

Choice Literature.

One Life Only.

CHAPTER XVII.

Una had listened to Atherstone with varying expressions of hope and fear and disquietude chasing each other over her mobile face, and when he paused and seemed to devour her with his eyes in breathless anxiety for her answer, she turned to him with an almost piteous look of distress. "I still can hardly understand what it is you mean me to do, surely you do not ask me to pronounce on a question of right and wrong without knowing to what it refers."

"My darling," he said eagerly, "the matter is so simple that I am sure you need not hesitate to decide upon it, merely to relieve me from the responsibility of seeking my own happiness at the cost of ever so fanciful an idea of almost impossible honour, for since I have learned to love you so utterly, so wildly as I now do, I have lost the power of being a law to myself, or seeing clearly where the line of justice may be drawn. Therefore it is that I have staked the whole issue on your decision, and if you will but say to me that your own precious life would be saddened by our separation, I should feel amply satisfied, that I am not bound to strain after the romantic chivalry of less enlightened days at such a cost."

Still the large eyes looked wistfully in his face and the sweet lips trembled, but were silent.

He caught her hands in his. "My darling Una! it would be for your happiness as for mine that you should come to me, would it not? say only that I have not deceived myself in this?—you do love me?"

"Oh yes," she whispered softly. "Then come to me," he said, drawing her closer to him, "let us for ever forget all doubts and obstacles. I do not now ask of you any decision as to right or wrong, I only beseech of you to let me love you all my life, to come home to my heart for ever!"

She had been confused and bewildered by his ambiguous words, by his half-defined hints of some deviation from truth and justice which would be involved in a union with him whom she loved with the whole power of her being, but there was no mistaking the meaning of this last earnest prayer—he was but asking her to crown herself no less than him with uttermost joy; to receive, at the same moment that she gave, the highest happiness she could imagine on this earth; to secure herself for evermore from the dreary, hopeless wretchedness of life apart from him, and she all but yielded. The longing to chase away all clouds of sadness from that beloved face impelled her irresistibly to utter the glad consent already trembling on her lips; but suddenly, at this crisis of her fate, the strange sentence of warning once spoken to her and half forgotten, came echoing back upon her inner sense: "Remember, you have one life only, for good or ill," and with the words came the recollection of her own bold, confident assertion, that she would make this one life noble, whether happy or not—that it should be great and pure at any cost. And was she now about to decide for herself and another, that they should tamper with justice in any shape or way to gratify themselves? was she going to drag this man down from his own high standard as well as from hers? At the bitter thought her heart stood still, a struggle rose within her which was almost unbearable, and faintly she gasped out, "My happiness is bound up in yours, I do not deny it; but did you not say that until now you have believed the highest honour held you to your resolution?"

"Oh, Una, let it go! it was but a visionary fancy, it can weigh nothing against your life and mine; do you think I can endure to lose you now?"

"I cannot lead you to fall from principle," she said; "you yourself would one day hate me for it."

"Never, darling—never!" he exclaimed, clasping her hands almost fiercely in his own. "Let me but have you, and the whole world, with all that men deem best and greatest in it, were well lost to me!"

"Not honour—not honour," she said, "keep honour and let me go. Yes! if need be let me die! but never let me be to you a source of wrong or failure," and with a violent effort she tore herself out of his grasp and rushed from the room.

Whatever might have been the obligations by which Humphrey Atherstone believed himself to be bound previous to this last interview with Una Dysart, they were now all swept away, as though they had never been, by the fierce tide of feeling which had completely overwhelmed him, and drowned all thought or care for anything on earth, but to win her swiftly and surely as his wife, from whom nothing in the whole wide universe should separate him more.

