

Did she scream? Did she fall? There was scarcely any change in her face, as she raised her eyes to his; perhaps for a moment the colour faded from her face, and left on it a death-like pallor.

But this might have been fancy. It might be the effect of the gas.

She met his gaze steadily enough, and he looked at her fixedly, wondering as he did so, where they could have met before, if ever.

Never, he thought; for in vain he racked his memory to recall her features.

No, they could not have met before; he could never have forgotten so beautiful a face, had he seen it.

He begged the honour of her hand for the next dance, and it almost seemed to him that she manifested a certain amount of eagerness to accept the invitation, although it was certain that she could stand in no lack of partners, had she required one.

Between the figures of the dance he took the opportunity of asking whether she had recovered from her late indisposition.

"I am much better," she replied, with a smile. "I hope that you have changed your determination of quitting the neighbourhood?"

"No; happily the business which I supposed would have taken me away has been otherwise arranged."

"Then we may hope for the pleasure of a visit from you. I know not how to apologize as it is, for all the inconvenience you have suffered upon my account."

"Any inconvenience, had there been any, would have been long ago forgotten in the pleasure of this meeting."

The words were somewhat formal and common-place, but the tone in which they were uttered was one of such evident admiration, that she drew back with a deep crimson flush suffusing her cheeks.

She raised her eyes to his with a slight frown, but he met her gaze, and they drooped again beneath his.

"She is afraid of me," he thought to himself, with one of his sweetest smiles. "And if I only could find the key to her secret. She's very beautiful! Poor little Phoebe!"

Never could Percy Hardwicke have shown to greater advantage than he did that night—never had he so tried his energies to be entertaining.

It was not long before he contrived to render himself a general favourite, amongst the ladies at least; though throughout the evening, however he might be engaged, his gaze never for many moments together wandered from the object upon which it was concentrated—the pale and beautiful face of Eleanor Jerrold.

Perhaps she felt its influence, although she never turned towards him; perhaps she had some other reason for wishing to leave the scene of her triumph.

She took an opportunity of quietly approaching her husband, and whispering in his ear: "My darling," he cried, reproachfully, "how neglectful of me not to ask you before! Of course you must be wearied to death. I will go at once and give orders about the carriage."

Mr. Jerrold's partners were inconsolable when they heard that she was going away. "Soon, too!" they said. "Could she not possibly wait for another dance—for a very little one?"

"You must not be so long before you honour me again," said the Colonel, as he led Mrs. Jerrold down stairs.

The other gentlemen crowded round to see her depart. The carriage was waiting without. But a disturbance suddenly arose—the sound of voices in an angry discussion.

In the midst of the servants was seen a drunken-looking, dissipated fellow, in a horsey style of dress, who was remonstrating against their rough treatment of him.

"Hands off!" he cried. "What do you take me for?"

"For no good," one of the servants answered jeeringly; "else we shouldn't have caught you where we did."

"Hands off, I say, or I shall spoil some of you or your splendid livery!"

The Colonel, leaving the lady for a while in a place of security, advanced into the passage to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. At sight of him, the servants fell back and allowed him to pass.

At the same time they loosened their hold of the man, who, shaking himself after the fashion of a Newfoundland dog, glared angrily at his late assailants.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the Colonel.

"I found the man hanging about the lawn," said one of the gamekeepers. "He said he knew you, sir, and I brought him into the house before taking any steps respecting him."

The Colonel looked at him attentively for a moment, and then said, "I have never seen you before. What do you want?"

"If I don't know you," retorted the man, "I know one of your guests. I am no thief—ask Mrs. Jerrold if I am."

"Ask whom?" inquired the Colonel in surprise.

The stranger, rolling a few steps backward with a kind of movement which was half swagger, half stagger, pointed to where Mrs. Jerrold was standing.

As he did so, she shrank back as though she would have avoided him.

Her face, at this moment, was deadly white, and she trembled so violently that she could scarcely stand.

At this moment, however, when the drunken trespasser's words seemed to promise some revelation, she sprang suddenly forward, and made as though she would have rushed down into the hall below and arrested the half-uttered words.

But ere she could carry into effect this intention, if such she had, a hand clasped her wrist. She looked round quickly, expecting to see her husband by her side.

It was Percy Hardwicke.

The crowd around were all eagerly interested in the scene enacting below, though the exact meaning did not clearly reach their comprehension.

No one at the moment was paying any attention to Mrs. Jerrold. No one saw this movement of Hardwicke's, nor the look of surprise and terror which passed over the woman's beautiful face as he bent over her and whispered in a low tone in her ear.

