ABSOLUTELY HER OWN MISTRESS.

BY J. T. J.

SECOND PART.—Matrimony.

Just as the dull daylight struggled with the darkness, the nurse and I went out into the parlor to receive Dr. Blank's commands before he left. It was decided that I should stay for the next twenty-four hours. In this outer room we stood, while Dr. Blank sat at the table mixing some medicine; and now for the first time I became aware of the presence of another person, by a voice at my elbow asking low and pointedly: "Is Mrs Feversham out of danger?"

"No, and will not be for weeks; it's a very dangerous case and all the chances are on the side of death."

I was looking at Mr. Feversham as Dr. Blank spoke and saw a twist of pain in his face and the color leave; very differently he would have answered had the old gray haired father been there to put the question, but we were all alike in our estimate of the man before us; oral tradition had led us astray, and we regarded him as a mere fortune hunter, who cared nothing for his wife. I fear it was curiosity rather than sympathy, which made me keep my eyes on the young fellow's face. Dr. Blank, who had not looked at him, now went on addressing the nurse in a clear under tone:

"Is Mrs. Montgomery here — or Mrs. Briggs, the old housekeeper here?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Well, send for them at once, better have people about her whose faces she knows well, and no strangers, under stand, admitted to the sick room. You take the night watch nurse, and they will relieve you in the day alternately. There must be absolute stillness in the house. Mr. Yarmey"—glancing at me—"will stay with you for the next twenty four hours and then I will return,"—here followed minute medical directions—"and all but those I have mentioned will be excluded from the sick room," he finally concluded.

"Except Mr. Feversham, of course," I said.

"I except nobody," returned Blank in his peremptory way he was in this brusqueness of manner not the only imitation of the great Abernethy. I have known among medical men—"much depends upon quiet, only those I have mentioned will be admitted, till I give further orders."

Here Mr. Feversham, who was standing close to him tapped him on the knuckles with the much used glass, and addressed him in a tone—though the voice was low—that made the doctor lift his head and look at him with interest.

"You may understand medicine, sir, but you want a lesson in ethics, and here it is for you. You have come to grey hairs and yet do not appear to know certain facts that even a fool can see without an eye glass; one is that a man is master of his own house, and another is that no one has a right to put a bar between husband and wife, or exclude one from the other. This lady is my wife and it is my right and duty to see that she is taken care of, and I will not waive that duty or yield that right to you, still less to Dame Montgomery, or old mother Briggs. What is more I will not have these women within my doors, they have done too much mischief already. You can send another nurse from Hamilton, and I myself will relieve them, and attend to my wife in the day, an if you object to my arrangements and insist upon the presence of these women, you may give up the case and I will telegraph to Toronto for another doctor."

The doctor's face had flushed at the first part of this address, but it softened as he observed the extreme excitement and pain in that of the younger man.

"Mr. Feversham, you know nothing of nursing," he said quite gently, "and this is a case of life and death."

"I know more than those old women, and can obey orders as well as any woman."

"Would you exclude Mrs. Feversham's aunt and old house keeper if she expressed a wish to see them?"

"No, but I would not leave them alone with her."

"Why?" was the next question put by this ruthless little man.

"Because they have spoken against me to her, for one reason."

"Pooh! pooh! my dear sir, all women do such things; you should forget these little animosities in a great trouble and accept their help."

"Their animosity is not little. Two days ago Mrs. Montgomery advised my wife to make her will and requested her that her mother died when she was born."

"That was very injudicious," the doctor admitted.

"It was heartless, it was gross, and after she was gone my wife begged me to protect her from her aunt, and I will. I promised to cherish in sickness as well as health, and if you won't help me to that end, the sooner you are out of my house the better, and another in your place."

"Some of your reasons are valid," said the great Blank, "but let us understand each other. The nurse is always subordinate to the doctor, and if I admit you constantly to the sick room, you must do as I tell you. Once you disobey you risk a precious life. If I thought you would I would resign the case at once."

"Her life is more precious to me than to you," said Mr. Feversham.

"Possibly, but strongly expressed affection is exciting and therefore injudicious; you must command yourself if we are to work together. Mr. Jarmey and the nurse will watch you and tell me how you behave."

"Very well, sir; breakfast is waiting you in the dining room, make yourself at home."

No sooner was the doctor's back turned than Mr. Feversham went at once to his wife's room, and though the nurse and I exchanged glances, we had neither of us the heart to follow and intrude upon that first interview. We gave him five minutes and then went in. He was seated by the bedside, his hand touched his wife's as it lay on the coverlid, the color had returned to his face and he looked very calm.

And now began a desperate and uncertain battle between life and death. A great hush and stillness fell upon the house, the knocker was removed from the front door, and a placard put up begging people to go to the back door to make inquiries. "And be quiet please," in monstrous letters. The baby, much inclined to assert himself, at the wrong time, by ear-splitting screams, was sent off with the weeping Briggs, Mr. Feversham sternly commanding her to "do for it, and herself, and not show her face there again till she was sent for," his wrath having been roused by hearing her say that "a death watch was a-tickin' in her ear all night."

