## TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE. THE

# Or, Agatha's Becompense.

CHAPTER XXVIL (Condensed.)

2

She was not altorether heartless. If she could have separated them without pain she would have been better pleased. She did would have been bettor pleased. She did not enjoy cruelty, but, an her way to what she wanted lay over a woman's broken heart, why she must break it, there was no help for it. Yet she was sorry, and would have avoided it if she could. The end she had in view was worth any sacrifice and any trouble.

To be Sir Vane's wife-Lady Carlyon of Garswood-she said to herself that she must try to keep that in view while she talked to Agatha.

Agatha waited two or three minutes in silence; she was struck by the expression in Valerie's face ; it was pale and anxious, quite unlike her usual bright self.

"Are you in trouble ?" she said, suddenly, her old instinct of wanting to ralieve every kind of grief she saw coming over het.

"No; at least, not in one sense. I am not in trouble for myself, but I am in great dis-

"This is more than a trouble," said Valerie; " it is a grief and anxiety all in one-a shock,

and to me, a horror." "I am sorry to hear is," said Agatha, sim-

"Is it a trouble about some one near ply. and dear to you ?"

San hesitated for one-half minute. "It is of some one whom I like very

mach. Now for the point of the knife in the white

breast. "Some one for whom I have not only great affection ,but also great respect," said

Valerie. "In fact, I may tell you that my trouble is over you." Agatha raised her face, so full of wonder

Velerie was dismayed; there was no did not change color; she locked otly astonished and mystified.

"That is hardly " About me ?" she said. possible. You have nothing to do with me and if you had, there is nothing concern ing me which could be either a shock or a horror.

'I hope not," said Valerie with a sigh. "You hope not," repeated Agatha. - 66 T do not in the least understand you, made-

moiselle,' "I do not understand myself." she said. hurriedly. "I only know that I have the most hateful task in the whole world to perform.'

"I cannot think," said Agatha, " what you mean-you must surely be jesting." "Alas !" said Valerie, "if it were only

jesting, I should be happy enough." You who read have perhaps seen the sudden change a thunder storm brings when,

rom the brightest sunlight, the scene changes to deepest gloom-whon a fa naral pall spreads over the earth and neral pain spicals over the earth and sky, and the light suddenly leaves everything. So it was now. All the brightness, the light, seemed to pass away. Agatha was distressed. Valerie, whatever abe felt, looked miserable. They were coming face to face now-the one whe believes herself to be Sir Vane's wife, and the one who hoped in reality to be so.

Agatha was perplexed, and began to wish that Sir Vane was at home. It was quite 'new to her to face any trouble without himwithout his advice to guide her.

"What can she possibly mean !" thought Agatha. "How I wish Vane were here." Valerie had risen from her seat and walked rapidly up and down the white terrace; then

she came to Agatha's side. "I must tell you," she said. "I hate doing it. I must tell you, because if it be true you have no right hore; you have no right among people of our station; in fact,

THE VILLAGE ANGEL: friend, at least I canned help thinking so. Liston and tell me. Mis Heriot I will read

..... The writer of this littler is a sincere friend of Madame le Barrenne, and of her, niece, Mademoiselle, d'Envers. Madams is quite anknown to the writer, who had, however, the happiness to meet and admire "The writer is averse to snonymous

letters; but this case is so peculiar and so painful, he knows of no other method to

spect to mademoixelle. If ever the 'truth friend' should become krewn, it would be highly prejudicial to madame, and would probably affect mademoiselle's settlement in life most materially.

"At this present time, residing under the roof of madame, at Chateau Bellefieurs, are an Boglish lady and gentleman who pass by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Heriot. They assume in trouble for mysell, but a man a structure of there has been no marriage, and no semblance "I am sorry for that," replied Agatha. "I think the troubles of others are harder to bear think the troubles of others are harder to bear the name of the person residing with him is Agatha Brooke. Sir Vane Carlyon is a man of bad character; he is very riob, and his estate at Garswood is a very fine one. He has never been a good map, but always a rose and a profligate ; he has no respect for women-a woman's honor or fair name is less than nothing to him. He has been famons always for his amours and adventures, his intrigues and gallantry; his name has figured more than once in court. It is said of him that he never spared a man in his anger, or a woman in his love. It is said of him that he has ruined more homes and broken more hearts than any man in England. Six years sgo he ran away with heautiful, flighty Lady Dundee ; she died in Italy some years since, and it is said that he has forgotten even her name. The writer could relate several true stories of the ruin and devastation this same man has brought on homes where only happiness reigned before. "" The girl with mm is one for whom he felt.

