

meetings, how do you think we can get on? I am thoroughly ashamed of myself, but you would make me go."

"He is an infernal scoundrel," replied her companion, "nothing better than a scoundrel. What is a couple of hundred more to him? A bagatelle."

"That may be, Harry, but people are not so fond of parting with their money. I have nothing to complain of, as regards Lord Verriest, if you have, did you not take me away from a happy home under the solemn promise of marriage, and how have you kept the promise? What have I been obliged to do? It maddens me when I think of it; you bring me to London, in six months you are penniless; then you tempt me on Seymour, and I have to keep you all the time on the wages of my sin. Seymour, after a time, pines for a fresh toy, dismisses me, or rather passes me over to his friend Verriest. What misery! what degradation! Oh, Harry, Harry, you have brought me to all this. Why don't you marry me, and make me an honest woman? Think what I have to go through for you," and she burst into tears.

"It is an awful thing you should know now all I have to say," she continued, after a short pause. "I swear I will give you shelter here no longer. I will not lead this life; this house, and the income I receive, are mine; I have a child now to provide for. I am certain if I write to his Lordship he will get me another house, for the lease of this has only three more months to run. I will go far away to some quiet corner, where I shall never be known, with my little one. I can never marry any one except yourself, so choose if you will have a true wife, or whether you will go on your own way, and by yourself."

The young man pondered awhile. "What could we do?" he asked at length, "the only thing I understand is farming, and we have no capital to commence with. I hate London, I am tired of it; I am fond of shooting and country pursuits."

"If I get the means," she asked, "will you marry me? but understand me, if I do, I keep the money, as I have hitherto. If I had not, what would have become of us? Marry me, let us take a farm far away, and try and forget the miserable past, and bring up the poor baby properly. God knows whose it is, his or yours, but he has promised to provide for it, and that promise he will keep."

"By Heavens! Emily, if you only get the means, I will marry you, marry you under any circumstances—there, what can I say more?"

Henry Bruton was not a bad-hearted young man in the main, but he had terribly deceived his poor victim. The least said about their wretched history the better. We see the same thing every day, and it will ever be the same till the end of all time.

"Bessy," said Lord Verriest, one morning, after he had unlocked the letter-bag, and gone through all his letters, "you remember Mrs. Bruton; that person who called on you the other day?"

"Of course I do, George, what about it?"

"Well, I have just had a letter from her; the man who first seduced her from home wishes to marry her and set up farming—this want he is to commence."

"Well, George, I should advise you to give to her; poor thing, by doing it she will be saved a life of degradation and despair. Do it, by all means."

"Just like my own darling wife," he said, patting her fondly on the cheek. "Well, let us consider what can be done; she has the house and furniture, for which I pay a hundred and eighty pounds a year, three hundred I allow her; nearly five hundred in all. Suppose I was to let her have a thousand pounds to stock the farm, and four hundred a year. Would that do?"

"No, George," replied the generous woman, "give them five hundred a year, and make them a present of a thousand pounds as a marriage gift, to buy stock and what not; but see that they are married, you will never miss the money."

"A woman of a thousand," said her husband, pressing her hand. "A woman of a thousand."

"Could a gentleman see you, ma'am?" asked Emily Bruton's servant, one afternoon, as she sat in her room fondling her baby; "he is below."

"What sort of a gentleman is he, Mary?—young or old?"

"He is an elderly gent," replied the servant, "quite respectable; he says it is of great importance."

The poor young mother's thoughts ran back to her father, the man who she had left nearly four years ago; she turned deadly pale as

maligned by special necessity of moment, and word and I will procure it."

The next morning Emily was married to Henry Bruton.

"Thank God, Harry, you have at last done what was right," she said as she hung fondly and proudly on her husband's arm. "I am indeed a happy woman; you shall never have cause to reproach me by word or deed. To-morrow we will go down to Cornwall and look at the farm."

Far away from the busy hum of the vast and overgrown metropolis, far away from the eternal noise and little village—among a primitive people, quiet and homely in their ways, close to the sea, which is for ever breaking against the iron-bound coast of Cornwall, reside Bruton and his wife. In a sweet little cottage, covered with myrtle and jessamine, they are settled for life—life which has so many charms for some, and so bitter to others.

Happy is the man or woman who can live to three-score and ten without sorrow; do such exist? I fancy not—life so fleeting, so uncertain, so clung to, and yet so hateful to tens of thousands.