When Sally came to the parlor door, and said in an awe-stricken whisper, "Mrs. Montgomery is a comin', sir, what shall I tell her?" her master promptly replied, "tell her to go to the dayvil."

"Oh! lor, I don't like to, sir, would you mind saying it yourself?"

"Not in the least," he replied, and out he went to meet that lady. What he said I do not know, but in about ten minutes she drove away and returned no more.

I noticed that Mrs. Feversham never once asked about her aunt or Mrs. Briggs, and what was stranger she never mentioned her baby. Knowing her fondness for children, I considered this a bad sign. Sally was frequently in the sick room by her mistress's desire, and she liked to have her husband with her and would let no one else lift her, nor would she take medicine or food from any hand but his. If the nurse offered it, it was invariably, "no thank you, not just now."

After five days Dr. Blank, dissatisfied with his patient's progress, summoned a still more celebrated physician from Toronto, a city rich in clever medical men. This gentleman, whom I shall call Black-de-Blank, arrived early in the morning, and we three held a consultation in the great drawing room, where Mr. Feversham had recently danced to such strange music. It had thawed, for the weather had greatly moderated, and here and there the ground was visible; and small icicles fell from the eaves continually with a tinkling click. A dreary council of war it was; our enemy grim death. We talked over the physical state of our patient, and explained our line of action to the new arrival clearly and at great length, and were pleased that he entirely approved. He had never seen the lady till to-day, and asked us what kind of a person our patient was.

"A very handsome"—— began Dr. Blank.

"Tut, tut—tell me nothing that is self evident, but answer my questions," and then he began a keen cross examination of us both. She is very weak, very feverish, sometimes wept, but never put her sorrows into words, never asked for her child, did not when it was in the house and crying continually; never complained even when very restless, showed an unusual amount of self command, and though the fever ran high had not yet been delirious. Never omitted to thank us for any little service but showed no interest in anything, and refused to take anything except from her husband.

"Ah!" said Blank de Blank when we had got thus far in our cross examination, "does she thank him formally each time?"

"Yes, always."

"Do you call this a love match, Blank, do you think there is affection between them?"

"Fanny thinks the young fellow cares for her, and I am sure he does not wish her to die. Of his feelings for him I know nothing, but she prefers to have him feed and lift her, and he does it skilfully and well."

"She is not at peace, there is something on her mind," said our ally, "that gone, she would have a chance. Call Mr. Feversham."

He came looking haggard enough in the bright sun light. The Toronto doctor, a tall old man with a gray head, faced him, and laid a kindly hand on his shoulder. "You know it's a doctor's privilege to be impertinent," he said, with a smile, "prying impudence is our prerogative. I wish to ask some questions about your wife which none but you can answer."

"Aw—well, sir?" he touched his eye glass, perhaps from habit, but made no use of it.

"Have you had any disagreement in your married life—any quarrel—any hard words—especially lately?"

"No, sir, never but there was an unspoken estrangement on her part, not mine. Latterly, her kindness changed to courtesy, I could see she kissed me in the morning from a sense of duty, with an effort but she tried to be sweet as of old, and I took no notice of it. I attributed it partly to ill health; only a brute could be exacting with a wife at such a time, and then I feared to investigate her coldness, because I lied to her about my age—I—aw—told her I was nearly forty to induce her to marry me."

"Love must have been blind, indeed, to believe you," said the old man, smiling. "Well?"

"I could not—aw—risk anything unpleasant with a wife in that situation. She seemed very low spirited, but I thought that perhaps was natural under the circumstances, that everything would come right with the baby."

"My p or boy," the old man began with infinite pity. The color changed in the face before him.

"You think there is no hope, sir?"

"I do not say that, I think there is a chance; but did you lie to her about anything besides your age—on your honor now?"

"No, I did not, why do you ask?"

"Because there is a pretty general impression that you married the lady for her money."

"My income, when I come into my property in a year, will be twice the amount of hers."

"Does she know that?" was the next question.

"I suppose not, I never spoke of these things. Who would—aw—think of boring a lady about money?"

"You made a mistake there Mr. Feversham, and gave a fine opening for your enemies One more question and I have done. You loved the lady—at least were quiet determined to have her (so I have heard) in spite of a good deal of opposition on both sides of the house, but did she love you! Do you know certainly what her feeling for you was—what it is now? do you know why she married you?"

Mr. Feversham winced visibly at this touch of the moral dissecting knife, but after the pause of an instant and a hard breath he answered.