He was too completely overwhelmed by her sudden disappearance when she struggled out of his grasp and fled away, to give a moment's consideration to the motives which impelled her thus to do violence to the love she had confessed, he only knew that he would not give her up—that she was and ever should be his, by all the strength of his will, and he could not even bring himself to leave the house until he had seen her once again, and forced from her lips the promise that she would fling aside all scruples as completely as he had done himself. He sent message after message to entreat that she would come and speak to him for but one moment; and at last when the astonished servants quite failed to satisfy him with the answers they conveyed, Una's own maid brought him a note, which contained these words: "Do not ask to see me again—at least to-day; I cannot bear it." Then slowly and reluctantly he left the house, but it was with the indomitable resolution that the obstacle he himself had been made enough, as he now thought, to raise, in her mind, should not have the power to separate them ultimately, happen what might.

Meanwhile Una, flung across her bed with her face buried on the pillows, was giving way to a passionate agony, which was making her feel, almost with despair, the great power of the love which had taken possession of her whole being. By

a desperate struggle in that last critical moment of their interview, she had retained her hold of the nobleness and rectitude which she had resolved should at least glorify the only life she had to spend, by whatever else of joy or sorrow it might be marked; but now she felt like one who comes out of a great battle wounded and bruised, and knows that all strength is gone to carry on the fight, or even almost to retain the victory won, it was nothing to her comparatively that she had doomed her own soul to desert, or wickedness for the rest of her days, but it seemed simply impossible to endure the consciousness that she had at the same time condemned to hopeless solitude the man for whose happiness she would have died.

What need to describe the terrible night the poor child passed? Is there one amongst us who has not known at some time or other what it is to lie down at night, dead beat—not with physical fatigue, but with some heavy wave of life which has gone right over our head, and knocked us down, shattered and exhausted, to feel only the weary longing to close our eyes for ever in the light of day?

How many such nights are passed in secrecy and silence by those who, with the dawn of morning, find just so much of returning courage as enables them to tie on their mask once more, and go out into the world without revealing the hidden gnawing at their heart-strings! The call to do this came next day to Una, almost before she had brought herself to feel that it was possible to live again at all.

When her maid came into the room, ostensibly to awaken her who had not known even a moment's forgetfulness in sleep, she told Una that Colonel Dysart's valet had been startled that morning at finding his master in a fainting-fit, and that it had been some little time before he could restore him to consciousness.

This account altered completely for the moment the whole current of Una's thoughts. She was greatly attached to her father, and had of late more than once felt some uneasiness at indications of failing health, which Colonel Dysart, however, always tried to conceal. Without waiting even to finish her toilet, she flew away to his room, in her long white dressing-gown, with her beautiful hair hanging round her like a veil. She found her father dressed and sitting at the open window, looking much as usual. He seemed somewhat troubled at the evident alarm which had brought her so hastily to his presence, and animated with a good deal of irritation on the gossiping propensities of servants.

"I particularly wished that you should not be disturbed, Una. It was a mere temporary faintness, which is quite gone, and I would rather you had heard nothing about it, especially as you are looking very ill yourself, child. What is the matter with you? I never saw you with so white a face or such heavy eyes. They told me last night you had gone to bed with a headache, but it must have been a very bad one to alter you so much."

"My head does ache, and I have not slept well, but that is nothing; I want to be sure that there is no serious cause for your fainting-fit. What can have brought it on? are you sure you are well again now?"

"Can you not see that I am?" he answered. "Do not think any more about it; I feel nothing but the wish to get as much fresh air as I can. You shall drive me out in the pony carriage after breakfast, and we will go a good long way and spend the day out of doors; you need it more than I do. I hope a good breeze will bring the colour back to your face; I do not like your appearance at all to-day—your very lips are white."

"I shall be pleased to go with you, dear father," was all she said as she stooped over him and kissed him, and then went back to her room to dress, and she was glad at the prospect of being out all day, for it would at least defer a few hours longer any renewal of the struggle between herself and Atherstone—or rather, in truth, between herself and the love that had become almost too powerful for her strength. Breakfast was soon over; Colonel Dysart appeared to have little appetite, and Una, with her parched lips and heavy head, had none. But it was a glorious summer day, with a fresh wind blowing, which seemed to excite Una's skittish ponies to a superabundance of high spirits, that caused them to prance and curvet at the door, till she and her father were ready to start, and then compelled her to give her whole attention to restraining their impetuous gait.

