

(ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.)

(NOW FIRST PUBLISHED)

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

BY FRANK BARRETT,

Author of "FETTERED FOR LIFE," "THE ADMIRABLE LADY BINDY FANE," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVII.—A WARNING.

It came about in this way. Mrs. Redmond would not stir out of the hotel on Sunday, because it was "bad form" in view of the vulgar herd of Saturday-to-Mondayers, who swarmed everywhere, and made the place unbearable; so Nessa, who was less fastidious, and indeed rather preferred to see a lot of people enjoying themselves, to the silent few looking as if their lives were a burden to them, went out alone in the afternoon. She had made up her mind the day before that she must go to the top of those white cliffs, and see how the sea looked bursting on the rocks below.

She stepped out briskly, and following the parade, passed the squalid houses and the gas works and at last found herself on the cliff, with nothing before her but the Downs and the sky and the sea. But just as she was beginning to feel that proper sense of awe and solitude which one ought to feel in the grand aspect of Nature, she became conscious that she was being followed by that pest of society—the enamoured young man—who will track unprotected young ladies into solitary places if he can, and make himself disagreeable when he may do so with tolerable impunity.

From the corner of her eye, as she looked over the sea, Nessa perceived that he was youthful and scrubby, with the appearance of a junior clerk or a draper's assistant. She walked on until she felt sure that he was keeping pace with her, and then did what perhaps, it is best, for a young lady to do in such a situation: she stopped and faced him.

When he took off his very shiny silk hat to her, she looked him calmly in the face, without moving a muscle. She knew the animal and his ways, and was prepared to make him utterly ashamed of himself.

But when, still holding his hat in his hand, he said, very humbly, "I beg your pardon, Miss Grahame: I have ventured to follow you here because I have something to say to you that I could not say elsewhere," she perceived that she had done the young man an injustice. She had a faint recollection of having seen this Jewish face before, and the recollection was strengthened by the sound of his voice and his painful embarrassment. His earnestness alarmed her, and she waited, breathless, to know what he had to tell her.

"You don't remember me," he continued, hurriedly. "Of course, you wouldn't notice any one so far beneath you, but I have—have taken the deepest interest in you from the first moment you came into our office, and—and I am proud to think I have already rendered some service, although I dare say you are not aware of it. My name is Levy, and I am clerk to old Mr. Nichols, the money lender, Finsbury Pavement."

"Remember you now. Pray put your hat on, Mr. Levy."

Nessa would have liked him to wipe the perspiration from his face with the gorgeous handkerchief that displayed a corner from his breast pocket, and would have felt much more at ease if he had taken a less servile attitude.

She walked on slowly, to give him confidence, and then said—

"I ask how I am indebted to you?"

"I don't think you are indebted to me at all the other way. In serving me, I found a pleasure that money cannot buy. I have, I think, quite paid for it."

"What I can at now do for you, I don't know. But I am sure I can do something to help you."

"What can I do for you?"

"I am sure I can do something to help you."

"What can I do for you?"

"I am sure I can do something to help you."

"What can I do for you?"

"I am sure I can do something to help you."

"What can I do for you?"

have the money to redeem that policy, he'll get the five thousand out of the insurance company—you see?"

"Yes."

"Now, Redmond is a villain, and my governor's another. The two have got one object—to take your life before you are twenty-one. They are hand and glove one with the other. They're working together, and the governor is paying the extra—the cash, I mean; and if money and villainy together can do it, you will be—I can't look at you, miss, and say it; but you can see by the look of my face what I mean."

"They will kill me! Oh, I can hardly believe that."

"But, pardon me, miss, you must believe it. You can read in the paper cases enough as to the villainy and wickedness of this. You've had a proof of Redmond's villainy; my governor is equal to anything where there's money to be made. It's all business to him."

"Yes, yes!" Nessa assented, turning round in apprehension at the sound of wheels behind them.

"You needn't be afraid, miss. No one will lay a hand on you to-day, being Sunday. While the governor is engaged in the business, there'll be no violence committed, you may depend on it. All will be done legally."

"What can be done legally that I need fear?"

"Oh, a lot. In the first place, they'll send Mrs. Redmond to quod—I mean prison for getting goods under false pretences, and pawning things that are not hers to pawn. Well, that will be no harm to you. But, at the same time, they will prove that you are of unsound mind, and either put you into a lunatic asylum, or hand you over to the keeping of Mr. Redmond. That is sure. I know the two rascally doctors that they have already engaged to prove that you are insane, and you saw one of them on Friday."

"I?"

"The old gentleman who got into the train at Three Bridges. Perhaps you caught sight of him yesterday."

"No; I have not seen him since the day I came here."