only profound compassion can be felt. She is not his wife, and, poor thing ! never will be. She is no more Mrs. Heriot or Lady Carlyon than she is the Sultans of Turkey. There was never even a semblance of marriage between them. The circum stances under which they came to live together are these : " 'Sir Vane Carlyon went on a visit to

Lord Croft, at the Abbey near Whitecroft, and there he saw Agatha Brooks.

" It is not the writer's province to tell how he compassed her ruin; it is sufficient that be did so compass it, and he persuaded her to leave home with him.

"'In justice to her it must be said that previously to this, she led not only a good but a most exemplary lite. She was noted for charity, for her goodness to the poor-indeed she was called the angel of the poor.

left a letter saying that she was happy and married, but that her marriage for some time was to be kept secret. Now, the real fact of the matter is this-that there never was any

marriage. "Sir Vane may have deceived herhe is clever enough to deceive any one; but he certainly never married her, cer tainly never intended to de so. Men of his callbre do not choose a wife from her class. She was only a dector's daughter. He could have married a royal princessjudge whether it was probable he would marry her.'"

A faint, gasping sound made Valerie look round hastily. Surely her victim was not escaping already. A fainting fit at this juncture would spoil all.

frem hor pure estate of womanhood. I write this in kindness, I write it to put you ca your guard Inwrite to you as I should wish any gentleman, any man of honor, to write to a sister of my own were she situated as you are. You, a noble, refined lady, belonging to one of the oldest and noblest families in France-you, of stainless lineage and stainless same, have no right to be under the same roof with the mistress of a rousa profligate who plays with the honor and

wither to swear to the entire truth of every word written here. It will bear the most quiry; it is true as an eternal truth. This is the shore word to here with the will bear the most of getting her living, and keep her from a such mistake 2—had he sent her wrong in-duiry; it is true as an eternal truth. This is

voice, so full of anguish that it was not like a human volce. "Oh, Heaven, it is not true !"

A despairing grasp was laid on Valerie's arm ; the face that so full of woe was raised te hers,

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN A LIVING LIE."

Valerie was half-frightened. She had expeoted that the letter would make a great impression upon Agatha, she had quite expected that the girl would either weep passionate tears, rave about her wrongs, or grow sullenly silent, and not speak at all; but she was not prepared for this deadly despair. She could not best back the hands that clung to her with despairing cries; she could not help seeing that the woe and anguish on that beantiful face were beyond any power to recall. Then Agatha remembered another thing-she had most faithfully promised Sir Vane never to mention the marriage, yet she must either tell the story or she could not tell what would happen. To live as a wife, yet not to he one, was, she knew, a crime so great, so terrible, that she could not endure the thought of having committed it. In that case it was against Heaven she had offended more than man, and during the whole course of her innocent life she had never once, to her knowledge, wilfully offended Heaven. The bare idea was horrible to her. These thoughts fisshed through her mind with the rapidity of lightning, while the dark eyes watching her noted

the struggie. "He has told her not to mention it, and she is afraid," she thought to herself ; " but I will have the truth."

"Agatha," she said, " it is no use for to go through the farce of calling you Mrs. Heriot-Agatha, you had better trust metell me your story, and I will tell you what you are-trust me. I know the world, I understand the law and the legal coremonies of marriage. Tell me your story and let me judge for you. If there had been any marriage between you and Sir Vane, the writer of this letter ought to be flayed slive." The white-stricken face that looked slready

as though years of misery had passed over it, was raised appealingly to hers. "It is true," with a great sob. "I am in-deed Sir Vane's wife-he married me."