The higher we are educated, the more we think—the more we are aware of our littleness and insignificance; for the short space that is allowed us on earth, we ought to do all we can, and make our fellow-creatures happy too.

Henry Bruton had made his wife's life joyous by marrying her; he had repaired, as far as he could, a grievous fault, and he had determined to make her forget, if possible, the past which he would willingly have recalled; he liked his new life, his farm and stock employed all his time, he kept the house in game, and was ever busy and doing, and in a short time he found by attention that it would pay him well.

"My happiness would be complete, Harry," his wife said to him one night, "if I could only get my father to forgive me, and come down and see us; poor old man, I did so love him. I have written three times, but my letters have never been answered."

"You must give him time, Emily; with time he may come round, and I am sure I hope he will for both our sakes; luckily, he is not aware you have ever lived with any one but myself, and he need never be wiser on that point. I wonder he holds out, now we are married."

"You little know my father, Harry. He feels deeply the way in which I have disgraced him, and I fear he will never notice me more. I can fancy his loneliness at home all by himself, my two brothers away in America, and my sister married and in New Zealand—poor desolate old man, I pity him."

A loud knocking at the door at this instant interrupted their conversation, and Harry went to see who it was at this hour. The night was pitch dark, and there was a drizzling rain falling.

"I've had an accident!" exclaimed a voice; but Bruton could not see who the speaker was, "for the love of God come down with me and bring a lantern; I am afraid the gentleman is killed. I had no lamp and drove into the ditch and upset the trap."

Burton hurried away with a light and a couple of his men. "Get a bed ready, Emily," he said, on leaving, "it may be wanted; I hope it is not as bad as he says."

They soon arrived where the carriage was overturned; in the ditch lay a fine old man, not dead, but quite insensible.

"Cover him up with the rug and bring him home," said one of the laborers. "He ain't dead, master, but quite insensible like; what are we to do for a doctor? there ain't one within six miles."

"One of you men get on the cob when we get home; a doctor must be had if we send twenty miles."

The body was carried upstairs and laid on the bed. Emily was there pale and trembling; directly she saw the features of the still breathing body she gave a piercing shriek. "Oh, God, it is my father!" she uttered; "did you not know him, Harry?"

"I have only just this instant seen his face," he replied. "Poor old gentleman, get some brandy quick, he breathes well enough; it may not be so bad after all."

The stimulant was given, and he gave some slight signs of consciousness; by ten o'clock the doctor was there, but could not pronounce on the case.

"Father, father, do speak to me!" exclaimed the poor girl, kneeling by the bedside, and taking the senseless man's hand in hers, "it is Emily, your daughter."

All night did she sit up with him, watching him every change of his countenance; it was days before he came round, but his fine constitution pulled him through, and he got over concussion of the brain.

ed to the nines, too—who the devil are you living with now? Come home and have dinner with me."

"You are mistaken, sir," she answered laughingly, "I decline your acquaintance; but as you wish to know who I am living with, I answer, my husband," and she passed on.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the gentleman, "she does the high moral fashionably; married! no, I am not so green as to swallow that tale; living with some one who keeps her well at any rate, she was beautifully dressed. Well, such is life," and he sauntered away to his club.

Emily was dreadfully agitated at this meeting; it recalled the past vividly to her mind, and she was only too glad to take her seat in the "Gallop" next morning to return to Cornwall.

She found her father much improved and anxiously looking out for her; the old gentleman's things were soon placed in a sitting-room expressly fitted up for him, leading to his bedroom. She was now a happy woman.

"Bruton told me," he said, "that a relative of his left him a little money, and he took this place; but if you want any more, I can let you have what you like."

"No father, we want none at present, the farm pays." She was grateful, her husband had got her off telling a lie to her parent.

In a day or two she wrote to Lord Verriest informing him how happily she was settled, what a nice place they had, and that her father was living with them.

"There, Bessy, is a letter from Emily Bruton," said his Lordship, after reading it at breakfast; "poor girl, she is well and happy now."