"He has seen you, though. Saw you and Mrs. Redmond come out of Mutton's and followed you to Randal's Hotel. Found you were staying there. Meanwhile, the regular 'tee who is hunting with him discovered that Mrs. Redmond had raised money on some silver which she got from a house in Bond St. three weeks ago, on credit, in your name."

"We intended to pay for it when Mr. Nichols paid us the money he promised."

"Yes; but Mrs. Redmond pawned it when she knew there was no prospect of her getting the money. Any way, she'll be sent to gaol when it comes to be tried. I don't want to say anything against a friend of yours, miss, but—"

"Please, don't," Nessa broke out, "every one misunderstands her: only I know that she is good and generous."

"Well, I'll say nothing more about her if you tell me not to. But I was going to ask you to leave her as the best means of saving yourself."

"Oh, I will not leave her. I have said so already."

"Yes, I know you have. That young fellow has gone back to Denmark. I pray you don't know that the price he paid for learning where to find you and how to save you was a promise to his father that he would never see you again unless you separated from Mrs. Redmond for good and all. He kept his word. He's gone."

Nessa bent her head, struggling to keep back the tears, biting her trembling lip, striving to gulp down the something in her throat that seemed to choke her. She had only half realised the young Dane's chivalrous sacrifice, and in her heart fostered the hope that they would meet again. Now she knew that they would never see him again.

"You will never see him again."

"Yes, I know you have. That young fellow has gone back to Denmark. I pray you don't know that the price he paid for learning where to find you and how to save you was a promise to his father that he would never see you again unless you separated from Mrs. Redmond for good and all. He kept his word. He's gone."

Nessa bent her head, struggling to keep back the tears, biting her trembling lip, striving to gulp down the something in her throat that seemed to choke her. She had only half realised the young Dane's chivalrous sacrifice, and in her heart fostered the hope that they would meet again. Now she knew that they would never see him again.

"You will never see him again."

"Yes, I know you have. That young fellow has gone back to Denmark. I pray you don't know that the price he paid for learning where to find you and how to save you was a promise to his father that he would never see you again unless you separated from Mrs. Redmond for good and all. He kept his word. He's gone."

Nessa bent her head, struggling to keep back the tears, biting her trembling lip, striving to gulp down the something in her throat that seemed to choke her. She had only half realised the young Dane's chivalrous sacrifice, and in her heart fostered the hope that they would meet again. Now she knew that they would never see him again.

"You will never see him again."

"Yes, I know you have. That young fellow has gone back to Denmark. I pray you don't know that the price he paid for learning where to find you and how to save you was a promise to his father that he would never see you again unless you separated from Mrs. Redmond for good and all. He kept his word. He's gone."

Nessa bent her head, struggling to keep back the tears, biting her trembling lip, striving to gulp down the something in her throat that seemed to choke her. She had only half realised the young Dane's chivalrous sacrifice, and in her heart fostered the hope that they would meet again. Now she knew that they would never see him again.

"You will never see him again."

discovered—so quick. However, that is no great gain on their side. You must have been found in a fortnight or so if they had lost the scent altogether, with Mrs. Redmond playing the fool. You must excuse me, miss, for I can't help saying that she is playing the fool to go on in this style. She's continually courting attention and setting the police on the watch. Here she is, carrying on the same rig she ran in London, and that before she's been in the place half a day. What has she done to escape detection? Changed her name, as if even a policeman were to be blinded by such a dodge. Changed her name: nothing more! Why, she hasn't even dyed her hair. She hasn't altered her style of dress—nothing. It's just like that sort of women; they're as reckless as the dev—as anything. I know 'em."

"Know whom?" Nessa asked in trepidation.

"Why the pros, you know. She was a pro. Began in the music halls, and took parts in the pantomimes. I thought I knew her the first time I saw her. She played Prince Poppet at the Transport, and then took to horse riding at Hangers'. They've got no idea beyond the present moment. 'Oh, it'll all come right at night:' that's their motto. They take a jump at a thing without seeing what's on the other side; just as she used to jump at those papered hoops, trusting to come down all right on the horses' back when she's through it. Mind you, miss, I don't say she's not a good woman just because she's been a pro; though I never can think she's a proper friend for you. Many of 'em are as good as gold: warm-hearted and generous and all that kind of thing. But they are so very impulsive, and they won't calculate consequences in a business-like way. While they've got money they'll chuck it about anywhere. I'll be bound Mrs. Redmond has blued—spent best part of what she got on Friday, warrant she hasn't five pounds in her purse, and is settling her mind on getting something to-morrow that will cost ten. Now how's a woman to escape notice going on like that, and how are you to escape while you stick to her? You might just as well go about with your name on your back for everyone to read and talk about. That is why," he continued, returning to his humbler tone, "I would again venture to suggest that you should separate—for a time, say. And you may take it, Miss Grahame, that it's as much for her advantage as yours. For the governor and Redmond won't bother themselves about her or spend a farthing in bringing her to justice, except as a means of getting you into their hands. Do you follow me, miss?"

