

A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

BY MISS MULLOCK. CHAPTER III. HIS STORY.

Sept. 30th. Not a case to set down to-day. This high moonland is your best sanatorium. My "occupation's gone."

I have every satisfaction in that fact, or in the cause of it; which, cynics might say, a member of my profession would easily manage to prevent, were he a city physician instead of a regimental surgeon. Still idleness is insupportable to me. I have tried going about among the few villages hard by, but their worst disease is one which this said regimental surgeon, with nothing but his pay, can apply but small remedy—poverty.

To-day I have paced the long, straight lines of the camp; from the hospital to the bridge, and back again to the hospital; have tried to take a vivid interest in the loungers, the foot-ball players, and the wretched awkward squad turned out in never-ending parade. With each hour of the quiet autumn afternoon I have watched the sentinel mount the little stockaded hillock, and startle the camp with the old familiar boom of the great Sebastopol bell. Then, I have shut my hut door, taken to my books, and studied till my head warned me to stop.

The evening post—but only business letters. I rarely have any other. I have no one to write to me—no one to write to. Sometimes I have been driven to wish I had; some one friend with whom it would be possible to talk in pen and ink, on other matters than business. Yet, cui bono? No friend could I or should I let out my real self; the only thing in the letter that was truly and absolutely me would be the great grim signature: "Max Urquhart."

Were it otherwise—were there any human being to whom I could lay open my whole heart, trust with my whole history; but no, that were utterly impossible now.

No more of this. No more, until the end. That end, which at once solves all difficulties, every year brings nearer. Nearly forty, and a doctor's life is usually shorter than most men's. I shall be an old man soon, even if there come none of those sudden chances against which I have of course provided.

The end. How and in what manner it is to be done, I am not yet clear. But it shall be done, before my death or after. "Max Urquhart, M.D."

I go on signing my name mechanically with those two business-like letters after it, and thinking how odd it would be to sign it in any other fashion. How strange—did any one care to look at my signature, in any way except thus, with the two professional letters after it—a commonplace signature of business. Equally strange, perhaps, that such a thought as this last should ever have entered my head, or that I should have taken the trouble, and yielded to the weakness of writing it down. It all springs from idleness—shoe idleness; the very same cause that makes Treherne, whom I have known do duty cheerfully for twenty-four hours in the trenches, lounge, smoke, yawn and play the flute. There—it has stopped. I heard the postman rapping at the hut door—the young simpleton has got a letter.

Suppose, just to pass away the time, I Max Urquhart, reduced to this lowest ebb of inanity by a prateral government, which has stranded my regiment here high and dry, but as dreary as Noah on Ararat—were to enliven my solitude, drive away blue devils, by manufacturing for myself an imaginary correspondent? To be it.

To begin then at once in the received epistolary form: "My dear—"

My dear—what? "Sir?" No—not for this once. I wanted a change. "Madam?" that is formal. Shall I invent a name?

When I think of it, how strange it would feel to me to be writing "my dear" before any Christian name. Orphaned early, my only brother long dead, drifting about from land to land till I have almost forgotten my own, which has quite forgotten me—I had not considered it before, but really I do not believe there is a human being living whom I have a right to call by his or her Christian name or who would ever think of calling me by mine. "Max"—I have not heard the sound of it for years.

Dear, a pleasant adjective—my, a pronoun of possession, implying that the being spoken of is one's very own—one's sole, sacred, personal property, as with natural selfishness one would wish to hold the thing most precious. My dear—a satisfactory total. I rather object to "dearest," as a word implying comparison, and therefore never to be used where comparison should not and could not exist. Witness, "dearest mother," or "dearest wife," as if a man had a plurality of mothers and wives, out of whom he chose the one he loved best. And, as a general rule, I dislike all ultra-expressions of affection set down in ink. I once knew an honest gentleman—blessed with one of the tenderest hearts that ever man had, and which in all his life was only given to one woman; he, his wife told me, had never, even in their court-

ship days, written to her otherwise than as "My dear Anna," ending merely with "Yours faithfully," or "Yours truly." Faithful—true—what could he write, or she desire more?