" Then, my dear child-for you are nothing

more than a child-if that he the case, if you are really his wife, if you are really Lady Carlyon, why do you pass by another name, a false name t"

"It is not a false one-it is his second **DAZ16.**' "None the less false if it be used for dis-

guise. Why does he not give you his name and title ?"

No answer came from the pale lips, "Men-above all, men of Sir Vane's rank -do not give their wives a name to disguise them, but to make them known. Agaia, if you are his wife, why does he bring you to the solitude of a Swiss chatean? You are beautiful and graceful-why has he not introduced you to his taken you to his beautiful home at

secon give up the acquaintance of one faller thing to deceive such a child most cruel

to go away unless he had first made me his wite. I should have hated, not loved him, had

some foundation. "Then," she said, slowly, " it is true that you were married to Sir Vane before yeu left home ?"

A light crossed the white despair of Agatha's face.

" It is quite true," she said. " Now, will you tell me when and where

yon were married ? Then we shall be able to see our way more clearly," said Valerie. But no rapid, frank reply came from

Agatha's lips. A quiver of great fear passed over her face; her heart beat more slowly; "It cannot be true !" she cried, throwing true ! Heaven could not be so cruel ! It is not true ! Ob, thank Heaven, I am indeed Sir Vane's wife ! Those wicked, cruel words have made we forget. I am Sir Vane's wife -who says I am not ? He married me. Oh, Heaven ? who shall say these horrible things of me?"

Such bitter teurs ! such bitter sobs !-such angulah and woe were in her face and voice that Valerie was almost afraid to look at her.

You had better refrain from those tra gical airs," she said, " and tell me what you mean by saying that Sir Vane married youexplain it to me."

the blood seemed to freeze in her veins; he hands grow cold and stiff. For the first time a great, overwhelming dread came to her. She had most implicitly believed Sir Vane no doubt of his truth, honor, or loyalty had ever assailed her. He had told her that the fashion of marriage had changedthat there was no longer any need for all the ceremonies and prayers people had once believed in. She never doubted the truth any more than she doubted the light of the sun. She had never, in her short life, heard of such a thing; but now a horrible fear came to her-it seemed to clutch her heart like a cold iron band. Suppose there was anything wrong about the marriage ! What then ? Oh, Heaven what then ?'

"Agathe," continued Valerie, " tell me where you were married. Was it in the church at Whitecroft ?"

" No. " Was it in any chapel there ?"

4 No."

" Was it In a registrar's office ?" " No."

"Were you married in England or in France ?" "In England."

And from the tortured heart came a ory to

heaven for pity. "I am airaid,' said Valerie, gently, "that "I am airaid,' married at all. The laws of marriage in England are so strict, so simple, a child could understand them. There can be no marriage without the law of the church or of the land. A marriage must take place either in a church or in a registrar's office ; or if it be in a private house by a properly appointed minister. Unless you were married in one of these three methods.

you are not married at all." "Fer Heaven's sake do not say so-do not

say so. I shall die. I cannot bear it." "You must face the truth. Your life has been a living lie long enough. You must face the truth. Tell me whore you were mar-

he has been here, while you have thought him devoted to.you, I have known some one at herself. else whom he has admired and made love to

ip an honorable fashion." She waited for a reply, but the girl was too stunned with her misery to ask a ques tion. \*' You must see," continued Valerie, "that Sir Vane, B

rich, numarried baronet, who has known no matter after that? Less than nothing." other love, no other will, than his own plea- Valerie said to herself that certainly noth. sure, goes out visiting; he meets you, a ing could be better than to creep away and simple country girl-and you are even more die, it would be the nicest think she could do. ignorant and more inexperienced than any far wiser than to live on with that horrible other girl of your age would he-he sees you, admires you, falls in love with you after his fashion ; but he finds you good and innocent. Had you been less good, he would have been far more trank; he would not have gone through even that farce of marriage. He would have said, 'I love you, but have no thought of marriage.' He found you good her white arms in the air-"it cannot be and innocent, so he gave himself the trouble to deceive you. He tells you all this nonsense, and you believe it; then he goes through the farce of marriage, and you believe in it. He ad pts a false name, brings you abroad, keeps you secluded, and never brings any friends near you. Now listen and believe me. In another year or two he would tire of you. He must marry some day, and he will marry some noble or wealthy lady ; he must have heirs to succeed

him. This pleasant love dream of yours is but a little interlude-do you not see ?" She sank lower and lower, with such a wail of anguish and pain as had never before como

from human lips. "It is a great pain to me," she continued, "to tell you these things, but you must know them. The day would most certainly come when Sir Vane himself would leave you, and that would be harder to bear than thie.