"Are you mad?" he whispered. "Would you betray yourself? Leave it to me."

"What do you mean?" she asked, in choking accents, scarcely articulate.

"Leave it all to me. I will secure his release. Your name shall not come into question."

"But—but why do you?"

"I have my reasons for befriending you. I will tell you all to-morrow night—in the fields where I met you with him. I will wait where I met you, just by the stile."

She looked at him with a staring face, scarcely seeming to comprehend.

"Will you come?" he asked.

"Yes, yes!" she replied in a low tone, full of deep concentrated anguish. "I will come. But go now and get him away. Let him say nothing—for heaven's sake, let him say nothing!"

CHAPTER XV. THE APPOINTMENT.

In spite of his loud assertions of respectability, Mr. Slider (for such, of course, was the name of the drunken intruder) would have run a very great risk of being consigned to duress, were it not for the fact that he had not Percy Hardwicke come to his rescue.

In a few well-chosen words he explained away all that appeared suspicious in Mr. Slider's conduct.

Taking the Colonel on one side, he explained that Slider was stopping at the same inn; and that he was a respectable man in his way, and worth a good deal of money, but rather eccentric and perhaps a trifle cracked.

The Colonel, readily accepting this explanation, set Slider at liberty, and Hardwicke having whispered in his ear an appointment for that night at the inn, turned round to look after Eleanor.

During the explanation, however, she had descended the stairs, and had been helped into her carriage.

He was only just in time to hear the rattle of its wheels as it disappeared into the distance. "Never mind," said he to himself, as he retraced his steps to the drawing-room above. "We shall meet again, I think, and she is in my power."

It was a late hour in the night, or rather an early hour in the morning, when the smiling gentleman rang the bell at his inn, on his return from Colonel Wycherley's house.

A very sleepy boots was making believe to sit up for him, but had fallen so often head first into the lighted candle as to have occasioned a partial baldness; having a very singular effect, somewhat as though he had been shaved for a priest in the wrong place.

"Has Mr. Slider come in?" asked Hardwicke.

"Ever so long ago, sir."

"No, he is gone to bed?"

"No, sir, he's sitting up; though how he can keep awake at this hour I can't say. Shall I give you your candle, sir?"

"No, thank you; I'll light it when I want it."

"Are you going to bed, sir?" asked the boots, with a long face.

"You need not wait up, friend, in any case. Here's half a sovereign for your trouble. Leave me, and I'll come to bed when I'm ready. Where's Mr. Slider?"

"In that room, sir."

"Stop—what are you going to do?"

"To tell him you have come in, sir."

"Did he say you were to do so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then don't! Good night to you. I will tell him myself."

The boots' stare was hard as his sleepy eyes would allow, and slowly retreated to his dormitory.

But Hardwicke did not stir from the spot where he had been standing when the man left him until he was certain that he could not without molestation.

Then, having listened for a moment, he drew from his breast-pocket a tiny pistol, the loading of which he carefully examined.

Replacing it in his pocket with a quiet smile, he cautiously turned the handle of the door.

He had expected to find Slider seated by the fire; and as he raised his eyes, that he would have met his foe standing there at the open door, with a background of pitchy darkness—a sensational effect the value of which he, as a consummate actor, could fully estimate.

She, however, was not the case. Slider was sitting by the fire in an arm-chair, but he was fast asleep, and breathing heavily. The fire burnt low, and the light burnt dimly.

Mr. Percy Hardwicke yawned as he read it, and yawned afterwards. He did not kiss it, as she would have kissed the letter he had condescended to write to her.

To burn it in the candle, and went to bed. "I should run away with her to-morrow," said Mr. Hardwicke, "if I had not an appointment with the other one. I wonder which is best? I cannot run away with both, I suppose. How awfully sleepy I am."

And so he went to bed, and to sleep, and smiled as sweetly and as innocently in his dreams as though he had been an angel.

The rain fell heavily throughout the day preceding that upon which the event occurred that we described above—a long, dull, inactive day was it, in which, nevertheless, there was some movement of deep import to some of the characters moving in this story.

Throughout the lengthy hours composing the morning and afternoon that Percy Hardwicke dreamed away in listless indolence in the parlour of the little inn, Jabez Bourke's ugly face might have been seen peeping out at intervals from the tap-room window, round the door-posts, into the inner passage, peering from the skittle-ground, flattening his nose against the window glass.

Peeping and prying, peering and spying, in all holes and corners, the two objects of his espionage being ever the same—the smiling gentleman, and pretty Phoebe, the belle of the village.