If my pen wanders to lovers and sweethearts, and moralizes over simple sentences in the maundering way, blame not me, dear imaginary correspondent, to whom no name shall be given at all—but blame my friend—as friends go in this world—Captain Augustus Treherne. Because, happily, that young fellow's life was saved at Balaclava, does he intend to invest me with the responsibility of it, with all its scrapes and follies, now and forevermore? Is my clean, sober hut to be farnished with tobacco and poisoned with brandy and water, that a love-sick youth may unburden himself of his sentimental tale? Heaven knows why I listen to it? Probably because telling me keeps the lad out of mischief; also because he is honest, though an ass, and I always had a greater leaning to fools than to knaves. But let me not pretend reasons which make me out more generous than I really am, for the fellow and his love-affair bore me exceedingly sometimes and would be quite unendurable anywhere but in the dull camp. I do it from a certain abstract pleasure which I have always taken in dissecting character, constituting myself an amateur demonstrator of spiritual anatomy.

An amusing study is, not only the swain, but the goddess. For I found her out, spelled her over satisfactorily, even in that one evening. Treherne little guessed it—he took care never to introduce me—he does not even mention her name, or suspect I know it. Vast precautions against nothing! Does he fear lest Mentor should put in a claim to his Eucharis? You know better, dear imaginary correspondent.

Even were I among the list of "marrying men," this adorable she would never be my choice; would never attract me for an instant. Little as I know about women, I know enough to feel certain that there is a very small residuum of depth or originality in that large handsome physique of hers. Yet she looks good-natured, good-tempered; almost as much so as Treherne himself.

"Speak o' the dell," there he comes. Far away down the lines I can catch his eternal "Donna and Mobile"—how I detest that song! No doubt he has been taking to the post his answer to one of those abominably-scented notes that he always drops out of his waistcoat by the merest accident, and glances round to see if I am looking, which I never am. What a young puppy it is! Yet it hangs after one kindly, like a puppy; after me too, who am not the pleasantest fellow in the world; and, as it is but young, it may mend if it falls into no worse company than the present.

I have known what it is to be without a friend when one is very inexperienced, reckless and young. Evening. "To what base uses may we come at last." It seems perfectly ridiculous to see the use this memorandum-book has come to. Cases forsooth! The few pages of them may as well be torn out in favor of the new specimens of moral disease which I am driven to study. For instance: No. 1. Better omit that. No. 2. Augustus Treherne, set 29, intermittent fever, verging upon yellow fever occasionally, as to-day. Pulse very high, tongue rather foul, especially in speaking of Mr. Colin Granton. Countenance pale, inclining to livid. A bad case altogether.

Patient enters, whistling like a steam-engine, as furious and as shrill, with a corresponding puff of smoke. I point to the obnoxious vapor. "Beg pardon, doctor, I always forget. What a tyrant you are!" "Very likely; but there is one thing I never will allow—smoking in my hut. I did not, you know, even in the Crimea." The lad sat down, sighing like a furnace.

"Heigho, doctor, I wish I were you." "Do you?" "You always seem so uncommonly comfortable; never want a cigar or anything to quiet the nerves and keep you in good-humor. You never get into a scrape of any sort; have neither a mother to lecture you nor an old governor to bully you."

"Stop there." "I will then; you need not take me up so sharp. He's a trump, after all. You know that, so I don't mind a word or two against him. Just read there."

He threw over one of Sir William's ultra-prosy moral essays, which no doubt the worthy old gentleman flatters himself are, in another line, the very copy of Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son. I might have smiled at it had I been alone, or laughed at it were I young enough to sympathize with the modern system of transposing into "the governor" the ancient revered name of "father."

"You see what an opinion he has of you. 'Pon my life, if I were not the meekest fellow imaginable, always ready to be led by a straw into 'Virtue's ways, I should have cut your acquaintances long ago. 'Invariably follow the advice of Dr. Urquhart'—I wish, my dear son, that your character more resembled that of your friend, Dr. Urquhart. I should be more concerned about your many fol-

lows were you not in the same regiment as Dr. Urquhart. Dr. Urquhart is one of the wisest men I ever knew; and so on, and so on. What say you?"