"I know you don't ask idly to give me pain, so I'll tell you the whole truth. I made up my mind to win her heart and marry her the first day I saw her, before I knew her name or anything about her. The more I knew of her, the better I liked her. I used every effort to make her take an interest in me, and her aunt and Briggs helped me on wonderfully by boring her constantly and opposing the whole thing; in fact we all bothered her so that I have thought lately that—aw—she married me to get rid of us all and have a little peace. But she likes my company better than theirs, perhaps because I try to please her, and don't bore her with disagreeables. I think Mrs. Montgomery may have said something to make her think me worse than I am"

"The weight on her mind must be removed," said the elder doctor speaking as if it were a visible excrescence. "It is not too late even yet for an explanation," but here Dr Blank interposed declaring that the excitement of such an explanation now, would increase the fever and perhaps cause immediate death. "All that must be deferred till she is stronger," he said, "It would not do to risk it now. If of a tender conscience she might reproach herself for past unkindness to her husband, and that would accelerate the fever; or, if she loved him more than he thought, she might in her weak state, die of joy at the reconciliation"

So the great Toronto doctor, having ordered Mrs. Feversham's beautiful hair to be shorn close, went away sadly, leaving us just where we were before.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"O ourblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour,
Do forge a life long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here through the feeble twilight of this world,
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other where we see as we are seen!"
—TENNYSON.

"Oh! doctor," exclaimed Sally Briggs to in a burst of despairing confidence, "I've been a runnin' to the back door ever since I rz, answerin' folks as comes to ask for the missus, and wants to see her; fifty I do believe. I've given up countin', an' no time to wash my face with 'em, and if the missus asked for me, I'm not fit to go in, I'm that dirty, an' she so perlickity about folks being clean. If our old rooster was alive he'd bust his-self acrowin' on the back door step."

"Sally," I said, "Mrs. Feversham is asleep. I will give you two hours to rest and refresh yourself, and take your post in the kitchen and answer all comers."

Glad to escape, Sally thanked me heartily, and telling me to leave the door ajar, "as it saves 'em thumpin' and makin' a noise," took her departure

A half open door on a cold day in March is by no means an addition to one's comfort, and I tied my pocket handkerchief over my head and donned my great coat. I had scarcely completed these necessary arrangements before the first arrival (a very tall man) marched into the room with a frozen leg of mutton in his hand and laid it on the the table.

"Wa-al I reckon you didn't look for me an' I didn't count on seein' you," glancing about and spitting as he spoke—"How do you get along?"

"Pretty well, thank you," I replied, not quite knowing what to say.

"How's Mrs. Feversham," was the next question, "do you reckon she'll die."

"She is very ill."

"I guess I'll go in and see her," he said, advancing to the inner door.

"Most certainly not," I replied, stopping the way, "I allow no one to see her"

"So I heerd an' I call it kind o' hard, my missus she come along yesterday. It ain't much like neighbors, I reckon, to turn folks out as comes to help, I say as all ought to see her."

As carrion crows gather round a dying creature, to gloat over distress which they care nothing about, and cannot alleviate," I replied.

"Wa—al, I calculate we can all see her as likes when we come to the funeral," he said after staring at me for a minute.

"I suppose so, I have nothing to do with that, and you cannot harm her then."

He turned on his heel and went away, and a minute later a woman with a plaid over her head looked in at the open door, which I had ajar Mr. Van Hover not to bang behind him.

"How's Mistress Feversham the noo?" she asked softly.

"Not any better, I think. Will you come in?"

"That's sair news, sir. I'll no come in thank ya. The maister 'ill take it hard, a kind lady an' see bounie; she's o'er young to dee. Weel, weel" she turned and went away, but presently came back to ask, "Is there nothing I could do to help Sally?"

"Nothing, thank you, we have two nurses now."

A pause of three seconds, and a stout man appeared at the door with a jar in his hand. "How's the young 'oman?" he asked gruffly. "Well I don't wish her any 'arm," he was pleased to say, condescendingly, when I had answered him "though as a general thing I don't loike quality. She guv my missus flowers, not as they're o' much account, an' passed the time o' day when I met her, an' when I went to the 'ouse wi' me 'at on me 'ed, she didn't say 'biggins where's your 'at?' (For by name's 'biggins I'd have you to know.) But her 'usband I can't say as I loikes un, 'e's one as 'ud trample us as they did it'n and country. I sees it in 'is heyes, but death don't make much o' quality, he takes the dainty un's as well as the rough un's, as me gentlemen 'ill find. That's 'oney," and he set the jar on the table with a bang and took his leave without another word. The next arrival was inside the door, before Mr. 'iggin's was well out, a tall dark haired woman with a green shawl over her head, and two powerful dark eyes, which looked boldly into mine as she softly asked, "an' how's the young lady, yer honor? Sorry am I that it tuck her the way it did."

She held up her hands when I had given her my cut and dried answer and exclaimed, "God be merciful to the poor creather this day, does she ask for her baby at all, at all, sir?"

