her into a drawing-room, which, at first sight, appeared a wilderness of gorgeous furniture, gleaming white statuettes, and fragrant hot-house flowers in costly porcelain vases. Whilst she was advancing with painful halting effort up the room, a side door opened, and a tall, florid-looking woman, in a magnificent purple silk, and cap decorated with roses, and long blonde streamers, entered.

Of course this must be the lady of the house, and, with a timid bow and hesitating voice, Margaret introduced herself, and "hoped Mrs. Atherton was well."

The portly lady smiled graciously. "Yes, Mrs. Atherton was well, and would be ready to receive her guest presently. She—the portly lady—was not Mrs. Atherton, but Mrs. Fennel, the housekeeper, in short, Mrs. Atherton's representative, manager and companion. She would now bring Miss Tremaine to her own room and help her to undress."

More surprises for Margaret in the passing glimpses she obtained of splendid bedrooms and richly-carpeted corridors, a surprise crowned by the sight of her own room, which was a perfect wonder of rich and graceful adornment.

"When you want anything, Miss Tremaine, please touch this bell, as I am doing, and Hester, the girl who waits on these rooms, will be entirely at your disposal. She is a good, smart creature, and I hope you will like her. Now, will you have a glass of wine or a cup of tea? You must take one or the other, for Mrs. Atherton ordered it, and her wishes must be obeyed."

"A cup of tea then," rejoined Margaret, afraid to refuse.

Hester, smiling and tidy, here made her appearance, and on the visitor's hastily declaring she wanted no assistance whatever, asked some question of Mrs. Fennel in an undertone, and then left the apartment. She soon re-appeared with a tray containing some biscuits and a small though superbly chased silver tea service. Mrs. Fennel, with magnificent condescension, sugared and creamed Margaret's tea, informing her at the same time how many years she had lived with the family, and how entirely the management of the immense household fell on her shoulders.

"None but a woman of strong and superior mind could be equal to it, Miss Tremaine, and if you knew the trouble I have merely with those two lazy, hulking footmen of ours, to make them wear their full livery at all times and seasons, you'd pity me. They say it's all very well when Mrs. Atherton is in London, but



MRS. ATHERTON CAME FORWARD, AND TAKING MARGARET'S TWO HANDS IN HER'S, AFFECTIONATELY KISSED HER.

that it's not necessary to be so ceremonious here. But knowing what is due to our family, I am as firm as iron, and insist on keeping up the same style as if the house were crowded with company. No more tea, Miss Tremaine? Well, we'll go to Mrs. Atherton now; she's in her own parlor."

Down through long corridors and halls, past open windows, some filled with hanging plants, till at last they paused before a closed door, at which Mrs. Fennel lightly knocked. They entered, and a slight, fragile old lady, dressed with great neatness and simplicity, rose to meet them.

"This is Miss Tremaine, ma'am," said the housekeeper respectfully, as she placed a chair for the guest and then disappeared.

Kindly Mrs. Atherton came forward, and taking Margaret's two hands in hers, affectionately kissed her.

"You are most welcome, my dear young friend! My only fear is that you may sometimes find us dull here, but in your present deep mourning you would, perhaps, have scarcely wished it otherwise."

"Neither now nor at any other time, Mrs. Atherton. Independently that the strict seclusion in which I have been brought up has rendered me shy and embarrassed, so much so that in the presence of strangers I feel wretchedly ill at ease, an affection of the hip, from which I have suffered since childhood, not only incapacitates me from joining in the amusements or exercises of girls of my age, but renders me at times a miserable invalid. Ah, Mrs. Atherton, it is you who will find me dull, and I wonder now at my venturing to accept your invitation, kindly and pressingly as it was worded."

"A gentle pressure of the hand was the encouraging reply, and Mrs. Atherton's soft voice whispered:

"God must love you very dearly since, young as you are, he has tried you so severely. Much more suited to my feelings and thoughts will be the companionship of one like yourself, who has known sorrow, than that of some bright, gay girl who would find my presence a wearisome restraint on her merriment and joyous spirits. But does your sister, the secret of whose disappearance my son is determined on fathoming, at all resemble you?"

"Not in the slightest. Beautiful as I am plain; healthy, gifted, joyous, as I am sickly, slow and dull, a more perfect contrast could not be imagined."

