

LOVE.

A fragile girl, who droops and pales,  
Like a flower in sudden frost,  
Clasping her wailing infant tight,  
Shrinking away from her fellows' sight.  
Like a wounded bird from the noonday light,  
Its plumage all smirched and tossed.

Why? and they whisper of sin and shame,  
And falsehood spoken in Love's pure name.

A grey old grange, with the ivy wreaths  
Far floating from the wall  
The thick dust drifting its floors to heap,  
The spider across its doors to creep,  
The flag-staff rotting upon the keep,  
As the banners within the hall.

Why? and they speak of a forfeit pledge,  
And their lord, who fell on his Sabre's edge.

A youth, in the genius-peopled room,  
That once his kingdom made,  
His pencil broken, his canvass blurred,  
And the music that once the heart-strings  
[stirred,

Dashed right across with a passionate word,  
Like the blood from a heart betrayed.

Why? and a common story was told,  
Of troth-plight broken for sheen of gold.

A little child, with frank blue eyes,  
And lips like flowers in dew,  
Who wondered amid his childish play,  
Why some should frown, some turn away,  
While those who blessing words would say,  
Wept 'mid their kisses too.

Why? the passion was past, the charm was  
The poison was left for the innocent. [spent

A wailing cry 'neath the sombre yew,  
A sob by a lonely hearth,  
Bright buds flung down upon quiet graves,  
Where lush and green the long grass waves  
And the dirge of the river's restless waves  
Swell'd sad o'er the sacred earth.

Why? ah, who knows not how life is marred,  
Where Death's strong hand strikes cold and [hard.

Love. Love forgotten, betrayed, forsworn,  
Crushed beneath Death or time,  
A due to every secret wrong,  
A note, life's sadness to prolong;  
A key, keen, magical, and strong,  
To sorrow, or care, or crime.

Yet, priest and poet unite to prove  
That "Love is Heaven, and Heaven is Love."

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PUBLICANS and SINNERS

A LIFE PICTURE.

BY MISS M. E. BRADDON,

Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "To The Bitter End," "The Outcasts," &c., &c.

BOOK THE LAST.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

Lucius closed the little book with a sigh. Alas how many a woman's life ends thus, with a broken heart! Happy those finer natures whose fragile clay survives [not the shattered lamp of the soul! There are some fashioned of a duller stuff, in whom the mere habit of life survives all that gave life its charm.

This was all that letters or journal could tell the investigator. But Lucius told himself that the rest would be easy to discover. He had the name, date, locality. The name, too, was not a common name; Burke's *Landed Gentry or County Families* would doubtless help him to identify that Henry Glenlyne who married Felicie Dumarques at the church in Piccadilly. These letters had done much for him; for they had assured him of Lucille's legitimacy. This made all clear before him; he need no longer fear to pluck the curtain from the mystery of the past, let he should reveal a story of dishonour.

He took some brief notes from Mr. Glenlyne's letter, and thanked Mademoiselle Dumarques for her politeness, promising that if the niece should profit by the use of those documents, the aunt should be amply requited for any assistance they afforded; and then he took a courteous leave of the dress maker and her apprentice, the monotonous click of whose needle had not ceased during his visit.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when Lucius left Mademoiselle Dumarques. He had thought of getting back to Dieppe in time for that evening's boat, so as to arrive in London by the following morning—he had taken a return ticket by this longer but cheaper route. He found, however, that the strain upon his attention during the last forty-eight hours, the night journey by Newhaven and Dieppe, combined with many an anxious day and night in the past, had completely worn him out.

"I must have another night's rest before I travel, or I shall go off my head," he said to himself. "I am beginning to feel that confused sense of time and place which is the forerunner of mental disturbance. No; it would be of some importance to me to save a day, but I won't run the risk of knocking myself up. I'll go back to Dieppe by the next train, and sleep there to-night."

CHAPTER IV.

COMING TO MEET HIS DOOM.