"I am truly glad to hear it, George. I think and hope she will make an affectionate wife, and that your kindness will not be thrown away. Fancy, I have had a letter from Alice, she says she is delighted with her new home; that she has lots to do, and has never a minute to spare, but that she is ever pestered with the curate there. He first called, then he brought music, then he remained to play and sing, and now he comes nearly every evening—that is very evident what his intentions are—that she has given him no encouragement—on the contrary, she has been rather rude to him; but he will take no hint or refusal. She writes to me for advice; he knows too that she is going to be married shortly, and she winds up by saying that although he is such a popular preacher, so much thought of and run after, that she can see nothing in the Reverend Butteer Gammon."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A fashionable preacher was the Reverend Butteer Gammon; people flocked to hear him, there was never such an earnest eloquent young man before; he was a wonder; the parish was indeed lucky to have such a curate appointed by their rich rector, who only made his appearance amongst his parishioners once a year. In person he was tall and well-made; a good figure, black hair and whiskers, most carefully brushed and cultivated; he was tolerably good-looking, but with a restless roving eye that never looked at you. He dressed scrupulously neat, and his white cravat was tied to perfection; he affected the long black frock coat and serge waistcoat; but his hat was an ordinary silk one of Lincoln & Bennett's make. He was particular about his hats, boots, and gloves, as indeed he was about all his dress; a dead hand at croquet, and a great favorite with the ladies, who regularly presented him every New Year's Day with a purse containing a hundred sovereigns. He was the most eligible bachelor within miles, his rooms were covered with worsted work and other things made by the fair hands of his lady friends; he always wore worked slippers and braces, and had he not adopted the black serge, he would have been found in waistcoats as well. He was a dandy clergyman.

With the men he was not liked; he could do nothing; called shooting, hunting, and fishing cruel; cricket and racquets dangerous; in fact he was a ladies' man. Whilst the gentlemen were over their wine he would steal away to the drawing-room, seat himself at the piano, and warble Moore's melodies.

He had not a bad voice, but he sang in an affected manner, threw and rolled his eyes about as if his whole soul was in music.

"Heavenly!" a lady would exclaim. "Beautiful!" another.

"Truly touching!" a third.

Whilst another wound it up by saying it was "divine and sublime." The gentlemen

and she attended so constantly to her farm and household affairs that she was seldom seen except on Sunday morning.

She took a delight in her newly-acquired property; her house was a picture of order and cleanliness. She had little or no trouble, because her late uncle's farm lands and servants were old and trusted ones.

"If you please, mistress," said her elderly housemaid, coming into Alice's little room one afternoon, where she was sitting marking some new house linen, "the clergyman has come to see you, and has sent in his card," handing one to her (she had then been nearly a month in her new home); "I have shown him into the drawing-room, missus."

"Very well, Jane, I will go in immediately," she was always well-dressed and to be seen at any time.

"I have called, Miss Lee," said the gentleman, "as one of my parishioners, to make your acquaintance. I ought to have come before; but my parish is so large and my duties so heavy that I must plead that as an excuse."

"I am sure, Mr. Gammon, I am much obliged to you for calling now. No apology is necessary; I know how many calls clergy-men have on their time."

"You play, Miss Lee, I see," casting his eyes on the Erard piano Alice had treated herself to—a second-hand one from Cramers'—but as good as new.

"Yes, I used to play a good deal. My poor father insisted on my learning, and I am very fond of it; but I have so little time now to attend to it."

"I do not on music," he said, turning up his eyes; "I play a little, enough to accompany myself to my songs." By this he let her know he sang. "Do you sing?"

"A little, but I have very few songs."

"You must allow me to bring you some—some of Moore's melodies, they are beautiful. But you have made quite an alteration in the house, Miss Lee, so comfortably and prettily furnished. Newly papered too! you have great taste."

"It is very kind of you to say so, sir. I do not think my uncle used the sitting-rooms much, for they were quite out of order. I re-furnished them, because—because," she said, hesitatingly and blushing, "I am going to be married."

"Oh! indeed," he answered, somewhat dryly. "Soon?"

"In about two months, sir."

He shortly after took his leave, saying "he would call again in a few days, and bring the music."

"I don't know what it is," thought Alice, after her visitor had left, "but somehow or other I don't like that man; there is a sly, cruel expression in his face which is extremely disagreeable. Nothing honest about it; he never looks one in the face; no, I do not like it at all."

A day or two after, Mr. Gammon found time to call again with a roll of songs. On this occasion he did not leave till he had sung them all through; then he sat and talked for an hour or more, getting what he could out of Alice in a quiet way. And it was not long before he discovered that her engagement was of very recent date; and that she had not known the gentleman very long.

"I shall soon come again, Miss Lee, and see how you have got on with the songs," he said, on leaving.

"I know not what it is," she said, "but I dislike that man more and more every time I see him. I cannot understand him; he is very polite and agreeable; but there is something I hate about him."

"Gammon!" exclaimed Lord Verriest, as his wife uttered the name, "I can tell you a little about him; I can put a spoke in his wheel. Why the infernal rascal is married already."