"I see from your description, setting aside, of course, your unjust self-deprecation, that the account given me by Neville is correct. How I would like to behold this regal young beauty, about whom my usually reticent son grows eloquent!"

"Mrs. Atherton, I am determined on finding her."

"And so is Neville. Willingly I promise my feeble help; let us hope that our united efforts may prove successful! But here comes Col. Atherton himself."

The reception tendered by the latter to Margaret was most cordial, and as he alluded to their relationship, and the mutual claims it established between them, his manner savored more of the kindness of a brother than of a mere acquaintance.

With a rapidity which the young girl could scarcely have hoped for, she found herself on the most familiar footing with her new friends, and in that stately mansion, whose magnificence had at first overwhelmed her with awe, more truly at home than she had ever done in Tremaine Court. Quickly, too, she gave her confidence to the gentle lady, who listened with such tender sympathy to the history of her young life's troubles, the recital of which brought tears to those eyes that rarely wept.

After a time Margaret overcame sufficiently her habitual shyness to talk more unrestrainedly in Colonel Atherton's presence, and to repeat her simple tale, which she did entirely with the view of justifying Lillian's sudden flight from home; and deeply his dark cheek flushed, and angrily his eyes lit up as he listened to that narrative of wrong and injustice. One evening that the three were seated in the deepening twilight, Margaret recounted the stormy interview between Lillian, her father and Mrs. Stukely, as told to her by her sister herself, and which had led to the latter's sentence of expatriation from home. Neville Atherton sprung to his feet and paced up and down the room, evidently much moved.

"Brave, noble-minded girl!" he at length ejaculated; "her heart and mind are worthy of her rare beauty. Oh, that some inspiration would whisper us where to seek her! Miss Tremaine, as you already know the carefully-worded advertisements I have inserted in every paper in the county have been of no avail, and I would advise you to drive to Chester Junction to-morrow, put up at the hotel where she was last seen, and make all possible enquiries about her. I have been already there myself, and

could learn nothing; but a woman's proverbial wit may succeed where that of a man has failed. The landlady seems a sort of half-stupid creature, unusually reticent, but with you she may prove more communicative, especially if you go alone. I have another project in view if this fail, but will not reveal it till later."

Colonel Atherton did not wish to harrow his listener's feelings by revealing more fully to them his second design, which was to make sure perquisitions, no matter at what cost, in two or three private lunatic asylums, and ascertain thus if Lillian, by some vile trickery or bribery, had not been placed in one of them. This thought was suggested by the knowledge that Mrs. Stukely had a daughter in one of these abodes for the insane, as well as by the remembrance of Mr. Tremaine's death-bed assurance that Lillian still lived, an assurance already repeated to him by Margaret. The latter had also mentioned the housekeeper's eager and successful efforts to prevent any further intercourse between father and daughter.

"I think it better, Neville, that you should remain at home till Miss Tremaine returns. She may bring news of pressing importance."

"You are quite right, dear mother, I will do so, and now I must be away. The post is in by this hour."

## CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. ATHERTON'S CONFESSION.

After his departure silence fell on the two women sitting there in the darkening twilight, which was broken by the eldest softly saying:

"How heartily I pray your sister's retreat may be discovered! Old, feeble as I am, I would undergo any amount of fatigue to ensure it."

A murmured expression of gratitude from Margaret, and Mrs. Atherton resumed: "Fifteen years ago, Neville, now so reserved, calm, I had almost said indifferent, was warm and enthusiastic in character, frank and upright too as any mother's heart could have desired. He had an elder brother, heir to the estate, of course, but far inferior to himself in physical and mental gifts, and Neville was my favorite, my idol. Alas! my love showed itself not so much in that deep abnegation and devotion that seem the distinctive characteristics of most mothers, as in overweening pride and boundless ambition which led me to desire for

him a splendid matrimonial alliance—one which I would deem worthy of him.

"Fortune seemed to favor my wishes. An heiress, young and well-born, bestowed on him unmistakable tokens of preference, and a female relative gave me to understand that his suit would be favorably received. Ecstasied with this success, for it was an alliance to which few younger sons could have dared aspire, I sought Neville and triumphantly communicated the intelligence to him.