THE passage from Dieppe to Newhaven was of the roughest. Lucius beheld his fellow voyagers in the last stage of prostration, and prescribed for more than one forlorn female on whom the sea maledy had fastened with alarming grip. The steamer was one scene of suffering, and Lucius, being happily exempt from the common affliction, did his best to be useful, so far as the limited means of treatment on board the vessel enabled him. The wind was high, and the passengers on board the Newhaven boat, who had never seen the waves that beat against the rock-bound coast of Newfoundland,

before the breeze, and in some spots, where tall shafts clustered thickly and crows were numerous, seemed in their vehement gyrations to be holding a witch's sabbath in honour of the storm.

That north-easter had a biting breath, and chilled the blood of the Shadrackites till they were moved to dismal prophecies of a hard winter. "We allus gets a hard winter when the heck winockshalls begins early," says one gentleman in the coal-and-potato line to another. And the north-easter howls its dreary dirge, as if it said, "Cry aloud and lament for the summer that is for ever gone, for southern breezes and sunny days that return no more."

Cedar House looked more than usually dark-some after the brighter skies and gayer colours of a French city. Those dust and smoke-laden old trees, lank poplars, which swayed and rocked in the gale, that gloomy wall, those blank-looking windows above it, inspired no cheering thoughts. There was no outward sign to denote that any one lay dead in the house; but it seemed no fitting abode for the living.

As the hansom came aground against the curbstone in front of the tall iron gate, Lucius was surprised to see a stout female with a bundle

But Lucius was not to be diverted by Brisbane emigrants.

"I don't think it was in our agreement that you were to leave your patient, Mrs. Milderson," said he; "above all during my absence."

"Lor bless you, Dr. Davoren, I haven't been away an hour and a half, or from that to two hours at most. I only just stepped round to my own place, and took the groser's coming back. I'd scarcely stop to say three words to Mary Ann, which she thought it unkind and unmotherly, poor child, being as she has one leg a little shorter than the other, and was always a mother's girl, and 'prenticed to the dressmaking at fourteen year old. Of course if I'd a' knowed you'd be home to-night, I'd have put off going; but as to the dear old gentleman, I left him as comfortable as could be. He took his bit of dinner down-stairs in the parlour, and eat the best part of as prime a mutton-chop as you could wish to set eyes on; but he felt a little dull-like in that room, he said, without his granddaughter, 'though I'm very glad she's enjoying the fresh country air, poor child,' he says; so he went up to his bedroom again before seven o'clock, and had his cup of tea, and then began amusing of hisself, turning over his papers and such-like. And says I, 'Have I your leave to step round to my place for a hour or so, to get a change of clothes, Mr. Sivewright?' says I; and he says yes most agreeable; and that's the longs and the shorts of it, Dr. Davoren."

Lucius said nothing. He was displeased, disturbed even, by the woman's desertion of her post, were it only for a couple of hours.

Mrs. Magsby had opened the gate before this, and half Mrs. Milderson's explanation had taken place in the forecourt. It had been too dark outside the house for Lucius to see Mrs. Magsby's face; but by the dim lamplight in the hall he saw that she was unusually pale, and that her somewhat vacant countenance had a scared look.

"Begging your pardon, sir," she began at once hurriedly, "I hope I haven't done wrong. I haven't forgot what you told me and my husband about not admitting nobody in your absence; but—"

"If you have admitted anybody, you have done very wrong," said Lucius decisively. "What does it all mean? I find Mrs. Milderson returning from a two-hours' absence, and you in a state of alarm. What is the matter?"

A straight answer was beyond Mrs. Magsby's power to give; she always talked in circles, and began at the outermost edge of the centre she wanted to reach.

"I'm sure, Dr. Davoren, I shouldn't have dreamt of doing it if it hadn't been for the order."

"Shouldn't have dreamed of going what? What order?" demanded Lucius impatiently.

"When first he came to the gate—which he rang three times, for my good man was taking a stretch after his tea, and baby was that fractious with the spasms I couldn't lie him down—I told him it was against my orders, and as much as my place was worth, being put in charge by a gentleman."

"Who came to the gate?" demanded Lucius; but Mrs. Magsby rambled on, and was not to be diverted from her circuitous path by any direct question.

"If the order haven't been reglar, I shouldn't have give way; but it was perfectly correck, from Mr. Agar, the house-agent, which has put me into many a house hisself, and his hand-writing is well bekknown to me. The gentleman wanted to buy the house of the owners, with a view to turnin' it into a factory, or works of some kind, which he explained hisself quite affable."