No graceful young tree, with springing green leaves-no fait flower opening its heart to the sun, and anddenly struck with lightning-no bright singing bird suddenly caught and caged, could have been more abject and pitiful than this hapless girl, strack down by the crael words that declared there was no hope for her.

She crouched lower and lower, until her face rested on the white stone terrace. All the pride of her youth, beauty, love, and life

smitten from her with unerring hands. Ah ! where were those who loved her !the fair young mother who loved her, and who had named her after the fair saint with the palm branch ! Where were the kindly father, the faithful old servant, the women, men and children, who would have given their lives for her ?

She lay there, crushed, blinded, stanned with her great shame and great misery, and of all those whom she had helped and tended, there was not one in this hour of need and despair to help her: not one to raise she golden head with its weight of shame and woe ; not one to kiss the face that wore the whiteness and chill of death; not one to clasp the orld hands and whisper words of pity.

Valerie looked at ner as the fair head fell en the white stone.

"It is very like marder," she thought to herself, " but it will soon be over, and she must have known it some time or other-at least, I have told her in kind words."

"Yon must rouse yourself, Agatha, continued Valerie. "I anppose you will see Sir Vana and tell him this !

becoming his wife. Even as she talked to the "Ob, Wane, Vane I" sobbed the giri. "Gh, Vene, my love, my darling, would to visitor, she was wouldening in her own mind Heaven you had left me dead at Whitecroft 1 what Sir Vane would do or say how long What have I done that such a horrible fate should be mine ! It must be some horrible jest or a dream, or you have gone mad, or I am mad. Vane has slways been good to me -has always loved me. Why, he met me first at the church-door, and he loved me from that moment. He could not be so cruch to me; he has not a cruel face, or a cruel heart. It is you who have stabled me and alain me."

Tadmire you came a child most cruel, trath the better. That is normal tige, and there are the solution of the point of the

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be will arrange for you'r "How can you pleak to me in that way ?" she orled? with beh pathetic mournfainess that Valerie, for half an instant, felt shocked

"What can anything matter to me now ! she said. "And you thing that I can care whether I have money or none. I shall creep away from here and die. Ah, if you tion. "You must see," continued Valerie, "that and found him false, you would to cutsiders everything is clear. Sir Vane, a understand. What could a hundred lives

ing could be better than to creep away and pain in her heart, and that anguish of woo in her eyes.

"There is one thing," said Agatha, and a flush of color rose for one minute to her white isce and then faded-"t there is one thing, I have not sinned wilfully. I knew little of life, and I was very yonng. I loved Sir Van', and I believed what he told me. I nev r asked myself whether it was right or wrong; I believed it as a simple and perfect truth. I thought I was Sir Vane's wife, now I find that I have accepted the position of a great sinner. I protest again, of my own will, Lam to sinner, and what you have read in that letter does not apply to me. I am innocent of any know-ledge of wrong."

"Still," said Valerie, "although you may be quite right, you will find the world will decide against you. Its laws are strict and severe where the honor and parity of women are concerned; when this same world knows what you have been, it will not wait to ask whether it was your fault or not. The very fact of holding such a position will cut you off from the world of good men and women."

"I will not believe it I' cried Agatha. "What have l dons? I believed the man whom I loved. What harm have I done ?" "I suppose," said Valerie. "that you are

paying the price of ignorance. I-' But she had not time to finish her sen. tence; a servant came to say that some visitor had arrived, and madame would be pleased if mademoiselle would go to the ialon.

"I will not be long," said Valerie. " Wait for me ; I have more to say."

"Will you give me that letter !" asked Agatha.

Yes," she replied, placing it in her band, little dreaming what use she intended to make of it.

CHAPTER XXX.