"No—never"

"Thin hope's gone intirely yer honor. Whin iver I heard how it tuck her, an wid me shawl and away to the praste an sez I, yer riverance there's a dozen of iggs for ye, if ye'll put up a prayer to the blest vargin for the poor young lady; an' sez he, 'should yer tongue an be off out o' this. Sure I'll pray without pay for the purtiest gairrl in the whole country side, though she is a heretic,' for father McGrath always had an eye to a purty ankle." This was said with unutterable slyness, but when she saw I smiled, she drooped her long lashes demurely and added, "God forgive me for saying the like of his riverence that might be torrened to evil, for a holy man he is, and nothing light in charachter. There's the dozen eggs with me compliments for the leedy, and a sup o' crame that I stole from me aunt, saving yer presence (it's that's a mane woman entirely, and will nivir git to hivin for her ginerosity), and tell the leedy it was Judy Mulrooney that lift 'em, that's Patrick's aunt—she'll know—an' sore he'll be at heart whin he hears, it's the pounds o' candles to the Vargin for the safety of her sowl, for his heart's as big as a barrel (though his timper is hasty) and it's herself that fills it all, an' the divil an inch o' room lift for anyone else. So, here's wishing yer honor betther luck, an' I'll say good day to ye for the gintry's coming."

The gintry were Mr. and Mrs. Jackson, in a large and comfortable sleigh. The horses were deliberately tied up, and carefully covered, and the lady came in bearing a bottle of cream, and the gentleman a small case of champagne and a lump of fresh beef for beef tea. Having added these to my stores on the kitchen table, and introduced themselves by names. Mr. Jackson told me that they were Mrs. Feversham's near kins folk, and didn't mean to leave the house without seeing her. His wife—who was willing to sit up at night, or do any menial service—had been twice, since the baby's birth, refused admittance to the sick room; but he had come determined to see her, and would take no refusal, and even as he spoke, his wife opened the door and glided away into the house, I knew not where, but like Leigh Hunt's pig driver, I felt in alarm the possibility that she might go up "all manner of streets." What could I do? Could I say to a tall lady in silk and velvet, "not a foot further, madam, here is your place by the kitchen stove?" Impossible. In the meantime her husband lectured me severely. "You medical gentlemen take too much upon yourselves," he said, "when you refuse admittance to near relatives. Now, here is poor Mrs. Montgomery, Clara's aunt, for she married her father's brother, has actually been turned out of this house in a most insulting manner, and I see from your eye that you think I ought not to see your patient. Why, I taught her to lisp the first word, and she has sat on my knee many a time and filled my pipe for me, and I went to school with her father years before you were born, sir. Not see Clara Montgomery because she is ill and dying, all the more reason I should see her, and I will."

"Even if you risk her life by gratifying yourself?" I said.

"Risk her life—am I a baselisk, sir, that I should kill her at a glance? I dare say she has often wondered why I have not been to see her. You're all strangers about her except Sally Briggs."

"Her husband," I suggested.

"Her husband!" he echoed, with great scorn; "a shallow young man whom she has not known two years."

"But still her husband, Mr. Jackson, her proper guardian, the father of her child."

It was not I who spoke this time, but Mr. Feversham, who had come noiselessly into the kitchen in his list slippers, conducting the unwilling Mrs. Jackson in her snow-stockings. He had encountered her at the very bed-room door, gently and most politely backed her into the dressing room, and from that into the parlor, thence into the drawing room, where he told her his wife's state and his slight hope of her recovery, had induced her to take a glass of wine, and actually persuaded her to persuade her husband to go home without seeing Clara, before he conveyed her to the kitchen. But all our united efforts would have failed with Mr. Jackson had not Brutus come to our assistance. While we were arguing the point, a musical tinkling of bells announced the arrival of another visitor, and Mr. Jackson looking out said: "It's Thompson, and it's very magnanimous in him to come and make inquiries."

In a minute Mr. Thompson had descended from his seat, and leaving his horse standing came in at the door, and presenting half a dozen somewhat damaged China oranges, "to moisten Mrs. Feversham's mouth," hoped she was better. Before anyone could answer, Brutus with a savage bark sprang upon him and seized him by the throat. It was in vain to say "down, sir," only by main force could we drag him from his prey, and before the hubbub had subsided, the nurse in attendance came out with a very grave face, saying Mrs. Feversham was awake and much alarmed by this disturbance and noise, and adding: "I beg you to go away, good people, if you value the lady's life."

Upon this hint they went, though unwillingly. My patient once more soothed and quieted, I returned to my post in the kitchen, only an hour having passed since I dismissed Sally Briggs. I found four women waiting at the door, which I had taken the precaution to look; one was the bearer of pickled blackberries, another had a pot of maple molasses, a third—Mrs. Danton's servant-maid—brought some calves foot jelly with her mistress's compliments; and the fourth, a tall, thin, resolute woman, brought a couple of living cocks tied together by the legs and struggling violently. I felt really appalled when she told me she had come to stay till "Feversham" was better and was "skilly with sick folks" and could turn her hand to anything. Gratitude, she said, was her strong "pint." Mrs. Feversham "had given her a "piny" (*i. e.* peony) and a moss rose, and many a nice pattern, and was "a down right good-natured gal" though some called her "stuck up" but "that's because she's handsome and her father rich, an' I guess we made ourselves we'd all be pretty nice lookin' an' have rich fathers, so no blame to her for that. An' now if there's anything to do set me a goin, for I'm spry. Mutton to fix for supper?" and she seized the leg.