Colonel Dysart had arranged that they were to go to a picturesque village, some ten miles off, and have luncheon there, returning home in the evening, and Una had acquiesced without a word; she only so far regretted his choice of a route that it led them past the gate of Atherstone Abbey, and she dreaded beyond words the possible pain of a chance meeting with its master. None such occurred, however. As they skirted the massive old wall which separated the beautiful grounds from the roads, she noticed her willing ponies to their utmost speed, and they bounded past so quickly that it scarcely flashed on her sight till they were far beyond it. Then she slackened her pace and went on to the distant village. It so happened that her precautions had been only just in time, for the echo of her wheels had hardly died away when Humphrey Atherstone rode through the gate, and put his great black horse to its swiftest gallop in order to reach Vale House; whence he returned, however, moody and miserable, to wait with impatience for the evening, when he meant to try his fate again, and make another determined effort to see Una.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Meanwhile Colonel Dysart and his daughter strolled about on the fair little English hamlet where they had lunched, and at last sat down on the banks of a sparkling streamlet flowing through it. Una was too wretched to notice the charming landscape, and she felt as if she had scarcely energy to answer her father when he spoke to her. He too, however, was unusually silent, and when he did speak it was entirely on the subject of the earlier days of his married life, to which he had never before alluded since the death of his

wife. Even though all the heavy load that hung over her heart, Una noticed with some surprise the vivid manner with which he recalled the most trifling incidents of his wedding-day, and the pleasure which he seemed to find in lingering over his description of them.

"You cannot imagine how lovely your mother looked," he said, "as she walked down the church-path over the flowers the village people had scattered beneath her feet, her white robes glittering in the sun, and her beautiful veiled face seeming like a star shining through a silver mist. She had orange blossoms in her hair, and a little spring for down just at my feet, when she stopped at the carriage door to speak for a moment to the crowd that had assembled to bid her farewell, and she smiled when she saw me pick it up and take possession of it. But Una, I have it yet." His voice faltered, and his daughter looked round at him in utter amazement. Could it be her doubtless, cynical father who was speaking thus? Colonel Dysart noticed her surprised glance and understood it. "You did not think I could be so sentimental, did you, child? but you will learn some day, as all living mortals do learn, that it is not over the dead alone the words 'dust to dust' ought to be sounded. Whatever theoretic possibilities of greatness or glory there may be for our complex nature, it is to human love alone, in its shrine of perishable clay, that, in this world at least, we cling, one and all, as to the very essence of life; and when it is gone from us into the grave, or the yet colder regions of betrayal and oblivion; there is nothing left but a mere empty husk of existence which is as valueless to ourselves as to others."

His voice died away, as if he had finished with the subject, and he remained apparently in dreamy contemplation of the stream that was rushing swiftly past them with its murmuring song, and Una could not rouse herself to break the silence, for the dull pain gnawing at her own heart was becoming almost unbearable. She could not face the future; she dared not let her thoughts rest on the present, which showed her but one image, that of Atherstone, hopeless and wretched in his lonely home; and the past, before she knew him, was as though it had never been. Where could she turn, poor child, to deaden the keen anguish that was consuming her?

"It is getting late, dear father; had we not better turn homewards?" she said. He slowly lifted his eyes and fixed them on the glowing western sky, where the sun had just sunk behind the soft clouds that had caught the radiance of his departing glory.

"Yes," he said, "it is time. I will go home."

The carriage was waiting for them at a little distance, and Una beckoned to the groom to bring it near. Colonel Dysart took his seat in silence, and by the time she had gathered up the reins and driven off, he seemed to have relapsed into the reverie from which she had awakened him.