I said nothing; and I now write down this, as I shall write anything of the kind which enters into the plain relation of facts or conversations which daily occur. God knows how vain such words are to me at the best of times—mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbal—as the like must be to most men well acquainted with themselves. At some times, and under certain states of mind, they become to my ear the most refined and exquisite torture that my bitterest enemy could desire to inflict. There is no need, therefore, to apologize for them. Apologize to whom, indeed! Having resolved to write this, it was folly to make it an imperfect statement. A journal should be fresh, complete, and correct—the man's entire life, or nothing; since, if it sets it down at all, it must necessarily be for his own sole benefit; it would be the most contemptible form of egotistic humbug to arrange and modify it, as if it were meant for the eye of any other person.

Dear, unknown, imaginary eye—which never was and never will be—yet, which I like to fancy shining somewhere in the clouds, out of Jupiter, Venus, or the Georgium Sidus, upon this solitary me—the foregoing sentence bears no reference to you.

"Treherne," I said, "whatever good opinion your father is pleased to hold as to my wisdom, I certainly do not share in one juvenile folly—that, being a very well-meaning fellow on the whole, I take the greatest pains to make myself out a scamp."

The youth colored. "That's me, of course."

"Wear the cap if it feels comfortable. And now, will you have some tea?" "Anything; I feel as thirsty as when you found me dragging myself to the brink of the Tchernaya. Hey, doctor, it would have saved me a deal of bother if you had never found me at all, except that it would vex the old governor to end the name and have the property all going to the dogs—that is, to Cousin Charitaria, who would not care how soon I was dead and buried."

"We are dead and buried if you please." "Confound it, to stop a man about his grammar when he is in my state of mind! Kept from his cigar too! Doctor, you never were in love, or a smoker."

"How do you know?" "Because you never could have given up the one or the other; a fellow can't; 'tis an impossibility."

"Is it I once smoked six cigars a day for two years."

"Eh! what? And you never let that out before? You are so close. Possibly the other fact will peep out in time. Mrs. Urquhart and half a dozen brats may be living in some out-of-the-way nook—Cornwall, or Jersey, or the centre of Salisbury Plain. Why, what? nay, I beg your pardon doctor."

What a horrible thing it is that by no physical effort, added to years of mental self-control, can I so harden my nerves that certain words, names, suggestions, shall not startle me—make me quiver as if under the knife. Doubtless Treherne will henceforth retain, so for as his easy mind can retain anything, the idea that I have a wife and family hidden somewhere. Ludicrous idea! If it were not connected with other ideas, from which, however, this one will serve to turn his mind.

To explain it away was of course impossible. I had only power to slip from the subject with a laugh, and bring him back to the tobacco question.

"Yes; I smoked six cigars a day for at least two years."

"And gave it up?" "Wonderful!" "Not very, when a man has a will of his own, and a few strong reasons to back it."

"Out with them—not that they will benefit me, however—I'm quite incorrigible."

"Doubtless. First, I was a poor medical student and six cigars per diem cost fourteen shillings a week—thirty-one pounds, eight shillings, a year. A good sum to give for an artificial want—enough to have fed and clothed a child."

"You're weak on the points of brats, Urquhart. Do you remember the little Russ we picked up in the cellar at Sebastopol? I do believe you'd have adopted and brought it home with you if it had not died."

Should I? But, as Treherne said, it died.

"Secondly, thirty-one pounds, eight shillings per annum was a good deal to give for a purely selfish enjoyment, annoying to almost everybody except the smoker, and at the time of smoking—especially when with said smoker it is sure to grow from a mere accidental enjoyment into an irresistible necessity—a habit to which he becomes the most utter slave. Now, a man is only half a man who allows himself to become the slave of any habit whatsoever."

"Bravo, doctor! all this should go into the *Lancet*."