As twilight gathered around the little village the rain ceased, and Percy Hardwicke strolled out to the door, to take an observation of the weather.

While thus employed, his eye fell upon the village blacksmith.

"Come here, my friend," said he, in a patronizing tone; and Jabez approached in his usual shambling, clumsy fashion.

"What a monster it is," said Percy Hardwicke, half-admiringly. "Come here, I want to speak to you."

"What can I do for you, sir?" asked the blacksmith.

"I am going to entrust you with an extremely delicate office, my dirty-faced friend," said Hardwicke. "You shall assist me in an employment. Let us take a walk and talk over the business quietly."

They walked up the village street, Percy Hardwicke smiling as he talked.

The blacksmith's face was averted, but wore a deeply attentive expression. When they parted this gave way to one of savage and vindictive hate, which was horrible to look upon; and as Jabez Bourke strode forward towards his forge, the children he met in his path crept hastily away, avoiding him as they would a wild beast.

[To be continued.]

THE BRIDE'S STORY.

When I was but a country lass, now fifteen years ago, I lived where flowed the Overcock, through meadows wide and low;

There first, when skies were bending blue and blossoms blowing free, I saw the ragged little boy who went to school with me.

His homespun coat was frayed and worn, with patches covered o'er, His hat—ah, such a hat as that was never seen before;

The boys and girls, when he first came, they shouted in their glee, And jeered the ragged little boy who went to school with me.

His father was a laboring man, and mine was highly born; Our people held both him and his in great contempt and scorn—

They said I should not stoop to own a playmate such as he, The bright-eyed, ragged little boy who went to school with me.

Yet spite of all the sneers around from children better dressed, My heart went out to meet that heart that beat within his breast;

His look was fond, his voice was low, and strange as it may be, I loved the little ragged boy who went to school with me.

For years they had forgotten him, but when again we met, His looks, his voice, his gentle ways remained in memory yet;

They saw alone the man of mark, but I could only see the bright-eyed ragged little boy who went to school with me.

He had remembered me, it seemed, as I remembered him; Nor time, nor honors, in his mind the cherished past could dim!

Young love had grown to older love, and so, to-day, I wear the little ragged boy that went to school with me.

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IN AFTER-YEARS; OR, FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER ROWS.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

To Mrs. Lindsay the recovery of her son had opened up a new life. The old haggard look, which made people fancy at times that she was the mother of Margaret, and not her sister, had given place to a healthy bloom in the open air life she led with the boy, whose favorite companion she soon became.

This was well. Agnes was now so fearful of again losing him that she could not bear him to be a moment from her sight, even during the night rising to go into the room where he slept with his nurse, that she might see he was there safe. All her trouble and anxiety seemed to be centered in the fear she had lest he should again be stolen from her.

Agnes had no idea that the money which they had been possessed of at the time of her husband's departure from the Isle of Wight was gone. She had so long been accustomed to leave everything to Margaret that she had no knowledge of what was needed for their household expenses, and Margaret, dreading the effect which a knowledge of the truth would have on her mind, had always led her to think there was enough and to spare.

Margaret toiled on, scarcely giving herself time for sleep; from dawn till dark she was occupied either in making designs or painting those she had by her. The money obtained by the sale of her pearls was all gone, and it took nearly every moment of daylight employ-

ed in steady labour with her pencil or paint brush to enable her to support a family that now numbered six persons.

The girl was becoming weak and weary. In Southampton, although she had hard work teaching, and it was sometimes disagreeable work too, yet at a certain hour it was done, and then she could go to see and comfort in her sweet, loving way, those who were poorer than herself.

On Saturday she could take Agnes to the woods in the vicinity of the town, where, attended by Adam, if the weather was fine, they would pass the whole day, change of scene and air giving her health and fresh spirits for renewed labour.

But now ceaseless toil was imperative. She had still the God-given Sabbath, which, if He had not given us, we would not give to ourselves; but on their return from church she was too weary to walk with Agnes and little Willie, and, lying down on the sofa, she would read, or, with eyes fixed on the little white ceiling above her head, dream of a time never to come again, of those she would never more see.

Margaret had set herself too hard a task for poor human nature—to toil unremittently with a broken spirit, memories that would not sleep. The girl grew paler and weaker day by day. How often she longed to lay down the brush and pencil with which she toiled on through the weary day and go into the mossy woods, and hiding herself there, to sleep soundly and come back again never.