"That man!" cried Lucius aghast. "You admitted that man—the very man of all others who ought to have been kept out of this house—to prevent whose admittance here I have taken so much trouble? You and your husband were put into this house to defend it from that very man."

"Lor, sir, you must be dreaming surety," exclaimed Mrs. Magsby. "He was quite the gentleman, and comin' like that with the intention to buy the house, which I have heard Mr. Agar say as how the owners wanted to get rid of it, and with the holder to view in Mr. Agar's own hand-writing, how was I to—"

"This house belongs to Mr. Sivewright, so long as he occupies it and pays the rent," said Lucius indignantly. "You had no right to admit any one without his permission."

"Which I should have ast his leaf, sir, if the dear old gentleman hadn't been asleep. Mrs. Milderson had took up his cup of tea not a quarter of a hour before, and she says to me as she goes out of this very hall-door, she says, which Mrs. Milderson herself will bear witness, being too much of a lady to go from her word, she says, 'Don't go for to disturb the old gentleman, as I've left him sleepin' as quiet as an infant.' And as for care of the property, sir, it wasn't possible to be more careful, for before I showed the gentleman over the place, outbuildings, and such-like, which he was most anxious to see, bein' as it was them he wanted for his factory, I calls my husband and whispers to him, 'Look sharp after the property, Jim, while I go round the place with this gentleman;' and with that my husband kep in the room where the choney and things is the whole time I was away."

"How long did the man stay?" asked Lucius briefly.

"Well, sir, that's the puzzling part of it all and what's been worritin' me ever since. I never see him go away. But I make no doubt he went out the back way—down by them barges, as is



"UNDER THE MISTLETOE."

thought that shipwreck was within the possibilities of the voyage, and asked the captain with doleful countenances if he thought they should ever reach Newhaven.

It was late in the evening when the train from Newhaven deposited Lucius at London-Bridge. But late as it was, he took a cab, left his bag at his own door, and then went on to Cedar House. His first duty, he told himself, was to Homer Sivewright, the old man who had so fully trusted him, and so reluctantly parted with him.

As he drove towards the house, he had that natural feeling of anxiety which is apt to arise after absence from any scene in which the traveller is deeply interested—a vague dread, a lurking fear that although, according to human foresight, all should have gone well, yet some unforeseen calamity, some misfortune unprovided against may have arisen in the interval.

The night was cloudy and starless, cold too. The wind, which had been rising all day, now blew a gale, and all the dust of the day's traffic was blown into the traveller's face as he drove along the broad and busy highway. That north-east wind shrieked shrilly over the housetops of the Shadrack district, and one might prophesy the fall of many a loose slate and the destruction of many a flowerpot, hurled untimely from narrow window-sills, ere the hurricane exhausted its fury. The leaden crows that surmounted refractory chimneys spun wildly round

ring the bell. She clutched her bundle with one hand, and carried a market-basket on the other arm, and that process of ringing the bell was not performed without some slight difficulty. Lucius jumped out of the cab and confronted the stout female.

"Mrs. Milderson!" he exclaimed, surprised, as the woman grasped her burdens and struggled against the wind, which blew her scanty gown round her stout legs, and tore her shawl from her shoulders, and mercilessly buffeted her bonnet.

"Yes, sir, begging your parding which I just stepped round to my place to get a change of linen, and a little bit of tea and an odd end of groshery at Mr. Binks's in Stevedor-street; for there isn't a spoonful of decent tea to be got at the groser's round about here, which I tell Mrs. Magsby when she offers uncommon kind to fetch any errands I may want. The wind has been that strong that it's as much as I could do to keep my feet, particlar at the corners. It's blowin' a regular gale. Hard lines for them poor souls at sea, I'm afeard, sir, and no less than three hundred and seventy-two immigrins went out of the Shadrack-basin this very day to Brisban, which my daughter Mary Ann saw the wessle start—a most moving sight, she says."

Mrs. Milderson talked rather with the air of a person who wishes to ward off a possible reproof by the interesting nature of her conversation.