The ponies, well aware that they were on their way home, carried them along the road at a rapid pace, and soon Una's heart began to beat fast with the consciousness that she was once more rapidly approaching Atherstone Abbey. It was still quite light, and the chance of a meeting with Humphrey was even greater than it had been in the morning, so that her whole mind was occupied with this one possibility, and she had not for some minutes glanced towards her father, when the groom, who sat behind her, bent forward, exclaiming, "Oh, ma'am! you had better stop; I think my master's very ill." Then she looked round in terror and saw that Colonel Dysart had fallen back, with his head drooping to the side, perfectly insensible. His face was ghastly; his whole appearance lifeless; and the terrible conviction came upon her like a thunder-bolt, that he was even then dying, if not dead. She let the reins fall, not knowing what she did, and had not the groom sprung to the ponies' heads, there might have been a serious accident; but he succeeded in checking them, and she busied herself in loosening her father's cravat and raising his head, while she called upon him by every endearing name to wake up and speak to her. There was no answer or movement from the unconscious man. The servant saw that she was in too wild a state of alarm and consternation to be able to think calmly what course it would be best to take in the emergency, and he therefore more slowly hastily, "I had better drive up to the Abbey, ma'am; and jumping on the foot-board he seized the reins and shouted "gate" so vigorously, that the lodge-keeper ran to open it without a moment's delay; and Una, holding her dying father in her arms, had reached the door of Humphrey Atherstone's home, before she knew in the least where she was. But even when she did perceive that she had been brought to the very spot where she had most feared to come, she could think of nothing but her father, who only by a faint occasional gasp showed that he still lived.

Humphrey Atherstone had been walking up and down the courtyard, waiting for his horse, with the intention of going once more to Vale House, and remaining there doggedly till, by fair means or foul, he had obtained an interview with Una, when suddenly, as with folded arms he strolled moodily from side to side, there was a sound of wheels coming slowly over the bridge, and in another moment she was borne into his very presence; the soft glow of the twilight showing her pale beautiful face, bending with a look of agony over the prostrate form of her father.

Atherstone understood it all in a moment. Calling hastily for his servants, he was by Una's side before she had time to look up. "Courage, darling," he whispered, "trust all to me; we will do the best we can for him, in every way." And without another word he lifted her with the utmost tenderness out of the carriage, keeping his arm round her as she stood trembling and faint with fear by his side, while under his directions the servants raised Colonel Dysart and carried him into the house. The sense of help and protection was unspeakably soothing to Una; but she could neither collect her thoughts, nor realize anything but the death-like face from which she never removed her eyes. She followed with Atherstone as her father

was borne into the nearest room, which happened to be the very same old hall in which they had so lately all been assembled, in careless enjoyment. Long couches covered with red velvet lined both sides of this vast room, and on one of these the helpless man was laid, while Una falling on her knees beside him tried once more to rouse him by every means in her power. The carriage had at once, by Atherstone's orders, been sent back for the doctor, and the groom made such good speed, that it was not much more than an hour before he returned with Dr. Burton.

During the interval every possible effort had been made by Atherstone and his servants to restore consciousness, but Colonel Dysart remained in the same state apparently, just breathing, and no more. When the doctor at last came in, Una rose from her knees and turned to him with a look of dumb piteous appeal, utterly unable to speak, and then whispered to Atherstone, "Take Miss Dysart into another room."

Humphrey went towards her, and taking her hand, drew her gently away. She had not strength to resist, but she looked up at him beseechingly, while her pale lips moved with an inarticulate murmur; then he passed his arm round her and whispered, "My own darling, trust me," and without an attempt at further remonstrance, she followed him into the next room. He placed her on the sofa, and still holding her hand, sat down beside her. She did not move or speak, but remained in an attitude of the utmost dejection, her graceful head drooping like that of a broken flower; and it was with no small difficulty that Atherstone restrained himself from pouring out to her all the thoughts and feelings which had filled his whole soul since he last saw her, and of which she herself had been the sole object. But he had too much chivalrous delicacy to breathe a word of love to her at such a moment, so he merely bent down and kissed repeatedly the little cold hand that lay so helpless in his own, till Dr. Burton at last appeared at the door and made a sign that he wished to speak to him.

"Colonel Dysart is dying," he said in a low voice, drawing Humphrey into the deep embrasure of a window, where Una could not hear him; "the case is perfectly hopeless, and his condition is no surprise to me, for he has been consulting me unknown to his daughter for some weeks past, and I quite anticipated a sudden termination to his malady."