Adam had been gone three weeks. How long those seemed. She was the old man's darling, and he would come into the apartment where she sat day by day bent over her work, bringing her a branch of evergreen, a few ferns, a little flower which, sheltered in some green, sunny nook, had escaped the fate of its race. These were little things, but she missed them.

Agnes had gone out for a long ramble with her son, the bright sunny morning, the crisp, frosty ground, the life-giving clear air, all inviting the sons of toil as well as the man of leisure to go abroad, and under the broad blue sky praise Him who gave them this green earth to dwell upon.

Margaret accompanied her sister and Willie to the door of the cottage, and stood looking wistfully after them as their forms grew dim in the distance. An almost irresistible desire to go also and spend a few hours in the lanes under the fir trees made her go to look how much money she had still left, and to reckon if she could furnish the order she was busy with in time if she spent that day in the open air.

Alas, two guineas were all that remained of her little fund. She must not lose an hour. She must endeavour, if possible, to finish the drawings she was busy with, so that next day they could be sent to London. The bookseller never failed to send the money immediately on receiving the drawings.

She seated herself, and, taking up her pencil, prepared to begin her task. For the first time the thinness of the almost transparent hand, laid on the paper to keep it steady, struck her, and this, together with the weakness she had been conscious of for a long time back, sent a chill to her heart as she thought: "What would become of them all if I were away?"

She rose hastily, and, going to the mirror, saw there an almost marble white face, large weary eyes, framed by long undulating waves of shaded pale brown hair, which fell in shining folds down her neck.

The last time she remembered going to the mirror that she might see if her face was like the face it used to be in the old time, was the day she met Ernest De Vere's eye, so full of pleased surprise, love and admiration, as he passed through London in triumph. Then she blushed to see that her face had gained in beauty; now a pale shadow met her gaze.

From the dressing-case in front of her mirror she took a crushed and faded white rose. The dead flower made her feel like a weed. She pressed it to her lips and brow. Its faded, scentless petals were full of thorns, and made her heart bleed.

She was far away in a deep thicket, the purple bloom of the lilac, the laburnum which she passed under their shade, a thrush out on the beech tree singing its vespers song to the slowly dying day, the fragrance came from the apple-blossom as it shed its petals in a white and crimson shower on the daisies at her feet, and over the house-tops and through the crowded streets of London the sweet chime of the church bells came floating in the air, and the shimmering silver of the moonbeams fell around her like a light rain.

Two large drops fell on the faded rose. "He may watch and wait there in the hush of the sweet spring night, but it will never again be for my step or the gleam of my white garment."

The dead rose was laid away in the little drawer so long its own in the dressing-case, and poor Margaret, with her white face and transparent hands, sat down again to her daily toil.

Lady Hamilton stood on the balcony of old Inchdrewer, looking towards the spire of the mausoleum where her son and daughter lay. The moon and stars were high in the heavens, throwing the long shadows of the pine trees athwart the path.

Lady Hamilton raised her clasped hands and streaming eyes to heaven as she said in solemn accents, "Praise to Him who hath shortened the days of trial; the curse of Haddon hath passed away."

That night Lady Hamilton left Inchdrewer by the mail for London, travelling almost day and night that she might join Colonel Lindsay and unite her efforts with his for the recovery of her grandchildren.

Colonel Lindsay had long before consulted one of the first lawyers in London on the subject, he, in his turn, communicating with other men of business in all parts of England. The advertisements which had for months appeared in all the lending city, as well as the provincial papers, were fruitful of annoyance and trouble, but naught else.

A letter from Liverpool informed Colonel Lindsay that by sending twenty pounds to the writer he would be informed of the whereabouts of the ladies he sought for, and all other particulars he wished to know concerning them.

Colonel Lindsay went to Liverpool at once, to find a Catchem-like man sitting in a dirty

booking-office, who demanded the twenty pounds before he would put on his hat to accompany his client, as he chose to denominate Colonel Lindsay.

The money was cheerfully paid, and lawyer and client proceeded to a densely-populated part of the city, whose streets and high dirty smoked brick houses made Arthur Lindsay shudder as he thought of the dire poverty which must have forced Agnes and Margaret Cuninghame to live in such houses, in such a neighbourhood.

Then, after climbing three sets of staircase, he was introduced into a suite of two rooms, occupied by two sisters named Anna and Maria Cumbermere, who had the appearance of being much superior to the place they lived in, and supported themselves by staymaking.

Poor things, they were the daughters of a Yorkshire clergyman, who died and left his family to fight the battle of life alone, and had buoyed themselves up with the hope that some relative had left money to which they were the heirs.