"He heard me to the end, then gently regretting his inability to fall into my views, informed me that his affections were already engaged, the object a handsome, affable girl, but poor, and living in the family of a wealthy relative, partly as dependent, partly as governess. Oh, the humiliation, the bitter disappointment inflicted by that revelation! It seemed to humble me to the dust. At length I asked from what time this fancy dated. Since many months. His affection was fully reciprocated, and the fear of incurring my disapprobation in the matter of his choice had alone prevented his speaking to me about it at an earlier date. Of course I expressed the indignant disapprobation I felt at the idea of such an unequal alliance. To his questions regarding my opinions of her moral worth and intellectual gifts, I could say nothing but what was complimentary, as I had often conversed with her, and noted her modesty and dignity, whilst visiting at the house of which she was an inmate.

"Earnestly she pleaded with me, alleging that his brother, who was heir to the honors of the house, had just made a wealthy and aristocratic marriage, and that he might surely be permitted to follow the wishes of his heart, and unite with the woman he so passionately loved. He reminded me how he had never through the long years of his youth caused me sorrow or anxiety—never refused me any request, and he called on me now to render him a return by listening to his prayer, picturing how he and his wife would worship, love and honor me. Alas! he pleaded to a heart hard as marble. I could not, would not sacrifice my ambitious dreams and hopes so utterly. My reply, however, was guarded, for I knew well the deep, earnest nature I had to deal with, and that Neville Atherton was not one likely to take up a new love as soon as chance might sever him from the old.

"Great management was necessary to quietly bring about a parting between himself and the object of his affections, far more than I had found necessary for ensuring him a wealthy and high-born bride. In a few cold words I expressed my disapprobation, but declined discussing the subject further that day. Hoping probably that time and reflection would do his cause, he said no more; but that afternoon, when he had started on a short shooting expedition with a party of friends, I drove over to Crosswell House and had an interview with Gertrude Ellis, Neville's love. The meeting was not long, but it proved decisive. I represented to her that my son had no fortune of his own, and that he must make up for that circumstance by contracting a wealthy and powerful alliance; that marriage with her would drag him down and chain him to life-long poverty and obscurity. The girl was generous, high-spirited, well worthy of the deep love lavished on her by Neville, and after she had listened in silence to all I had to say, she replied with an outward calmness, contradicted, however, by her pallid face and quivering lips:

"Do not fear, Mrs. Atherton. I love Neville Atherton too well to injure him, or to stop between him and the brilliant destiny you have planned for his future."

"Some words of thanks, of admiration, I would have uttered, but she swept from the room, worthy in nobility of soul and bearing of being the bride of any man, however high his social standing. I returned home ill at ease and anxious. Three days after one of the family from Crosswell House called and casually informed me that Miss Ellis, with only a day's notice to her friends, had left with a neighboring family for the Continent, as governess to their three children.

"It was most ungrateful on her part," warmly added old Miss Crosswell, "we had always been best of kind and consistent to her, but I can't say that she was a relative. Quite inexplicable too, for the duties of her new place are far more arduous than they were with us. However, she was bitten, perhaps, by that sudden mania for travelling and sight-seeing which so often attacks young people."

"I listened in guilty silence, relieved at one moment, almost regretting my interference at the next, and already dreading my son's return. It soon came. Four days after he entered my dressing room, so deeply agitated that voice, expression, look seemed changed, and handing me an open letter, abruptly said:

"Do you know anything about this?" "Silently I took and read it. It contained but a few lines, stating that it was expedient for them both that they should part. He would do better to seek a mate from among his own equals, whilst she would probably never marry. The letter contained no allusion to my visit or to outside interference of any sort, and concluded by assuring him that all further attempts at correspondence or intercourse on his part would be useless, as she was resolved on never seeing him again.

Though free from all accusation, there was yet a guilty consciousness in my very silence, in my troubled countenance, that bore testimony against me, and with a look of unutterable grief and bitterness he turned from the room. That evening he started for London, though not to plunge, as I had at first feared, into his dissipation and folly. Arrived there, his earliest step, as I learned long months afterwards, was to write again to Miss Ellis, but his letter was returned unopened.

Before these events he had resided almost entirely here with me in Atherton Park, but after, he spent like his elder brother, the chief part of his time in London. This separation