"Is he end very near?"

"Very; I feel sure he will not pass the night. I dare say you are aware of the fact that from two to three in the morning is the most fatal hour for the dying. I think I may safely predict that he will not live beyond that time."

"Ought we attempt to move him?"

"It could only hasten his death. I have placed him in the position in which he can lie most easily, and there is nothing whatever to be done but to let him remain undisturbed while life ebbs away. Attempted remedies would only torture him; but it would be well if you could get Miss Dysart to go to bed and spare herself the last painful scene."

"I fear that will not be possible," said Atherstone; and as he spoke he felt a light touch on his arm, and turning round, saw Una standing at his side, her sweet mournful face gleaming white out of the surrounding shadows, and her large wide-open eyes fixed on Dr. Burton.

"I must know all the truth," she said, grasping Atherstone's arm to support herself; "do not try to deceive me; the greatest kindness you can show me is to let me know what I have to expect."

The doctor hesitated, and then she lifted her appealing eyes to Atherstone, saying, "You will not fail me?"

He bent down and answered, "Dr. Burton says we must not cherish any hope, and that we can do nothing but watch by him till the end comes."

"How soon?" she asked with a gasp; and he replied at once, "Before the morning."

"Then do not make me lose another moment of these last precious hours of his life," she said; and breaking from them, she flew back into the room where Colonel Dysart lay, and sank down once more by his side with his cold hand firmly clasped in hers.

Atherstone arranged that Dr. Burton was to remain in the house till morning, in case his services were required, either for the dying man or his daughter; and having sent tidings of what had occurred to Vale House, he hastened to join Una in her sorrowful vigil.

(To be continued.)

A Beautiful Thought.

The sea is the brightest of all cemeteries, and its slumbers sleep without a monument. All other graveyards in other lands show some distinction between the great and the small, the rich and the poor; but in the great ocean cemetery the king and the clown, prince and peasant, are alike distinguished. The same waves roll over all; the same requiem by minstrels of the ocean is sung to their honor. Over their remains the same sun shines, and there, unmarked, the weak and the powerful, the plumed and unadorned, will sleep on until awakened by the same trumpet.

MR. SPURGEON doesn't believe in keeping politics out of the pulpit. In one of his prayers, lately, he thus expressed himself: "And, O God, give our senators wisdom, especially at this critical time. Let not the extraordinary folly of our rulers lead our country into war, and change our rulers, O God, as soon as possible."

WHEN we are full of heavenly love we are best fitted to bear with human infirmity, to live above it and forget its burden. It is the absence of love to Christ, not the fullness, that makes us so impatient of the weakness and inconsistencies of our Christian brethren. Then, when Christ is all our portion, when he dwells with us and in us, we have so satisfying an enjoyment of his perfection that the imperfections of others are, as it were, swallowed up, and the sense of our own nothingness makes us insensible to that which is irritating in individual feeling and habits.

Scientific and Useful.

TRIFLES.

Roll out rich puff paste a quarter of an inch thick, brush over with icing, as made for cake; then cut in strips four inches long and one wide, and bake delicately.

WARTS.

"These may be removed," says a celebrated physician, "by rubbing them night and morning, with a moistened piece of marble of ammi lila. They soften and dwindle away, leaving no such mark as follows their destruction with lunar caustic."

REMOVE DANDRUFF.

Put one ounce of flowers of sulphur into one quart of water, agitate often for several hours, then pour off the clear liquid and saturate the head with it every morning. This does not produce the extreme dryness sometimes occasioned by the continued use of borax.

BRAN TEA.

A very cheap and useful drink in colds, fevers and restlessness from pain. Put a handful of bran in a pint and a half of cold water, let it boil rather more than half an hour, then strain it, and, if desired, flavor with sugar and lemon juice, but it is a pleasant drink without any addition.

FROSTED CURRANTS.

Pick fine even bunches and dip them, one at a time, into a mixture of frothed white of egg and a very little cold water. Drain them till nearly dry and dip them in pulverized sugar. Repeat the dip in sugar once or twice, and lay them upon white paper to dry. They will soon make a beautiful garnish for jellies and Charlottes, and look well heaped in a dish.