Colonel Lindsay, sore at heart himself, sympathized perhaps the more with those who suffered also, and looking on these old ladies toiling for bread in a garret, a sharp pang stung his heart as he thought how those dear ones he sought for must have suffered those long years, when, as he was now aware, that the miserable pittance he left with them was gone.

With characteristic generosity, he insisted on leaving twenty pounds with the youngest and most accessible of the ladies, whose eye and trembling lip thanked him as words could never have done.

Another episode: A letter, rather pompously and patronizingly written, came from Southampton, signed by Amos Porter, and desiring the person interested in Miss Margaret Cuninghame (if this was one of the ladies he sought) to come to Southampton, where, at Lee's Villa, he would obtain the information wanted.

In due time Colonel Lindsay presented himself at Lee's Villa, a very pretentious looking place, the house a tremendous affair when viewed in comparison with the small piece of ground surrounding it, which last, however, was made the most of, not an available space being left without flower, or shrub, or fruit tree. He learned from the Jarvey who drove him there that the proprietor was a brewer who had made what he considered quite a fortune, and was now launching into polite society with his wife and daughters.

Colonel Lindsay was shown into a handsomely furnished drawing-room, where in a few minutes he was joined by a stout gentleman wearing two gold rings, gold studs and sleeve-buttons, and an immensely thick gold watch chain, to which were attached a bunch of seals. A lady accompanied him, most elaborately got-up in wine-coloured satin, which swept the floor, and jewellery which a Moorish princess might have envied her the possession of.

"Mr. Porter, I presume," said Colonel Lindsay. "I came in reply to your letter promising me information of Miss Cuninghame."

"So, so, exactly so; you are the person who wants to know about Miss Cuninghame," spoken in a half-pompous style, as if the assumption cost him an effort. "Sit down, sir. This is Mrs. Porter, sir."

Colonel Lindsay bowed to the lady, who seemed to be perfectly conscious of her own importance.

"Yes, sir," continued Mr. Amos Porter, "Miss Cuninghame was our Matilda's governess for over a year, sir, and gave perfect satisfaction, sir; we were well pleased with her, sir, and we paid her well, sir. It was not for that we parted with her, sir—no."

"No," broke in Mrs. Porter, who feared Mr. Amos might, with his usual indiscretion, speak of the reports which had told him in confidence by one of the Queen's Chaplains (alias Catchem), who was introduced to her by Mrs. Gattlesoup, with whom the Queen's Chaplain boarded in Southampton for the benefit of his health; "no, indeed, it was not because she did not teach well, but Matilda has a most wonderful talent for all sorts of music. When she comes home from a ball, a fresco or anything like that, she can play all the tunes on her finger ends, and so you see she knew as much by the end of the year as Miss Cuninghame did herself, and the Reverend Josiah Dobbleson, one of the Queen's Chaplains, who is a particular friend of ours, recommended Miss Senora Duputy, an Italian lady, that we're very well pleased with."

"Can you tell me where Miss Cuninghame lives now?"

"No indeed, that we can't. Mr. Dobbleson wanted to know after they left Southampton, and he could not find out."

"She made a good penny of her teaching here," said Mr. Amos very pompously. "She wouldn't take a penny less than half a crown for every lesson, and a pretty smart sum it came to by the end of the year. Besides the sheet music, which we bought ourselves, I paid her thirty pounds sterling more for her work."

"You're perhaps going to engage her for your own girls?" said Mrs. Porter, who began to think that the stranger was somewhat more gentlemanly-looking than even the Queen's Chaplain.

"No," replied Colonel Lindsay, as he rose to take his leave, "I am Miss Cuninghame's brother-in-law."

Opening his pocket-book, he took from thence a Bank of England note for thirty pounds, and, writing his name on a blank card, laid both on the table, saying: "This money will repay your servant for the trouble he had in showing me in, the card is for yourself. Good morning."

The worthy Mr. Amos Porter and his lady were perfectly amazed when, lifting the card, they read, "Sir Arthur Lindsay, Haddon Castle," and lifting up the present for the servant, found that it exactly amounted to the sum Miss Cuninghame had received for their talented darling's music lessons.

Colonel Lindsay returned to London only to renew the same round of searching and disappointment which had been his lot since his return from abroad.

His anxiety was fully equalled by that of Lady Hamilton, to whom it seemed an impossibility to rest one hour in the house, driving about to every house in the vicinity of Duke Street, where they had last been traced to, in hopes that in their country home, which she fancied might be within a few miles of London, they might still deal with the same trades-