"No, for it does not touch the question on the medical side, but the general and practical one—namely, how to create an unnecessary luxury, which is a nuisance to everybody else, and to himself of very

doubtful benefit, is—excuse me—the very silliest thing a young man can do. A thing which, from my own experience, I'll not aid and abet any young man in doing. There, lecture's over—kettle boiled—unless you prefer tobacco and the open air."

He did not; and we sat down, "four feet upon a fender," as the proverb says. "Heigho! but the proverb doesn't mean four feet in men's boots," said Treherne, dolefully. "I wish I was dead and buried."

I suggested that the light moustache he curled so fondly, the elegant hair, and the aristocratic outline of phiz. would look exceedingly well—in a coffin.

"Fugh! how unpleasant you are."

And I myself repented the speech; for it ill becomes a man under any provocation to make a jest of death. But that this young fellow, so full of life, with every attraction that it can offer—health, wealth, kindred, friends—should sit creaking there, with such a used-up, lack-a-daisical air, truly it irritated me.

"What's the matter, that you wish to rid the world of your valuable presence? Has the young lady expressed a similar desire?"

"She? hang her! I won't think any more about her," said the lad, sullenly. And then out poured the grand despair, the unendurable climax of mortal woe. "She cantered through the north camp this afternoon with Granton, Colin Granton, and upon Granton's own brown mare."

"Ha! horrible vision! And you! you! Watched them go; one horse was bit; the falls of both hung down behind. Their shoes were on their feet."

"Doctor!"

I stopped—there seemed more reality in his feelings than I had been aware of; and it is scarcely right to make a mock of even the fire-and-smoke, dust-and-sashes passion of a boy.

"I beg your pardon; not knowing the affair had gone so far. Still, it isn't worth being dead and buried for."

"What business has she to go riding with that big clodhopping lout? And what right has he to lend her his brown mare?" chafed Treherne, with a great deal more which I did not attend to.

At last weary of playing Friar Lawrence to such a very uninteresting Romeo, I hinted that if he disapproved of the young lady's behavior he ought to appeal to her own good sense, to her father, or somebody—or, since women understand one another best, get Lady Agusta Treherne to do it.

"My mother! She never even heard of her. Why, you speak as seriously as if I were actually intending to marry her."

Here I could not help rousing myself a trifle.

"Excuse me; it never struck me that a gentleman could discuss a young lady among his acquaintances, make a public show of his admiration for her, interfere with her proceedings or her conduct toward any other gentleman, and not intend to marry her. Suppose we choose another subject of conversation."

Treherne grew hot to the ears, but he took the hint and spared me his sentimental maunders.

We had afterward some interesting conversation about a few cases of mine in the neighborhood, not on the regular list of regimental patients, which have lately been to me a curious study. If I were inclined to quit the army, I believe the branch of my profession which I should take up would be that of sanitary reform—the study of health rather than of disease, of prevention rather than of cure. It often seems to me that we of the healing art have begun at the wrong end; that the energy we devote to the alleviation of irremediable disease would be better spent in the study and practice of means to preserve health.

Thus, I tried to explain to Treherne, who will have plenty of money and influence, and whom, therefore, it is worth while taking pains to inculcate with a few useful facts and ideas; that one half of our mortality in the Crimea was owing not to the accidents of war, but to the results of zymotic diseases, all of which might have been prevented by common sense and common knowledge of the laws of health, as the statistics of our sanitary commission have abundantly proved.

And as I told him, it saddens me, almost as much as doing my duty on a battle field, or at Scutari, or Renkioi, to take these amateur rounds in safe England, among what poets and politicians call the noble British peasantry, and see the frightful sacrifice of life—and worse than life—from causes perfectly remediable.

Take, for instance, these cases, as set down in my note book.

Amos Fell, 40, or thereabouts; down with fever for ten days; wife and five sons; occupy one room of a cottage on the Moor, which hold two other families. Says, would be glad to live in a better place, but cannot get it; landlord will not allow more cottages to be built. Would build himself a pent hut, but doubts if that would be permitted; so just goes on as well as he can.