Here the others spoke up and asked to see Mrs. Feversham. They promised not to talk if I would only let them see her. I begged them all most seriously and earnestly to go away, thanking them for their gifts, and promising to tell my patient who sent them, and declining all their services.

"Oh! you git along," said the tall lady, with good humored contempt. "I bet a dollar I kin cure her with yarfs afore you kin with drugs, though you look a spry little fellow," and she deliberately took off her shawl and bonnet. It was with a sense of relief that I heard sleigh bells, and I glanced with interest at the door, hoping in my heart that a deliverer was at hand. Mr. Jackson returned to the charge with a tall clergyman. I took them through into the drawing room, locking the kitchen door, lest my fair enemies should follow, and went at once to Mr. Feversham. The clergyman of course wished to see my patient, but did my patient wish to see the clergyman? Would such a visit do her harm? She was awake, and the nurse gently told her who was there, and asked if she would like to see them.

"Oh! dear, I suppose I must see them," she said, with a sigh that was nearly a groan, "I wish they had not come."

"I will make an excuse for you," said Mr Feversham. "You shall only see those you wish to see."

"You do so many disagreeables for me, dear Horace," she said, with another sigh. "I am so weak, they would tire me; say everything polite for me, please."

Mr. Feversham went to the drawing-room and told them the truth manfully. The clergyman smiled pleasantly and said he would come another day, but Mr. Jarsoon was exasperated and lost all patience.

"Refuse to see a clergyman, why I never heard of such a thing," he exclaimed. "It's not orthodox, it's not like Clara, it's heathen, positively heathen. Would you have her die without the rites of the church, Feversham? without receiving the sacrament? I tremble at the consequences of your wrong, your obstinate conduct. The weaker she is the more need for his services. They that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick."

And here the old gentleman embarrassed us all by burstin into tears. When at last they were gone, I found all the fair inmates of the kitchen gone too except the tall one, Miss Young, who had put the mutton into the oven, cut off the cocks heads and hung them up to bleed outside the door, and who said I had "better go along ont o' that, as now she would red up. While she was speaking an Indian glided in, dressed in blanket coat and deer skin leggins. He put a lump of resinous gum in my hand saying "good for sick folks," and placed a little basket on the table, containing smoked venison steaks, which proved delicious eating, and departed without another word gliding silently and swiftly over the frozen snow. At the instant of his departure Sally Briggs arrived looking bright and fresh after her wash and bath, and I asked her if she knew the Indian to whom Brutus greatly objected, growling and bristling his back long after he had gone.

"Lor' no sir," she replied, "the old master made a deal of them red vermin, an' so did Miss Clara. I can't abide 'em with their skins the color of a dirty copper kittle, and how they could shake 'ands with 'em passes me."

Mrs. Feversham was not so well that night. She asked her husband to read the Bible to her, choosing the passages she wished to hear, and listening attentively. One was Naboth's vine yard, she made him read it twice over. She was very feverish and restless, and told us many times that she wished to see Jack Montgomery when he came again. He came that very night, and she put her arms round his neck and kissed him, saying he seemed "like a fresh breath of the outside world. After a pause, she said, "You must not blame Horace for keeping your mother away from me, she has made me very unhappy, and I don't want to see her. I don't wish her any harm, Jack, but I never want to see her any more. I wanted to say that to you because I am dying, and I love you Jack, I love you."

The poor boy's round face lengthened greatly during this interview, and he left the house blubbering.

As the days passed the case seemed to grow more desperate, the patient weaker; the beautiful face often looked like a beautiful mask, white, helpless meaningless; this stillness would be followed by fierce fits of restlessness, and burning fever; but as yet the mind held its own. There was no delirium, and that fact formed my only ground of hope She chose to take nourishment from her husband alone, she chose to be moved by him, but always thanked him, and the thanks, we could see, hurt him like a blow.

One night, as she lay with closed eyes, she said faintly, "Horace." I told her that Mr. Feversham was asleep on the dressing room sofa quite worn out. "Wake him," she said, "he can sleep when I am dead, and to-morrow my courage will be gone."

The nurse roused him with some difficulty, for he was thoroughly exhausted. He bathed his face and hands, and was in the bed room in a trice. He stooped and put her hand to his lips, as he said tenderly, "Well, dearest?"

Her eyes did not open, but her lips quivered a little at the tender tone.

"Horace, I wanted to say a thing to you, it grieves me to say it because I love you, but I cannot play the hypocrite in the face of death."

"Well, dear?" he said with a kind of eagerness, not expressed in voice but in his dark and hollow eyes.

"I know how many men do as you have done and think it no sin. They say—or think—the woman is handsome and has a little money; I like her as well as anyone else—rather better, perhaps. The match is very suitable, so they marry a little for beauty, a little for money, and call it love." All this was said very steadily, but in a low weak voice, and she concluded, "Horace, I forgive you."

"For what, dear Clara?"