" VOU RAVE DECIEVED OTHERS, BUT NONE SO

"Successfully carried out," thought Va-

lerie to herself, thankful to get away from

the sight of the white, despairing face,

thankful to be out of the hearing of

that sad, sweet voice. "Nothing was ever better planned or better executed.

I would make an excellent ambassadress; I

could arrange all those little difficulties be-

tween Germany, Austria, Spain, and those wonderful provinces that people talk se

much about, yet no one seems to know just

where they lie. I am thankful that it is over,

and it has been done effectually. I shall

never forget her ; I shall always say that I

have witnessed a murder. How innocent

and simple she is. How cruel of him, and

Yet, wicked and orushes she thought him, it made no difference to her fixed intention of

what a wicked man he is !"

CRUELLY AS ME.

hard as it may seem, you have no p world at all."

"Hush !" said Agatha, with gentle dignity, that almost subdued Valeric. Hush ! you must not speak to me in this fashion. You are making some terrible mistake."

For one moment Valerie thought could she be mistaken ? could there be any error in that well-studied report ? if so-but no,

"I am afraid," she said, " there is no mis-take. The details are far too minute for that. Will you mind my asking you one or two questions !"

"You can have no possible right to ask me any questions," she said ; " but I will answer anything you like to ask."

Are you Agatha Brooke, who disappeared some time since from Whitecroft ?"

"Yes, I am," was the oalm reply. " Are you the lawful wife of the person

whom you call Mr. Heriot, but who is really Sir Vaue Carlvon ?"

Sir Vane Carlyon 1 Again the calm, grave answer. "Most decidedly I am." "Thank Heaven !" said Valerie, with conscious hypocrisy; "that then, at any rate, is false."

### CHAPTER XXVII.

### A CRUEL LETTRE.

As Valerie spoke she took from the pecket cf her dress a thick envelope you must use a sharp remedy. contained a letter which she opened slowly. "'If she is innocent, and has been he "I am glad that you say this." she continued, "it makes my task less difficult."

"Indignation and anger rapidly took the place of wonder and surprise on Agatha's face. She rose from her seat; a gentle, calm dignity secmed to fall like a muntle over

her. "I do not understand at all," she said, " why you behave in this fashion to me. You have nothing to do with me, nor can you have any concern in my affairs.

"None in the least," said Valerie, "ex-cept so far as concerns me."

No affirs of mine can concern you," said Agatha. "And now, if you please, madem-ciselle, we will end the conversation."

"Not at all," she replied ; "we have not yet begun it. I have something to say which must be said, and you must listen. It concerns you more than me, but the truth must be sifted. You say that you are Agatha Brooke from Whitecoft, and that you are the lawful wife of Sir Vane Carlyon. Now I want you to listen to this letter. Do not think I have brought it to you in an unkind spirit-it is not that ; but, having read it. I must ask whether the contents be true or not. Pray take your seat again, Mrs. Heriot -Lady Carlyon-or Miss Brooke-I am not sure which name is yours."

Agatha sat down again, and Valerie opened the letter.

"You will believe me," she said, "that I am really sorry to read such words as these to yeu

"Make no mere apologies," said Agatha, gravely ; "let me hear what you have to read And Valerie, holding the envelope under

ber eyes, said : "You set the letter is addressed to me-

here is my name-' Mademoiselle D'Envers, Chatean Bellefleurs, Lucerne'-the postmark Paris, the handwriting quite unknown to me, and there is no signature.

"An anonymous letter," sail Agatha,

But there was no fainting-ne sign of it ; | Garawood ? only a white face, with white lips and great | here ?" frightened eyes, so full of anguish and won that it was pitiful to look at them. The face, a few minutes since so full of life and beauty looked more like a stone mask than a human countenance. Valerie saw her lips move, but no cound came from them, only a

long-drawn, quivering sigh, like the faint wail of the winter wind. "She will bear it to the end." thought Valerie, "and then she must die if she will." Valerie resumed the reading of surely the

most crnel letter that was ever written : "' Sir Vanes vagaries, follies, sine, crimes,