COCONUT PUDDING.

Break the cocoanut and save the milk; peel off the brown skin and grate the cocoanut very fine. Take the same weight of cocoanut, fine white sugar and butter; rub the butter and sugar to a cream, and add five eggs, well beaten, one cup of cream, the milk of the cocoanut and a little grated lemon. Line a dish with rich paste, put in the pudding and bake it one hour. Cover the rim with paper, if necessary.

GLASS CEMENT.

A cement to stop cracks in glass vessels, to resist moisture and heat, is made by dissolving caseine in a cold saturated solution of borax. With this solution, paste strips of hog's or bullock's bladder, softened in water, on the cracks of glass, and dry at a gentle heat. If the vessel is to be heated coat the bladder on the outside, just before it has become quite dry, with a paste of a rather concentrated solution of soda and quicklime, or plaster of Paris.

CHICKEN PIE.

Out up a chicken, boil it until tender, take out the meat, simmer down the gravy to a pint, add three pints of milk and one-half pound of butter; two tablespoonfuls of flour, a little salt; bring the gravy to a boil; line a tin pan with a crust made by taking one-fourth as much butter as sour milk, and a little soda and flour, to make a nice paste; line the tin pan, put in the meat, pour over it the gravy, put on a top crust, leave a vent, and bake two hours and a half.

FLOATING ISLAND.

Separate the whites from the yolks of six eggs, and put the whites in a very large bowl; beat the yolks smooth, and pour upon them one quart of sweetened milk well boiled, stirring to the right until the consistency of cream; a little salt in the custard; to flavor, pare the yellow rind of a lemon as an apple is pared, and drop it into the boiling milk; let the custard become cold. For the float, beat the whites with one very large tablespoonful of currant jelly until the whip or egg beater will stand erect. Any other kind of jelly is too sweet and insipid. Drop the float on the custard. If properly beaten it will pile very high.

FRICASSEE OF LAMB OUTLETS.

Cut a leg of lamb into thin outlets across the grain, and put them into a stewpan. In the meantime make some good broth with the bones—enough to cover the meat. Put the whole into a stewpan, and cover it with a bundle of sweet herbs, an onion, a few cloves, and some mace tied in a muslin rag, and stew them gently for ten minutes. Take out the outlets and skim of the fat, also take out the sweet herbs and mace. Thicken with butter rolled in flour. Season with salt and a little pepper. Put a few mushrooms and some forcemeat balls, three eggs beaten up in half a pint of cream, and some nutmeg grated. Keep stirring it one way till thick and smooth, then put in the outlets. Give them a turn with a fork and lay them in a dish. Pour the sauce over them, and garnish with beetroots and lemon.

WHY AND WHEN LAMPS EXPLODE.

The *Scientific American* gives a catalogue of causes of the explosion of coal-oil lamps, from which it seems there can be no possible exemption (from the liability of an explosion and its dreadful consequences, however carefully one may guard against such a calamity. The introduction of a new and safer illuminating agent will be an inestimable blessing to the world: 1. A lamp may be standing on a table or mantel, and a slight puff of air from the open window, or sudden opening of a door, may cause an explosion. 2. A lamp may be taken up quickly from a table or mantel and instantly explode. 3. A lamp is taken into an entry where there is a strong draught, or out of doors, and explosion ensues. 4. A lighted lamp is taken up a flight of stairs, or is raised quickly to place it on the mantel, resulting in an explosion. In all these cases the mischief is done by the air movement—either by suddenly checking the draught, or forcing the air down the chimney against the flame. 5. Blowing down the chimney to extinguish the light is a frequent cause of explosion. 6. Lamp explosions have been caused by using a chimney broken off at the top, or one that has a piece broken out, whereby the draught is variable and the flame unsteady. 7. Sometimes a thoughtless person puts a small sized wick in a large lamp, thus leaving a considerable gap at the edges of the wick. 8. When the air draught closes, the flame is extinguished, and the lamp is continued in use, and the explosion.