"Yes; I think I understand you."

"Who's paying the fees to hunt down Mrs. Redmond? Her husband and my governor. Well, the moment they cease to pay, the fees will jack up—I mean throw up the job, and Mrs. Redmond will be as safe out of this scrape as if she were the Queen of England. If you part, you will save her from going to gaol. If you don't part, and she keeps on as she is going now, she will get three years as sure as she's alive and you—No, I cannot think of that."

"Surely it is not so bad as you imagine. Cannot I appeal to a magistrate, telling him everything that concerns myself, without reserve?"

"What could a magistrate do? At the best he might advise you to consult an able solicitor—supposing that he believed your story. Well, suppose you act on his advice and go to a good solicitor. The first question he would put when he had heard you out would be what means you have for moving the courts. What have you? Nothing. He could only shrug his shoulders and recommend you to try some one else."

"But could we not raise money?"

Mr. Levy stopped her. "For Heaven's sake, keep clear of money lenders!" he exclaimed. "Nichols is no worse than the rest, and a great deal better than some. Not one amongst 'em would dream of advancing money before making inquiries, and who would lend a penny when it is found you are in danger, of being put into a lunatic asylum, or your estate thrown into Chancery? Inquiry of any sort must end in Redmond discovering your whereabouts and getting you into his hands."

"Then, what am I to do?" Nessa asked in despair, stopping dead short, and facing the young man.

"Go back to London by the next train. It is the safest place in England for you if you are alone and only take the simplest precautions."

"I have no money, not enough to take me to London, no means of getting any when I am there."

"Miss Grahame, will you allow me to pay you what I have, as a loan, which you may pay me when you have the means? And please do not misunderstand my intention—I shall not intrude upon you: I

will not even ask you to let me accompany you to London. I would not even suggest which part of London it would be most advisable for you to live in (though I must warn you against the North and West End), for fear you might suspect me of a wish to take advantage of your position. We will part here, and I will walk on to Rottingdean while you go to the station, if you will only consent to take this."

Exalted by true gentlemanly feeling Mr. Levy spoke like a gentleman, and looked like one, despite his particularly Sunday get-up. As he concluded, he offered a very new purse, which looked as if it had been bought for the occasion.

"Oh, I cannot accept that," Nessa replied with dignity, though with warm recognition; "though indeed, indeed I thank you with all my heart for your kindness and generosity. I can never forget what you have just said to me. Besides," she added, after a moment's pause, "I must warn Mrs. Redmond of her danger."

"I will undertake to do that. Men are watching the place to-day. If they see you leave the house together you will surely be followed."

"Now, what am I to do?" Nessa asked herself, seeking earnestly to find the right course by the light of conscience. After brief reflection it appeared to her.

"I must go back to my friend, Mr. Levy. I feel that it is my duty to do so," she said. The young man remonstrated feebly, but she was firm now that she felt she was doing right, he held her in such reverence that he then gave up the attempt to dissuade her from her purpose.

CHAPTER XVIII.—A NEW OPENING.

Like other shallow persons who think themselves deep, and who are headstrong and reckless while confident in their own security, Mrs. Redmond was helpless and panic-stricken in the presence of disaster. She listened with growing dismay as Nessa related clearly and truly all that had passed between herself and Mr. Levy, and sat speechless with fright for a minute or two when all was told.

"He said they could send me to prison for three years!" she gasped at length.

"Unless you separate yourself from me; in that case you would be perfectly safe from any further pursuit."

"Then that is what I must do. I will go by the next train. Ring the bell; I must have a brandy and soda. Order a fly. Where's my bag? Get those things out of the next room."

"We must take nothing away from here. Nothing belongs to us. And—" seeing that the old discussion was likely to recommence and that a more powerful argument was necessary, "I believe that the man over there at the corner is one of the detectives who are watching us."

Mrs. Redmond, looking through the blinds, declared she recognised him as one of the men whom she had evaded at St. John's Wood. Then in the fury of impotence she turned upon Nessa and burst out into a torrent of silly regrets and unjust reproaches—wishing she had never been born, that she had never seen Nessa, that she had never left her husband, and accusing Nessa of being the cause of her ruin; finally, having exhausted her passion, she burst into tears.

Nessa waited calmly till the storm was past, and then said, quietly—

"Your position cannot be worse than it was at Grahame's. It may be very much better. You have nothing to fear when you leave me, and with your theatrical ability you can obtain an engagement wherever you please, I dare say."

"Then, what would you advise me to do, dear?" asked Mrs. