

A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

BY MISS MULLOCK.

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and shall do that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

CHAPTER I.

Yes, I hate soldiers.

I can't help writing it—it relieves my mind. All morning have we been driving about that horrid region into which our beautiful, desolate moor has been transmogrified; round and round; up and down; in at the south camp and out at the north camp; directed hither and thither by muddle-headed privates; staid at by pappyish young officers; checked with chimney-smoke; jolted over roads laid with ashes—or no roads at all—and pestered everywhere with the sight of lounging, lazy red groups—that color is becoming to me a perfect eye-sore! What a treat it is to get home and look myself in my own room—the tiniest and safest nook in all Beckmount—and spurt out my wrath in the blackest of ink with the boldest of pens. Bless you (query, who can I be blessing, for nobody will ever read this), what does it matter? And after all, I repeat, it relieves my mind.

I do hate soldiers. I always did from my youth up, till the war of the East startled everybody like a thunder-clap. What a time it was—this time two years ago? How the actual romance of each day, as set down in the newspapers, made my old romance read like mere balderdash; how the present, in its infinite pitifulness, its tangible horror, and the awfulness of what they called it "glory," cast the tame past altogether into shade? Who read anything but that fearful "Times"?

And now it is all gone by; we have peace again; and this 20th of September, 1866, I begin with my birthday a new journal (capital one, too, with a frigate lock and key, saved out of my summer bonnet, which I didn't buy). Nor need I spoil the day—as once—by crying over those, who, two years since,

Red Alma's heights to glory.

Conscience, tender over dead heroes, feels not the smallest compunction in writing the angry initiatory lines, when she thinks of that odious camp which has been established near us, for the education of the military mind, and the hardening of the military body. Whence red-coats swarm out over the pretty neighborhood like lady-birds over the hop gardens—harmless, it is true, yet forever flying in one's face in the most unpleasant manner, and making inroads through one's parlor windows, and crawling over one's tea-table. Wretched red insects! except that the act would be murder, I often wish I could put half a dozen of them, swords, epaulets, mustaches, and all, under the heel of my shoe.

Perhaps this is obstinacy, or the love of contradiction. No wonder. Do I hear of anything but soldiers from morning till night? At visits or dinner-parties can I speak to a soul—and 'tis not much I do speak to anybody—but that she (I use the pronoun advisedly) is sure to bring in with her second sentence something about "the camp"!

I'm sick of the camp. Would that my sisters were! For Lisabel, young and handsome, there is some excuse, but Penelope—she ought to know better.

Papa is determined to go with us to the Grants' ball to-night. I wish there were no necessity for it; and have suggested, as strongly as I could, that we should stay at home. But what of that? Nobody ever did that I ever remember. So poor papa is to be dragged out from his cozy arm-chair, joggled and tumbled across these wintery moors, and stuck up solemn in a corner of the drawing-room—being kept carefully out of the card-room because he happens to be a clergyman. And all the while he will wear his politest and most inimitable of smiles, just as if he liked it. Oh, why cannot people say what they mean, and do as they wish? Why must they be tied and bound with horrible chains of etiquette even at the age of seventy? Why cannot he say, "young ladies," "I had far rather stay at home; go you and enjoy yourselves," or better still, "go, two of you, but I want Dora."

No, he never will say that. He never did want any of us much; me less than any. I am neither eldest nor youngest, neither Miss Johnson nor Miss Lisabel, only Miss Dora—Theodora—"the gift of God," as my little bit of Greek taught me. A gift—what for and to whom? I declare, since I was a baby, since I was a little solitary ugly child, wondering if I ever had a mother like other children, since even I have been a woman grown, I never have been able to find out.

Well, I suppose it is no use to try to alter things. Papa will go his own way, and the girls theirs. They think the grand climax of existence is "society," he thinks the same, at least for young women, properly introduced, escorted, and protected there. So, as the three Misses Johnson—sweet, fluttering doves—have no other caper or protector, he makes a martyr of himself on the shrine of paternal duty, *alias* respectability, and goes

The girls have called me down to admire them. Yes, they looked extremely well; Lisabel, majestic, slow, and fair; I doubt if anything in this world would disturb the equanimity of her sleepy blue eyes and soft-tempered mouth—a large, mild, beautiful animal, like a white Brahme cow. Very much admired is our Lisabel, and no wonder. That white barge will kill half the officers in the camp. She was going to put on her pink one, but I suggested how ill pink would look against scarlet, and so, after a series of sitters, Miss Lis took my advice. She is evidently bent upon looking her best to-night.

Penelope, also; but I wish Penelope would not wear such airy dresses, and such a quantity of artificial flowers, while her curls are so thin and her teeth so sharp. She used to have very pretty hair ten years ago. I remember being excitedly shocked and fierce about a curl of hers that I saw stolen in the summer-house, by Francis Charteris, when we found out that they were engaged.

She rather expected him to-night, I fancy. Mrs. Granton was sure to have invited him with us; but of course, he has not come. He never did come, in my recollection, when he said he would. I ought to go and dress; but I can do it in ten minutes, and it is not worth while wasting more time. Those two girls—what a capital foil each makes to the other!—little, dark, lively—not to say satirical; large, amiable, and fair. Papa ought to be proud of them—I suppose he is.

Heigho! 'Tis a good thing to be good-looking. And next best, perhaps is downright ugliness—nice, interesting, attractive ugliness—such as I have seen in some women; nay, I have somewhere read that ugly women have often been loved best.

But to be just ordinary; of ordinary height, ordinary figure, and, oh me; let me lift up my head from the desk to the looking-glass, and take a good stare at an undeniably ordinary face. 'Tis not pleasant. Well; I am as I was made; let me not undervalue myself, if only out of reverence for Him who made me.

Surely—Captain Treherne's voice below. Does that young man expect to be taken to the ball in our fly? Truly, he is making himself one of the family already. And there is papa calling us. What will papa say?

Why, he said nothing; and Lisabel, as she swept slowly down the staircase with a little silver lamp in her right hand, likewise said nothing; but she looked—"Everybody is lovely to somebody," says the proverb. Query, if anybody I could name should live to the age of Methuselah, will she ever be lovely to anybody?

What nonsense! Bravo! thou wert in the right of it, jolly miller of Dee!

"I care for nobody, no, not I; and nobody cares for me."

So let me look up my desk and dress for the ball. Really, not a bad ball; even now—when looked at in the light of next day's quiet—with the leaves stirring lazily in the fir-trees by my window, and the broad sunshine brightening the moorlands far away.

Not a bad ball, even to me, who usually am stoically contemptuous of such senseless amusements; doubtless from the mean motive that I like dancing, and am rarely asked to dance; that I am just five-and-twenty, and get no more attention than if I were five-and-forty. Of course, I protest continually that I don't care a pin for this fact (mean, mean again). For I do care—at the very bottom of my heart, I do. Many a time have I leaped my head here—good old desk, you will tell no tales! and cried, actually cried—with the pain of being neither pretty, agreeable, nor young.

Moralists say, it is every woman's power to be in a measure all three; that when she is not liked or admired—or some few at least—it is a sign that she is neither likeable nor admirable. Therefore, I suppose I am neither. Probably very disagreeable. Penelope often says so, in her sharp, and Lisabel in her lazy way. Lisabel would apply the same expression to a gnat on her waist, or a dagger pointed at her heart. A "thoroughly amiable woman." Now, I never was—never shall be—an amiable woman.

To return to the ball—and really I would not mind returning to it and having it all over again, which is more than one can say of many hours of our lives, especially of those which roll so rapidly as hours seem to roll after five-and-twenty. It was exceedingly amusing. Large, well-lit rooms, filled with well-dressed people; we do not often make such a goodly show in our country entertainments; but then the Grants know everybody. Nobody would do that but dear old Mrs. Granton, and "my Colin," who, if he has not three pennyworth of brains, has the kindest heart and the heaviest purse in the whole neighborhood.

I am sure Mrs. Granton must have felt proud of her handsome suite of rooms, quite a perambulatory parterre, boasting all the hues of the rainbow, subdued by the proper complement of inevitable black. By-and-by, as the evening advanced, dot after dot of the adored scarlet made its appearance round the doors, completed the coloring of the scene.

They were most effective when viewed at a distance—these scarlet dots. Some of them were very young and very small; wore their short hair—regulation cut—exceedingly straight, and did not seem quite comfortable in their clothes.

"Militia, of course," I overheard a lady observe, who apparently knew all about it. "None of our officers wear uniform when they can avoid it."

But these young lads seemed uncommonly proud of theirs, and strutted and sidled about the door, very valorous and magnificent; until caught and dragged to their destiny—in the shape of some fair partner; when they immediately relaxed into shyness and awkwardness—nay, I might add—stupidity; but were they not the hopeful defenders of their country, and did not their noble swords lie idle at this moment on the safest resting-place—Mrs. Granton's billiard-table?

I watched the scene out of my corner in a state of dreamy amusement; mingled with a vague curiosity as to how long I should be left to sit solitary there, and whether it would be very dull, if "with gazing feet"—including a trifle of supper—I thus had to spend the entire evening.

Mrs. Granton came bustling up. "My dear girl—are you not dancing?" "Apparently not," said I, laughing, and trying to catch her, and make room for her. Vain attempt! Mrs. Granton never will sit down while there is anything that she thinks can be done for anybody. In a moment she would have been buzzing all round the room like an amiable bee in search of some unfortunate youth upon whom to inflict me as a partner—but not even my desire of dancing would allow me to sink so low as that.

For safety I ran after, and attacked the good old lady on one of her weak points. Luckily she caught the bait, and we were soon safely landed on the great blanket, beef, and anti-beer distribution question, now shaking our parish to its very foundations. I am ashamed to say, though the rector's daughter, it is very little I know about our parish. And though at first I rather repented of my *ruse*, seeing that Mrs. Granton's deafness made both her remarks and my answers most unpleasantly public, gradually I became so interested in what she was telling me, that we must have kept on talking nearly twenty minutes, when some one called the old lady away.

My mind and eyes followed her with a half sigh, considering whether at sixty I shall have all the activity, or cheerfulness, or kindness of her dear old self. No one broke it upon my meditations. Papa's white head was visible in a distant doorway; for the girls, they had long since vanished in the whirligig. I caught at times a glimpse of Penelope's rose-clouds of tartletan, her pale face, and ever smiling white teeth, that contrast ill with her restless black eyes; it is always rather painful to me to watch my oldest sister at parties. And now and then Lisabel came floating, moonlike, through the room, almost obscuring my yet appressed queue content in his occupation. He also seemed to be of my opinion that scarlet and white were the best of colors, for I did not see him make the slightest attempt to dance with any lady but Lisabel.

Several people, I noticed, looked at them and smiled; and one lady whispered something about "poor clergyman's daughter" and "Sir William Treherne."

I felt hot in my very temples. Oh, if we were all in Paradise, or a nunnery, or some place where there was neither thinking nor making of marriages!

I determined to catch Lisa when the waltz was done. She waltzes well, even gracefully, for a tall woman—but I wished, I wished—my wish was cut short by a collision which made me start up with an idea of rushing to the rescue; however, the next moment Treherne and she had recovered their balance and were spinning on again. Of course I sat down immediately.

But my looks must be terrible tell-tales, since some one behind me said, as plain as if in answer to my thoughts: "Pray be satisfied; the lady could not have been in the least hurt."

I was surprised; for, though the voice was polite, even kind, people do not, at least in our country society, address a lady without an introduction. I answered civilly, of course, but it must have been with some stiffness of manner, for the gentleman said:

"Pardon me; I concluded it was your sister who slipped, and that you were uneasy about her," bowed, and immediately moved away.

I felt uncomfortable; uncertain whether to take any notice of him or not; wondering who it was that had used the unwonted liberty of speaking to me—a stranger—and whether it would have been committing myself in any way to venture more than a bow or a "Thank you."

At last common sense settled the matter. "Dora Johnston," thought I, "is no more a simpleton. Do you consider yourself so much better than your fellow-creatures that you hesitate at returning a civil answer to a civil remark—meant kindly, too—because you, forsooth, like the French gentleman who was entreated to save another gentleman from drowning—should have been most happy, but have never been introduced? What! girl, is this your sort of conventionalty—your grand habit of thinking and judging for yourself—your noble independence of all the follies of society? Phe! ha!"

To punish myself for my cowardice, I determined to turn round and look at the gentleman.

The punishment was not severe. He had a good face, brown and dark; a thin, spare, wiry figure; an air somewhat formal. His eyes were grave, yet not without a lurking spirit of humor, which seemed to have clearly penetrated, and he was rather amused by my foolish embarrassment and ridiculous indecision. This vexed me for the moment; then I smiled—we both smiled, and began to talk.

Of course, it would have been different had he been a young man, but he was not. I should think he was nearly forty. At this moment Mrs. Granton came up, with her usual pleased look when she thinks other people are pleased with one another, and said, in that friendly manner that makes everybody else feel friendly together also:

"A partner, I see. That's right, Miss Dora. You shall have a quadrille in a minute, doctor."

Doctor! I felt relieved. He might have been worse—perhaps, from his beard, even a camp officer.

"Our friend takes things too much for granted," he said, smiling. "I believe I must introduce myself. My name is Urquhart."

Dr. Urquhart spoke at last.

"So, as I overheard you say to Mrs. Granton, you 'hate soldiers.' 'Hate' is a strong word—for a Christian woman. My own weapons turned upon me.

"Yes, I hate soldiers because my principles, instincts, observations, confirm me in the justice of my dislike. In peace they are idle, useless, extravagant, cumberers of the country—the mere butterflies of society. In war—you know what they are."

"Do I?" with a slight smile. I grew more anxious.

"In truth had I ever had a spark of military ardor, it would have been quenched within the last year. I never see a thing—we'll not say a man—with a red coat on, who does not make himself thoroughly contemptible."

The word stuck in the middle. For to those passed slowly by my sister Lisabel; leaning on the arm of Captain Treherne, looking as I never saw Lisabel look before. It suddenly rushed across me what might happen—perhaps had happened. Suppose, in this passionately venting my prejudices, I should be tacitly condemning my—what an odd idea—my brother-in-law! Pride, if no better feeling, caused me to hesitate.

Dr. Urquhart said, quietly enough, "I should tell you—indeed I ought to have told you before—that I am myself in the army."

I am sure I looked—as I felt—like a downright fool. This comes, I thought, of speaking one's mind, especially to strangers. Oh! should I ever learn to hold my tongue, or cabbie pretty harmless nonsense as other girls? Why should I have talked seriously to this man at all? I knew nothing of him, and had no business to be interested in him, or even to have listened to him—my sister would say—until he had been properly "introduced;" until I knew where he lived, and who were his father and mother, and what was his profession, and how much income he had a year.

Still, I did feel interested, and could not help it. Something it seemed that I was bound to say: I wished it to be civil if possible.

"But you are Dr. Urquhart. An army-surgeon is scarcely like a soldier; his business is to save life rather than to destroy it. Surely you never could have killed anybody?"

The moment I had put the question I how childish and uncalculated for, in fact, how actually impertinent it was. Covered with confusion, I drew back, and looked another way. It was the greatest relief imaginable when just then Lisabel saw me, and came up with Captain Treherne, all smiles, to say, was it not the pleasantest party imaginable! and who had I been dancing with?

"Nobody."

"Nay, I saw you myself talking to some strange gentleman. Who was he? A rather odd-looking person, and—"

And with a grave professional air my medical friend wrapped me close up in my shawl.

"A plaid, I see. That is sensible. There is nothing for warmth like a good plaid," he said, with a smile, which, even had it not been for his name, and a slight strengthening and broadening of his English, scarcely amounting to an accent, would have pretty well showed what part of the kingdom Dr. Urquhart came from. I was going, in my bluntness, to put the direct question, but felt as if I had committed myself quite enough for one night.

Just then was shouted out, "Mr. Johnston's"—(oh dear! shall we ever get the aristo cratic into our plaid name?)—"Mr. Johnston's carriage," and I was hurried into the fly. Not by the doctor, though; he stood like a bear on the doorstep, and never attempted to stir. That's all.

CHAPTER II.

Hospital Memoranda, Sept. 21st.—Private William Carter, *et. 24*; admitted a week to-day. Gaitria fever—typhoid form—slight delirium—had case. Aaked me to write to his mother; did not say where. Mem.: to inquire among his division if anything is known about his friends.

Corporal Thomas Hardman, *et. 50*.—Delirium tremens—mending. Knew him in the Crimea, when he was a perfectly sober fellow, with constitution of iron. "Trench work did it," he says, "and last winter's illness." Mem.: to send for him after his discharge from hospital, and see what can be done; also to see that decent body, his wife, after my rounds to-morrow.

M. U.—Max Urquhart, M. D., M. R. C. S.

Who keeps scribbling his name up and down this page like a silly school-boy, just for want of something to do. Something to do! never for these twenty years and more have I been so totally without occupation.

What a place this camp is! Worse than ours in the Crimea, by far. To-day especially. Rain pouring, wind howling, mud ankle-deep; nothing on earth for me to be, to do, or to suffer, except—yes! there is something to suffer—Treherne's eternal fute.

Faith, I must be very hard up for occupation when I thus continue this journal of my cases into the personal diary of the worst patient I have to deal with—the most thankless, unsatisfactory, and unkindly. Physician, heal thyself! But how?

I shall tear out this page—or stay, I'll keep it as a remarkable literary and psychological fact—and go on with my article on Gunshot Wounds.

In the which, two hours after I find I have written exactly ten lines. These must be the sort of circumstances under which people commit journals. For some do—and heartily as I have always contemned the proceeding, as we are prone to condemn peculiarities and idiosyncrasies quite foreign to our own, I begin to-day dimly to understand the state of mind in which such a thing might be possible.

"Diary of a Physician," shall I call it? Did not some one write a book with that title? I picked it up on ship-board—a story-book, or some such thing—but I scarcely ever read what is called "light literature." I never had time. Besides, all fictions grow tame compared to the realities of daily life, the horrible episodes of crime, the pitiful bits of hopeless misery that I meet with in my profession. Talk of romance!

Was I ever romantic? Once, perhaps. Or at least I might have been. My profession, truly there is nothing like it for me. Therein I find incessant work, interest, hope. Daily do I thank heaven that I had courage to seize on it and go through with it, in order—according to the phrase I heard used last night—"to save life instead of destroying it."

Poor little girl—she meant nothing—she had no idea what she was saying. Is it that which makes me so unsettled to-day? Perhaps it would be wiser never to go into society. A hospital ward is far more natural to me than a ball-room. There, is work to be done, pain to be alleviated, evil of all kinds to be met and overcome—here, nothing but pleasure, nothing to do but to enjoy.

The press past is gone woefully. H from it—in but to brood

Now, I have sanity, both speak. I cal disease which paratively he cessantly on find in some ancholy from men for or egotism high pitch, insanity. Al as distingu disease of the have studied and correspond was simple e herself often the law of sution of any others, under original idea is laid to sleep.

Why cannot do for myself prescribed and It was with that I went to a vague sort of anonymous be so long been read with all his folad. I should any harm.

The tall one and the small pleasanter to sister. And, was Johnson.

What a name cause him to s door, with his his nerves qu now, in the m compel himself tional argumen be it chimerica man ought to c as base a parox wise face to stood—

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Write it down plain English o in degree have have set down recount to me, of his delusion mere telling of vanish.

I went away once Never a my life I could that would have walked across along road or w whether, for mi rise. She seen nineteen years months, all but tic is correct, n self like a gho waves of moor, upon the north there was horri hide from-out but the plain at that night.

What am I coming back ag be kept by a A knock—ah of poor Carter's turn to daily w me.

Rational Tre Dr. R. V. World's Dispen is in earnest in der positive gua who purchases widely celebrat rive benefit the would like to h scription of s case. Organiz the Association surgery and for of all chronic d nually thousan original metho ever seeing the the largest annu the accommoda cated cases, an the Faculty fee undertake eve cases. They re dial means kn science—negle World's Dispen Buffalo, N. Y. Buildings, Lonc

[To I

What am I writing? What am I dar to write?

"Physician, heal thyself." And surely that is one of a physician's first duties. A disease struck inward—the merest tyro knows how fatal is treatment, which results in that. It may be I have gone on the wrong track altogether, at least since my return to England.