do not concern me, you will say. No, cer tainly not; but this concerns me-that he should dare take his mistress, and pass her off as his wife, under the roof of a friend whom I respect as I respect madame. I, for one, cannot in silence pass so great an insult by. I think madame ought to know the truth, so I tell it to you. From what I have heard of Agatha Brooke, I should say that, in some way or other, Sir Vane has most cruelly and basely deceived her. If so, you, unademoiselle, ought to tell her the truth ; the longer she remarus in ignorance, the more terrible will the knowledge of the truth be when it does come. Some diseases require a

sharp knife; in this case of moral disease,

trayed, you are bound to tell her the truth; Either she is Sir Vane's wife, or she is not ; if she is, then I have been grossly misinformed; if she is not, she ought to know the trath-she ought to know that she has fallen from her high estate of pure womanhood-that she can never be classed with the good, the pure and innucent again-that she is a fallen star-that, but for the paltry distinction of money and better clothes. there is no difference between her and the woman from whom all other women shrink--As I said before, it is just possible that she sinned in ignorance. Be that as it may, she ought to know where her sin has

played her. "She ought to know that she has lost

her good name, her fair fame, her place among the pure and innocent, her honor for all time ; that no tears and no repentance can restore them to her; that other women will draw aside as she passes by, lest the touch of her dress should be contagion; that so long as she lives, no woman worthy the name will ever consort with her or call her friend : she will be forever a by-word and reproach. a shame to all women. If she does not know these things you are bound to tell her ; if she does know them, and does not care, you have nothing to do but insist upon their leaving the chateau at once; if she dots not know it, tell her ; if she be wise, if she would prove that she has been sinned against, not sinning, if she desires to show that she hates once, when she knows the truth, go-she ought never to look upon the face of her be-

trayer again. " Let her rise and go forth; let her

leave her sin ; let her hate her deceiver. Let her show her determination to have done with such horrible, hateful sin, by leaving him at once. For your own sake, for your

Why has he shut you up ried,"

"He knows best," sobbed the faint volce. "I have never questioned him."

"You must have noticed one thing," continued Valerio ; "most husbands share with their wives-they use the same initials, the same crests, the same motto; you do not. Everything belonging to Sir Vane is quite distinct from you, that is the strongest proof to me.

" I am his wife," she repeated.

"No one is more pleased to hear it than I am," she said. "It would have been a terrible thing to have had all that expose here ; but, you see, Agatha, I must look to myself. You may think it all right, bot if it is all wrong, that is complete ruin to me. I must know the truth. Tell me how, when and where you were married. I know you hesitate because you have promised Sir Vane. Do not hesitate-the truth must be known, now that the investigation is started. If you do not tell it to me, you will have to tell it to some one else. lt is not likely that my annt, after reading this, will remain content. You had better trust me-I am young, like yourself, and can feel for you. Other women will sit in judgment on you. I should sympathize. Tell me, and will help you."

Agatha had fallen on her knees on tho white stone terrace; the same doves were fluttering around with pretty cooing cries; the sunlight fell on the marble fang and crimson flowers ; it fell, too, on the white, miserable face raised in despair to the dark one.

"I am in indeed his wife," she repeated. "Do you think-could any one in this wide world think-that I should be here with him were it otherwise ? I could not. Oh, I have loved and served God all my life. I have al-ways thought of the Christian virgin Agatha, and tried to make my litelike her. She preferred to die rather than to deny God. And I-oh, believe me--- would have died a hundred deaths rather than have offended God ; I would, indeed. How could you-how could any one-think that I should be with Sir Vane unless he had married me?'

Something like pity stole into the heart of this cruel woman who was torturing the other. If this girl was really as innocent, as child-like, and as simple as she seemed, then had Sir Vane Carlyon done the deed that fiend would scorn. As Valerie watched that tortured face, she despised him. Surely, from a world full of women, he might have chosen another, and have left this beautiful wild flower slone.