"For marrying me, and bringing me to this."

His face flushed with a mixture of feelings in which I am sure anger had as great a part as love. I shook my head at him, and the nurse held up a warning finger, but I believe if death had been there in person to shake his skeleton hand, it would not have restrained his tongue.

"I don't know how much money you have," he said, "but I hold it as a paltry sum, my income must be at least thrice the amount of yours. It has been kept back by my father's trustees, because I married you. I never told you a lie except about my age. I married you for love, if I had taken you for money or any mixed motive, and brought you to this, I should go out like Judas and hang myself. I love you, Clara my poor suffering dear wife, but you are cruel to me, you are cruel to doubt my affection."

What Dr. Blank's feelings would have been could he have seen and heard all this in a vision. I cannot say, but our patient opened her blue eyes wide, and turning her head slowly looked in her husband's face, in a searching yet pitiful way for a minute, then held out her arms to him.

"Forgive me dear Horace—I did not mean to wound you. I love you, you cannot tell how dearly, and it hurt me so to think you had made a bargain of me. I dreaded a quarrel with one I loved and could not respect. Oh! if I could go back and live the year again, it would be different, but I'm dying. I have not made you happy or been happy myself, and now I have no heart left, and no strength to live and try again. You will forgive me for doubting you, and hold my hand to the last. You will go as far as you can with me through the dark valley, my Horace." All this in a quivering broken voice. I was ashamed of being present at this scene, but stood fascinated till she had ceased to speak, when I left the room, and in a minute the nurse followed blowing her nose as she came.

"The excitement can't matter much now, sir," she said, "for we all know she can't live, but I'm real glad she spoke, and that they understood each other."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Sweet is pleasure after pain."
—DRYDEN

The Toronto doctor was right, Mrs. Feversham did not die; the pressure on the mind gone, the heart at rest, she began slowly to recover. Though so weak that she could not lift her hand to her head, though when the fever left her voice left too, and for some days she could not articulate a word, yet she visibly improved and gradually gained strength day by day. She grew a little peevish and exacting, failed to apologize for giving us so much trouble, forgot to thank "dear Horace" or carrying her from sofa to bed and from bed to sofa, or thanked him with a kiss.

The south wind blew, the snow went all at once, the ice broke up, and every little stream and creek swelled and gurgled and made the most of its liberty, after six months imprisonment. There were actual waves on the pond, and the freshet was so great that the tall elms at its edge seemed to be growing in the water. Snow drops appeared as by magic, all day the blue-birds called and the robins gave their quaint, musical cry of joy, the crows were cawing everywhere, the winter had gone in a minute as it were, and here was spring. Six weeks from the night we had been summoned to attend Mrs. Feversham I returned to Hamilton, leaving my patient in a fair way of recovery. I would have left long before but for the earnest entreaties of Mr. Feversham, who regarded me not as a buckler against death, but a strong ally against the impertinence of the outer world. I had—when Mrs. Feversham was still hovering between life and death—by reason of threats, entreaties, bribed and bullying kept Miss Young—familiarly called "Melindy Anne"—from these three rooms sacred to suffering. I had induced her to take off her heavy shoes, and would have lent her my own slippers, had she not preferred to go about with bare feet, even in the coldest weather. She stayed four days and did an immense amount of washing, ironing and scrubbing, but as I felt her to be a very uncertain and dangerous person, and never knew what she would do next, I was greatly relieved when she told me that "the old girl to him," (*e. i.* her mother) had "themmasilly rights bad, and I must go with the old man and red 'em up, but I'll be around agin in no time," she added in a tone that damped my joy at her departure. The day she left Billy Tuddle's came and demanded his wages, saying Mrs. Briggs had treated him "like dirt," had thrown his cigar into the fire and boxed his ears, which was more "nor any man could stand." He was just fourteen years of age. Mr. Feversham not only paid his wages, but gave him another box on the ear, because he squirted tobacco juice on the floor which "made Mrs. Anne look as white as a sheet." This gave great offense to Sam Burton the hired man, who had been in a state of semi-insurrection for some days past, because his mo her had been refused admittance to Mrs. Feversham when she came with a charm to cure her right away, a charm never known to fail. As far as I could judge by my nose, it was a piece of camphor in a flannel bag, but she would not allow me to handle it, saying, "She knowed what she knowed, an' a deal more nor any doctor—poor sticks they—" but she didn't mind telling me that "Queen Ann's Powder, (namely, quinine) was good for "the 'ooman's fever."

Now Sam's spirit, which had been in a ferment since his mother's visit, boiled over at the insult offered to Billy Tuddle, and he also demanded his wages and took his departure, not without a piece of Sally Brigge's mind, delivered with a volubility that would have done credit to her mother. "Mean sperrited hound," she said, when he had gone, "if Melindy Ann had bin 'ere we'd a well whopped him to leave like that, when we need him wust."

