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## A FATAL WEDDING

BY BERTHA M. CLAY.  
CHAPTER XXVII.

"THE WAGES OF SIN ARE DEATH."

Two long, dreary years passed, and never one gleam of light had come during the course of them to Sybil Ayerton. It was the same sad story all over again—the same waiting, the same hours of patient waiting, the same weary hours of hard work, poor fare, unkind words, and privations of all kinds. She had bravely steered her heart not to feel; she had girded herself never to allow herself to think of home—the room where she had lived, and what was to have been. Had she done so, she must have died under the shock.

Two years of hard, stern discipline, and she came out of them changed. The gloom of what he once was—their hopes, disappointments, and everything else. Sybil tried to reconstitute with him, to cure him by gentle patience, by good advice, by care and caution, but every effort was thrown away. He had had many narrow escapes of his life, and whenever he was away from home his wife dreaded some awful accident.

One evening he had been drinking without intermission night and day for the past week, and Sybil lived in a state of fear and trembling on this evening she sat alone in the little room where their narrow means had reduced them, busily engaged in finishing some fancy work for the shops—for she was obliged to support herself; how light of the lamp falling upon her, showed a face that no one could pass unnoted; the light, girlish, beauty had passed away, but there was power and strength in the delicate features—patience that was almost sublime—the look of one who does not belong altogether to this world.

She was sewing busily, when a shadow fell between her and the light. Hastily raising her head, she saw the mistress of the house looking fixedly at her. "What is it?" asked Sybil, gently, wondering at the woman's strange stare. "You are wanted, Mrs. Ayerton," was the quick reply. "There is a cab waiting for you at the door—you are wanted at Gay's Hospital."

She rose quickly, her face could grow pale, but a sharp shudder seized her. "Tell me at once what it is," she said, in a tone of command.

"Your husband has met with an accident," was the reply, "and has sent for you."

She will never forget the hurried drive through the long streets, the awful dread, the dull wonder, the listless apathy, sharpened at times into pain.

She saw the gloom of the world, the feeling before her, and as she went in at the gates a wonder came to her as to how much more she would have to suffer.

The only thing she remembers clearly is the face of a kindly doctor, who met her at the entrance of the long ward and asked gravely if she were Mrs. Ayerton.

"Your husband is very ill," he said, gently. "He has met with a terrible accident. You must summon all your courage for we fear the worst."

He led her down the long ward to the side of a bed standing in a recess, and there, with an awful gray pallor on his face, with crimson bandages wound round his head, a white dry lips and closed eyes, lay the man whom the world had once called "Handsome Captain Ayerton."

She bent over him. In that moment all his faults, all his crimes, the long years of neglect and cruelty died away from her; she remembered only the fair-haired soldier who had wooed her under the trees of Glynn.

"Will he never recover?" she asked, in a hushed voice, of the doctor.

"He will not see the sunrise," he replied gravely.

Then she knelt down by his side. The closed eyes did not open, the white lips did not move.

"Will he never know me again?" she asked.

"Yes, he will recover consciousness before he dies," was the reply.

And she knelt by his side to wait. Every moment of that long, dull wait is burned in upon her brain. Ten, eleven, twelve, and there came no change. One, and two—and the head moved restlessly on the cushion, the closed eyes opened, and she heard her name called as no human voice ever spoke before.

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Assent to the world's way is descent from God's way.

"Sybil, Sybil!" he cried. "What is it? Where am I?"

She bent over him tenderly. "You have been injured—run over in the streets," she said.

A gleam of recollection seemed to cross him; for he shuddered at her words. He looked curiously into her face; and at the doctor.

"I am not very ill," he said. "I feel no pain. Why do you look at me so, Sybil? I am not going to die."

He uttered the last word with a shiver that rung through the ward.

"I have a charmed life, you know," he gasped. "They left me once before for dead, but I did not die."

She whispered soothing words to him—words that came from Divine lips—of mercy and pardon, even at the eleventh hour; and he answered with cries of despair.

Draw a curtain over that death-bed. As he had sworn he would. The life spent in breaking the laws of God ended in despair. It was a death so terrible that strong men turned away in dismay; only she, whose tender heart he had well-nigh broken, remained with him until his tortured soul went to meet his Judge.

He never saw another sun rise. The awful struggles, the frenzied fear, the unutterable agony were all ended. When the first golden rays of the morning crept into the room, all that remained of Lyster Ayerton—the maimed, distorted body—was covered with a white sheet.

Yet he had had good prospects when he started in life: a moderate fortune, a fair face, the fatal gift of winning hearts, the chances of promotion, and this was the end—a fearful death in a hospital ward. Are those grand old words false which say: "The wages of sin are death?"

They had carried poor Sybil from his bedside; horror overpowered her. In the last dread moment when, with a wild, blood-curdling cry, his soul went forth to meet its God, she felt senseless to this world.

The same doctor who had met her attended to her; he learned her name and history; he wrote to the squire, and prayed him to come instantly.

When he reached the hospital it was to find his daughter nearly dying and her husband dead.

They buried him with all honor. The white monument in Kensal Green tells his name and age. The flowers laid upon his grave near his wife's grave before Sybil knew those around her. They feared for her life, then for her reason.

The horrors of that terrible death-bed never left her. She would cry out in her sleep, and cry when awake, praying God in His mercy to let her die, if she could not forget.

They did not take her back to Glynn Castle when she recovered. They went to a quiet little village in North Wales, and there they tended her until health was once more restored.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"WE ARE ALL HAPPY."

Six years after the events told in our last chapter there was an unusual stir of festivity at Glynn Castle.