"I do not know much of the world." said Agatha, in a voice that was most pite-ous; "but I know right from wrong, ous; "but I know right from wrong, and I have not gone wrong. Believe me, believe me, I am his wife. Lady Anne and Joan, my father's old ser-vant, warned me-both of them. They sin and loves virtue, if she wishes to repair | said I should know the true love from as far as she can the evil done, she will at the false; they said if he, Sir Vane, did not love me, he would only amuse himself by talking to me, and then, when he was tired, he would go away and forgot oven my

name. See how false it was 1 He would not go away without me. He said that he could not live without me, and he asked me to go with him ; then I know he loved

him at once. For your own sake, for your me." own reputation, you must tell this truth to Keener pain and pity filled the heart "\* Do not say so. Oh, Heaven ! spare me Madame la Baronne; and if you are ever to of the beautiful woman who held the sword "do not say so !" Madame la Baronne; and if you are ever to in har hand. It had been a cruel, cowardiy "Poor child ! the sconer you know all the gravely. "Yes; but it seems also the letter of a establish yourself in the world, you must at in her hand. It had been a oruel, cowardly

It was pitiful to hear the sweet, childlike

voice that replied : "We were married at Whitecroft-Si Vane married me himself."

Triumph flashed in the eyes of the beautiful women, who was risking her life on one throw-triamph that should have crushed her with shame ; yet she feared and reverenced the purity and innocence of the girl

kneeling at her feet, and clinging to her with such pleading hands. "Tell me about it," she said gently ; "do not be afraid. You will have to face the

truth some time-face it now, with me. Tell me all about the marriage.' "We were together in a beautiful

place-in the woods-a place we both loved, and where I often met him. ffe told me he was going away, and he asked me to go with him. He said he could not live without me, and I knew quite well that I could not live without him. I loved him so well. He began to teach me about the new law of matriage." "What is that l" asked Valerie. "I have

never heard of it. What is it ?"

Alaz, alas I if she, this woman of the world, who had every kind of knowledge, if she knew anything of it, what then ? "He explained it to me," said Agatha, her

eyes fixed with piteous entreaty on Valerie's face. "He told me that marriage was really the union of two hearts.' "So it is," interrupted Valerie ; "but even

hearts are human, and must be governed by human laws." "He told me that when two hearts became

one, and when two people pledge themselves to each other until death, and prayed Heaven to bless them, that they were then really married, and that the old cumbersome signs and ceremonies were done away with. There need be no ringing of bells and strewing of flowers, he said. But I had been to a wedding and I had heard the prayers. I told him how beautiful they were, and he knelt down. 1 knelt with him, and he said them all over. Then he told me, and I knew l was his wife.'

"Did you believe it ?" asked Valerie, wonderingly.

"Yes, certainly I did." "And Sir Vane taught you that ?"

"Yes."

"Then may Heaven torgive him. He is a greater villain than I thought any man could be," and Valerie was silent for some minutes. CHAPTER XXIX.

A WOMAN CRUSHED TO BARTH.

Valerie was triumphant. She would not speak for some few minutes, lest the elation she felt should be shown in her voice. It was just as she had expected-a mere intrigue on the part of Sir Vane ; a matter of life or death for Agatha. There had been no marriage ; Sir Vane was free to marry ; and she congratulated herself on her plot; yet she could not help pitying the terrified girl kneeling at her feet. She must have known should ever see Sir Vane again?" the truth some time ; better, perhaps, that it

"I am grieved for you, Agatha," she said "You have been basely and cruelly deceived I am."

and sign me. "I was bound to tell you the truth," said Valerie, coldly. "You have evidently no ides of your position, and you must be made to understand it."

But the cruel, biting words passed over the girl's head. Sne was far too miserable to heed them. The prick of a pin does not pain when one suffers from a sword wound. The very utterance of the name of Wane seemed to have unlocked the flood-gates of her sorrow. She wept such bitter passionate tears ; she sobbed until her whole frame shook; she wept notil Valerie in storn pity almost hoped she would die. It was the thought of Vane -Vane, whom she loved so dearly-in whom she had such firm, implicit faith. It was Vane who had betrayed her ; who had made her a shame and disgrace among women-Vane, whose beloved face she would never see, never kiss again. In stern pity Valerie let her weep on. She could not check those tears.

"Agatha," she said, "you must rouse yourself; it will not do for any one to find you here-we should have a soandal all over the place. You must rouse yourself, and make up your mind what you are going to do."