The ice house was only half filled for summer use; the wood boxes were empty, and scarcely a stick left, as that day Sam should have drawn a cord of wood from the forest, and he went away leaving the horses unfed, and the cow without her breakfast, and felt quite proud of his exploit too, though three of the house had been up all night, not expecting Mrs. Feversham to live till the morning, his last remark being that he had "a 'igh sperrit."

About two hours after the departure of this high spirited gentleman, Mr. Hans Swartz struggled up through the fields with a heavy load of wood sawn into stove lengths, which he unloaded with little noise at the back door, Briggs and I had been in earnest council at the minute of his arrival about wood and our want of it, and greatly relieved I went out to thank the donor, a strong handsome gray-haired old man.

"Wa-al, I guess I've ben and saved the fort from freezin," he said with a broad smile. "I'll split enough for to night and leave the rest to Melindy Ann. You've had a kind o' clearin' out here? I reckon you won't clear out Melindy Ann in a hurry; you've ben here a considerable while yourself doctor. I guess you'll make it out till your patient is right smart again."

I had at that time little hope for my patient and said so.

"Wa al, all I can say is that it's a pity a dozen useless old critters I could name, hain't shoved off in the place of her. Some ot the wimmen think she's made a poor chice of a husband, but I reckon he has a sperrit by all accounts, and he sot his blow in the right place when he hit Billy Tuddles.

The next morning Mr. Gustavus Adolphus Browne arrived and had split half the remaining load of wood before breakfast and I had gone out to invite him in and thank him for his kindness in the name of mine host, when we were startled by the apparition of "Melindy Ann" striding across the fields with a large turkey under her arm. Mr. Browne had just returned to his axe as she came up.

"Wa al done," exclaimed the new arrival, "you're considerable spry at splittin' for a little un, but if the doctor 'll hold the gobbler I'll race you, and you bet I'll whip you to nuthin in no time."

The doctor retreated at this challenge, and Mr. Browne blushed deeply, but Melindy Anne, nothing daunted, seized the other axe and chopping off the head of the gobbler to quiet him, laid his body on the snow, and went to work at the wood with a will. When all the wood was split, Mr. Browne volunteered to take the team and draw another load of wood from the bush, as he thought it likely there would be a change of weather, and then the sleighing would go. No sooner was he off on his errand than Miss Drayton arrived, not in any conveyance, but on foot. She seemed very nervous and had a loud, hard cough. She said she had come to stay as long as dear Clara lived.

I told her that was impossible, that we thought Mrs. Feversham a shade better, and would risk no visitors, and she in turn told me with a great deal of feeling, how kind Clara had been in her sister's last illness, and that if she had not been suffering from such a fearful cold she would have been in the house long ago, and had come on purpose to stay. I tried my best to persuade her not to stay, Mr Feversham tried, Sally Briggs tried, nurse Adams tried, nurse Penny tried, but all in vain. Our separate and united efforts only made her weep, but did not alter her determination to stay.

"It's enough to make a fellah sweah," said Mr. Feversham, as a last effort of persuasion before he went back to his post, but at that moment he caught a glimpse of Gussy Browne and his wood team from the window, and going out he begged that little gentleman to try his hand upon Miss Drayton. Mr. Browne, after a long private interview with the lady, said that she was willing to let him drive her home—"you would not mind lending your horse and cutter?" "Delighted, I'm sush," responded Mr. Feversham with great alacrity.) If "we would allow her just to see Mrs. Feversham as she lay asleep," for now she was asleep we had told Miss Drayton. We consented, not being able to help ourselves, and the young lady came into the bedroom on tip toe. The sight of her friend's altered appearance so shocked her that she burst into tears, the tears brought on a fit of coughing, and though Mr. Feversham hurried, and half carried her through the suite of rooms, she was not out of hearing before the smothered coughing and sobbing had aroused our patient, who did not sleep again for many hours.

"So you hunted her out," said Miss Melindy Anne when next I meet her, "I'd have sot and sot till I growed to the chair afore you'd ha' cleared me, and I reckon you know it."

Indeed to clear Miss Young out seemed an impossibility, for three whole weeks she stayed with an occasional "spell to him," as she expressed it; the eye glass was useless in repressing her. "I guess you'll know me when you see me again," was the young lady's remark when Mr Feversham first brought it to his aid, and she afterwards threatened to break it, if he came inspecting, "and prying as though I'm a curiosoty," said the damsel.

Mr. Feversham rashly promised her a sky blue silk dress if she would keep away from the parlor door, and never look into the hall while she stayed.

"Wal, that'll be pretty spry," she answered calmly, "an' I guess it's a bargain, Squire, if Clara don't mind."

After this her energies redoubled, she cut two cords of wood into stove lengths, she milked the cow, she fed the horses, she slaughtered the poultry, and when Mrs. Feversham was so decidedly better, that her husband yielded to our persuasions, and took a good night's rest, and discovered the next morning that he was very hungry, Melindy Ann exclaimed, "Wal, I'm down right glad, an' I reckon I'll go to trouble and give the Squire a square meal."