Peck family, fever also, living at the filthiest end of the village; themselves about the dirtiest of it; with a stream rushing by fresh enough to wash and cleanse a whole town.

Widow Haynes, rheumatism, from field work, and lying in a damp room

with earthen floor, half underground; decent woman, gets half a crown a week from the parish; but will not be able to earn anything for months; and what is to become of all the children?

Treherne settled that question, and one or two more; poor fellow, his purse is as open as his heart just now; but among his other luxuries he may as well taste the luxury of giving. 'Tis good for him, he will be Sir Augustus one of these days. Is his goddess aware of that fact, I wonder?

What! is cynicism growing to be one of my vices? and against a woman too! One of whom I absolutely know nothing, except watching her for a few moments at a ball. She seems to be one of the usual sort of officers' belles in country quarters. Yet there may be something good in her. There was, I feel sure, in that large-eyed sister of hers. But let me not judge—I have never had any opportunity of understanding women.

This subject was not revived, till the tobacco-hunger proving too strong for him, my friend Romeo began to fidget, and finally rose.

"I say, doctor, you won't tell the governor—it would put him in an awful fume?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh! about Miss—, you know. I've been a great ass, I suppose, but when a girl is so civil to one—a fine girl, too—you saw her, did you not, dancing with me? Now, isn't she an uncommonly fine girl?"

I assented.

"And that Granton should get her, confound him! a great logger-headed country clown."

"Who is an honest man, and will make her a kind husband. Any other honest man who does not mean to offer himself as her husband, had much better avoid her acquaintance."

Treherne colored again; I saw he understood me, though he turned it off with a laugh.

You're preaching matrimony, doctor, surely. What an idea! to tie myself up at my age. I shan't do the ungentlemanly thing either. So good-night, old fellow."

He lounged out, with that lazy, self-satisfied air which is misnamed aristocratic. Yet I have seen many a one of these conceited, effeminate-looking, drawing-room darlings, a curled and scented modern Alcibiades—fight-like Alcibiades; and die as no Greek ever could die—like a Briton.

"Ungentlemanly"—what a word it is with most men, especially in the military profession. Gentlemen—the root and apex of all honor. Ungentlemanly—the lowest term of degradation. Such is our code of morals in the army; and, more or less, probably everywhere.

An officer I knew, who, for all I ever heard or noticed, was himself as true a gentleman as ever breathed; polished, kindly, manly, and brave, gave me once, in an argument on duelling, his definition of the word. A gentleman—"one who never does anything he is ashamed of, or that would compromise his honor."

Worldly honor, this colonel must have meant, for he considered it would have been compromised by a man's refusing to accept a challenge. That "honor" surely was a little lower than virtue: a little less pure than the Christianity which all of us profess, and so few believe. Yet there was something at once touching and heroic about it, and in the way this man of the world upheld it. The best of our British chivalry—as chivalry goes—is made up of materials such as these.

But is there not a higher morality—a divine honor? And if so, who is he that can find it?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A LADY'S REASONS FOR NOT DANCING.

1. Dancing would lead me into crowded rooms and late hours, which are injurious to health and usefulness.

2. Dancing would lead me into very close contact with very pernicious company, and evil communications corrupt good manners.

3. Dancing would require me to use and permit freedoms with the opposite sex of which I should be heartily ashamed, and which I believe to be wrong.

4. My parents and friends would be anxious about me if I were out late, keeping company with they know not whom.

5. Ministers and good people in general disapprove of dancing, and I think it is not safe to set myself against them. If a thing be even doubtful, I wish to be on the safe side.

6. Dancing has a bad name, and I mean to study things that are pure and lovely and of good report.

7. Dancing is generally accompanied with drinking, and I see drinking produces a great deal of evil.

8. I am told dancing is a great temptation and snare to young men, and I do not wish to have anything to do with leading them astray.

9. Dancing unites the mind for serious reflection and prayer, and I mean to do nothing that will estrange me from my God and Saviour.

10. There are plenty of graceful exercises and cheerful amusements which have none of the objections connected with them that lie against dancing.

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