It was the middle of June, and such a June people declared had not for many years showered golden smiles on old England.

On the lawn, under the shade of the stately cedars, whose branches trail in the long grass, sits an old man, whose peaceful countenance wears a happy smile. Time has not changed the squire; the sorrow that once bowed his strong frame, and brought such deep lines to his face, is past and gone. He was watching a group that would have charmed an artist.

Near him sits a lady, no longer young, but in the prime of magnificent womanhood. One can not mistake the rippling, golden hair, the sweet, sprightly face, and clear, violet eyes of the squire's darling, Lady Dacre, of the Hilde.

She, with the squire, is watching Sir Rupert, watching her lovely little boy to walk. The handsome, stately father, and the smiling, fair-haired child, make a beautiful picture. As she watches them, tears of happiness rise to her eyes.

She turned to Irene, who was near them.

"What time do you expect Violet?" she asked.

"About noon," replied Miss Jocelyn. "I know of nothing lately that has pleased me so much as Violet's marriage."

"A good match," said the squire. "Lord Stedden is a good man, and she will be happy."

"We are all happy," said Sybil, Lady Dacre; and then she gazes on the older sister, whose life has been sacrificed to her.

"Come here, Irene," cries Sir Rupert. "This boy requires two to play with him always."

Miss Jocelyn hastened across to the laughing child and his happy father. She is common with every one else, helped to spoil the little heir of the Hilde.

At that moment a footman crossed the lawn, carrying a silver salver, on which lay a white card.

Sybil looked over her father's shoulder as he read the name; and both gazed almost helplessly at each other as they said, "Alan Ryder?"

"Paper," explained the excited Sybil. "It is Irene's lover! Now, thank Heaven, she will be happy, too!"

"Where is the gentleman?" asked the squire.

"He is in the drawing-room," replied the footman: "waiting there, ready for you."

"Come with me, Sybil," said the old man. "Say nothing to Irene until we know."

They knew soon. Alan Ryder had returned—older in years, a rich man, but unchanged in heart—returned to find the noble girl he loved so well had been true to him through all time and all changes.

There never was a happier party than that assembled now in Glynn Castle. Lord and Lady Stedden came at noon; and Violet's surprise at hearing of Alan's return can be better imagined than described.

Irene seemed to grow young again. Three weeks after Alan's return they

THE YOUNG MOTHER  
devotes herself to her first child as she never does to another. As child succeeds child she no longer reads them stories, tells them tales at twilight or joins with them in a merry romp at bed time. Does she give her later children less because she loves them less? No. She gives them less because she has less to give. The birth of each child has left her a little more weak, a little more nervous, a little more worn out. She hasn't strength, to be their intimate and playmate. What a loss this means, to mother and to children. It is to such



mothers, worn with the burden of motherhood and drained of vitality, that Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription comes as the greatest of blessings. The timely use of this remedy prevents the strain and stops the drain from child bearing. Where this strain and drain have been experienced, mothers find that Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, acting directly upon the delicate organs which bear the burden of motherhood, restores them to a normal condition of health and elasticity. Ulcerations are cured. Inflammations are removed. The appetite becomes robust. Sleep is refreshing. The nerves grow quiet. There is a new brightness in the eye; a new lightness in the step. There has come the perfect happiness of perfect health.

"I began taking your 'Favorite Prescription' in August, 1897," writes Mrs. Mollie E. Grimes, of Florence, Alabama, Ala., "and took it until after my baby was born. I was in better health than I ever was with any of my other children. I think all women with child should use Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription. I feel everything that flesh could suffer with all the rest of my children, and I was also subject to miscarriage. Now I am the happy mother of a fine baby girl. She was the largest one of all my babies, and at the birth I had an easier and shorter time than I ever had. I am stouter and healthier than I ever was."

were married, and live now with the squire at Glynn.

The sun shines upon them; upon the squire's white hair; his darling's golden head, never so bright as now; upon the fair little child; and the noble gentleman, Sir Rupert. The long night of sorrow had passed—pure and perfect day had dawned at last.

Years afterward, when blooming daughters grew around Sybil—girls with spirits high and wilful as her own had been—with the memory of Lyster Ayerton's grave upon her, she taught them that the grandest lesson in life is, "To do one's duty."

## THE END.

## THE EXPECTANT BRIDE.

"Twas in the May meadows, all flowering and fair,  
With the lilac and whitethorn incensing the air,  
A maiden was singing with voice past compare,  
"I'm going to be married on Sunday."

The blackbird fell silent to hear the sweet song.  
The thrush, that true lover, who does Love no wrong,  
Prayed only the tune and the time to the melody:  
"I'm going to be married on Sunday."

Q rosebud of blisses, with eyes like the sky,  
You caught the poor heart of me wandering by,  
With the price of your mien and the glint of your eye,  
"I'm going to be married on Sunday."

"Young maiden," I sighed, "the delight of the grove,  
With the bosom milk-white, and the voice of the dove,  
'Tis he that is lucky, the boy that you love,  
And going to be married on Sunday."

"But where is that you, is he cold to your charms,  
That will he ever linger afar from your arms?  
A stranger to Love and to Love's false alarms,  
And going to be married on Sunday."

She blushed as she answered, "Pray, think no such thing—  
He's gone to the town there to buy me the ring,  
My heart is as merry, I cannot but sing,  
"I'm going to be married on Sunday."

As I went on my lone way with Love's heavy chain,  
On my heart that will never know freedom again,  
She turned to her singing, the old melting strain,  
"I'm going to be married on Sunday."

"I'm going to be married on Sunday,"  
—Pall Mall Gazette.



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