For the first time since his wife's illness Mr. Feversham laughed as he looked at the dining room table. Buckwheat cake, corn cake, rolls, eggs, roast chicken, apple sauce, pumpkin pie, pickled pears, pickled blackberries, cranberry tart, ham, maple molasses and honey, all these dainties and more for the breakfast of two mortal men.

That afternoon Melindy Ann announced her intention of going home for good, and Sally Briggs came to tell us.

"She's a dayvil of a woman, but really she's been very useful, I ought to pay her," and he took out his purse.

"Oh! Lor, no, sir," said Sally Briggs, "that would never do, her father has two hundred acres, and she thinks herself as good as you; 'twould make her angry; but if you wouldn't mind shaking hands with her," she added very timidly.

"I—aw do mind it very much, but I'll do it; you come too Mr. Jarmey, and see fair play," and out we went together; Sally Briggs earnestly, though rather timidly begging Mr. Feversham not to give two fingers "as I've seen you do sir but the 'ole 'and, or she might knock you down."

"Aw—so we're going to lose you Miss Young? Much obliged I'm suah, came to say so," and he extended his hand which she grasped heartily.

"You're down right welcome; you won't forget the blue silk, I reckon?"

"I'll—aw—think of nothing else till I see you in it."

"Wal, I call that handsome. I guess I'll step along and see Miss Feversham as soon as she's right smart squire."

"Aw"—a rather long pause—"we'll be delighted."

When I related this tender leave taking to nurse Adams in the bed room, Mr. Feversham was over joyed to hear a faint little quavering laugh from the sofa.

The next day I took my departure, I had come out in three quarters of an hour, and it took me four hours to reach Hamilton when I returned, for the roads had broken up, as the phrase is. A week later—the weather being lovely—Dr. Blank proposed that we should go together and pay our last professional visit to our patient. At the gate, we met Mr. Jackson coming out with an abstracted air.

He was too much pre-occupied to see us, and as he came up said aloud. "The mincend is sixty millions three hundred and four thousand, the difference twelve thousand five hundred and eighty six; find the subtrahend," then suddenly becoming aware of our presence he moved his hat and bowed distantly. "I came down to see your patient, gentlemen," he said, "and she looks so frail a snow drop; the wonder is that she is alive poor thing, after the treatment she has received. Candour compels me to say that we need not thank you for her life, you did your best or your worst to kill her for the benefit of science, I suppose. She is at present in the garden, which I think very rash; but she tells me that the doctor ordered her to get out of doors as soon as possible. Now, gentlemen, I have lived in the world seventy five years and I hope I am entitled to some respect on that account. I am perfectly sure, from long experience, that unlimited fresh air is highly dangerous. We did not contradict him, we said we were sorry to have given offense and drove on. We found Mrs. Feversham in the garden, reclining in an easy chair, her head supported by cushions. She had a faint color in her cheeks and looked happy, and even bright. Her husband was with her of course. "You never thought to see me out here," she said, smiling and giving us each a hand, "and I did not think myself that I would live. When the baby was gone I had no wish to live. I knew it was dead when it suddenly ceased crying, and you never mentioned it, and looked at me with such compassion, all of you. You have all been very kind and I don't deserve it, for I think I could have been content never to see your faces again, if I could have held my baby alive in my arms, though you have all been so good and nurse Adams like a mother to me.' We looked at each other without a word, 'But now I am reconciled, God is very good to me. I have Horace and so many kind freends," smiling at us old fogies as she spoke.

"There's Briggs, I know her bonnet over the fence," said Mr. Feversham, "it must have been made in the year one, would you—aw—like to see her, Clara?"

"Oh! yes, I'm equal to it, I'm afraid she'll feel hurt that I have not sent for her."

Mr. Feversham with a meaning look walked away "to tell Briggs," he said, and Dr. Blank made the novel remark, "it is a very fine day."

"It is a delicious day," said Mrs. Feversham, "and I feel in tune with it. I feel it is spring with me, a renewing, a re opening of life, a sort of resurrection. Some beautiful lines have been haunting me since I opened my eyes, and heard the twitter of my old friends the swallows:

'Winter is passed; the little bee resumes
Her share of sun and shade, and o'er the lea
Hums her first hymnings to the flower's perfumes,
And wakes a sense of gratefulness in me.
The little daisy keeps its wonted place,
Ere March by April gets disarmed of snow;
A look of joy goes on its smiling face
Turned to that Power that suffers it to blow."

"Who wrote those lines?" asked Blank, by way of saying something. He was a matter of fact little man and felt rather uncomfortable under the weight of so much poetry.

"Poor Clare; you know his sad history?"

"Not I. Never heard of him in my life, and if his history is sad, better not think about him; think of something merry. Here comes Mr. Feversham with a bundle in his arms."

"Another shawl, I suppose," said Clara, without turning her head, "he is so much afraid that I shall take cold"

"Open your arms, Clara," and Mr. Feversham placed in them a rosy, healthy, fat, sleeping child."

"A baby!—my baby? I know it is, oh! say it is—it is like you, Horace—my own