She was not a tender-hearted woman, but the sight of that crushed figure lying there, the golden hair all disheveled, the grief, such as few ever know, on her white face, made Valerie feel uncomfortable. It was as though she had plunged a knife in her heart and was waiting until she died. Valerie felt that she could not bear it much longer.

"Something," she said, "must be done at once. You cannot remain here; my annt and I would both be compromised. You must both go at once. Perhaps it will be better for you to tell Sir Vane that we know the truth, and cannot meet you again." in which Agatha rose from her grouching attitude and faced her accuser.

"You tell me," she cried, " that Vane, my lover and husband, to whom I trusted my body and soul, has deceived and ketrayed me; that he has lied, and cheated, and made me a by-word. You yourself called him a villian, and you dare to suggest that I should see or speak to such a man again. If I am all you say, it is unconsciously so. I call Heaven to witness that I would rather have been dead a thousand times than have of. fended Heaven. I have not done it wilfully : but do you think, after finding out my sin,

Valerie's heart gave a great thrill of tri-umph. This was even better than she had dared to hope. If she went away quietly, without any scene or scandal, then the field was clear for her. She would ride triumph-

was clear for her. She would file triample in the free again. She could not rise from the free again. She could not rise from the certaining to decline seeing him again, Agatha. Yon know hest; though, of course, he must make provision for yon." "I route though of course, he must make provision for yon." "Provision for me?" she cried, "Do you would come clearly to her. She could

he would grieve over Agatha, how long it would be before he asked her to marry him, and whether he would be vexed with her if ever her share in the matter came out.

The visitor did not seem inclined to ge, having driven some distance to see Madam la Baronne. She cozeented to remain 'e-dinner, and Valerie had to entertain her. There was no chance of returning to the terrace to give the Snishing blow to her work thore. Once, during the course of the long, sunny

afternoon, Madame asked :

" I wonder where Mrs. Heriot is ? I have heard nothing of her to-day.'

"She was in the garden this morning," replied Valerie ; "I saw her there."

" Mr. Heriot has gone to Lucerne. Josef tells me. Do you think she is lonely ? Would she care to join us, do you think, Valerie ?"

And mademoiselle shuddered as she thought of the ghastly face and figure she had left on the terraco. "I think not," she said. "Our visitor

is not very amusing. Mrs. Heriob would not like to say 'No,' and she would most err tainly be bored. Better not ask her, aunt. And the kindly baronne bowed to the de

cision of her nicce. When Valurie left her, Agatha made an (f fort to go to the house. She had is intention of remaining until Val intention erie returned. Grief has a strange physical effect on some people. In tie midst of her horrible anguish a sudden lethargy came over her-a sense of almost intolerable fatigue, a pain in her limbs as though she had walked long miles. Her eves were so hot and heavy she must close them; her head ached, her brain seemed to be on fire. If she could but creep away 10 lie down somewhere, close her eyes and die ! She almost forgot what her trouble was in the pain of that sense of fatigue.

There was a great group of myrtile and ilex behind the marble faun ; she looked with wistful, pitcous eyes at the marble face and the rippling waters ; and then she could never remember how she came to be there. She found herself on the soft grass underneath the myrtle ; she could see the blue sky, It was something to remember-the way and it seemed very close to her ; the wind gen:ly fanned her face, the white doves fluttered and coced near her, Oh, Heaven ! what was the sweet sense of rest coming over her ?-what horrible dream, what nightmare possessed her? A face was smiling above

hers-the very face of Saint Agatha in the eastern window smiled on her; then the white eyelids fell, and she slept. That sleep most certainly saved her life.

She awoke after two hours, shivering, cold, and seriously ill. At first she could not remember why she was sleeping there alone. Heaven help those who forget a sorrow in sleep and awake to remember it by degreesthere is no experience in life more terrible than this.

Little by little it all comes back to her. She remembered every word of that fatal letter-nay, she held it there in her hands. A long convulsive shudder came over her. She know that she must never see Vane's felce again. She could not rise from the ground until the trembling of her limbs had

should be now. You may believe me-all the more that I am sorry, for your sake, to say it, but that was no marriage ; you are no more married than