"Married already, George! surely you must be mistaken!"

"Not a bit of it, Bessy. I will tell you all about it. Some three or four years ago I went over to St. Servan, in France, with my yacht. I had been cruising about the Channel Islands. Well, when I got to St. Servan, I put up at the British Hotel, kept by an Englishman there; and at this hotel was stopping this very man Gammon. There is a little English church in the town; and the regular clergyman having over-dosed himself with brandy and French cooking, had such a fit of gout that Gammon took his duty till he got better—which he never did, for he died soon after. Then a requisition was signed by the English inhabitants there; and somehow or other—I cannot say how—Gammon, who really preaches a good sermon, got the berth, worth about a hundred a year. He soon became quite the rage; was invited and went out everywhere. There

inquiries, leaving his wife behind. A fortnight after he had been gone she received a letter from him, stating that though he ex-communicated her, her father had miserably deceived him. That they had not money to live together, and that night he was starting for Australia; wished her good-bye, and said he had no doubt she would be well looked after by her St. Servan friends; and that if things ever turned up trumps with him, she would be the first to know, and he would come over and fetch her.

"There was a kind-hearted old English lady living there quite alone, and with plenty of means; she took compassion on the half-maddened creature, and there she is at present moment installed as companion. I only heard about her just before our marriage. As for Gammon, he never wrote a line, nor has he been heard of. Now, Bessy, you have this scoundrel's history."

"Alice shall know all about it by to-morrow's post," said her ladyship, quietly. "This is the pet curate that all make such a fuss about! I'll put Alice on her guard at any rate, and if I know her rightly, which I think I do, she will make it remarkably unpleasant for his reverence."

"My dear Miss Lee," said the curate the Sunday night following the above conversation, "I have come to see what is the matter, you were not at church this morning. I fear you are unwell."

"No, Mr. Gammon, but I did not feel inclined to go to-day."

"Fie, fie," said he, playfully, "you should not neglect your religious duties for a day; if it had been raining, now, or bitterly cold, there might have been some excuse, but such a lovely day as this has been."

"Well, at any rate, Mr. Gammon, I did not go, but you must forgive me."

"Of course, I will forgive you anything, but let us talk of another matter. You cannot but have observed the great interest I feel in you—more than that, the love I have for you; this he said in his most dulcet tones. "Mr. Gammon!" she exclaimed, and her eyes flashed. "You are aware I am engaged, but perhaps, sitting calmly down again, 'it has slipped your memory.'"

"Well, Miss Lee, honestly I cannot say it has, but everything according to the old adage is fair in love or war. Yours is not a long engagement, you have only known the gentleman a short time, he cannot give you the position I can—will you be my wife?—we can be married at once—write to him and break off your engagement; say, Miss Lee—Alice—shall it be so?"

The girl sat perfectly quiet—pale as death—her lips livid and compressed; but she uttered not a word. Her companion fondly imagined his triumph and victory was secure, and that the "Yes" would come as soon as she had sufficiently collected herself.

"Alice," he said, "do not keep me in suspense any longer, say you will be mine, you know not how I doat on you."

"Mr. Gammon," she at length replied, "you have asked me a question, and that is to be your wife; I will answer it by asking you another."

"What is it, Alice? I will answer anything," he breathlessly said.

"Well, Mr. Gammon," she asked, with the utmost calmness and composure, "were you ever at St. Servan, in France?"

Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet he could not have been more frightened, and ghastly-looking, he seemed turned into stone.

"Base, bad, cowardly, treacherous man!" she exclaimed, starting up and confronting him, her bosom heaving, and her face literally blazing with emotion. "I see guilt written in your craven countenance. Do you remember Lord Verriest? have you forgotten your poor innocent, unfortunate and deserted wife? Shame, shame on you! you a clergyman too—a servant of God—first to desert her you swore to love, honour, and protect, and would then commit bigamy by marrying me—I whom you know to be engaged—this is your holiness, your goodness! You are indeed a worthy subject to be placed in the situation you are. Pray hear me out," seeing that he was about to interrupt her, "you shall hear what I have to say—heartless as you are; have some pity on her you have abandoned—go to France, bring back your wife, do it any way you like, but do it quickly, or the whole country shall know your history, and Lord Verriest will bear me out. Begone now, and say by letter to-morrow what you will do; if I do not receive a favorable answer in twenty-four hours from this, all shall come out; but if you act in a proper way, no one shall ever hear a word of your infamous behavior—this I swear to you."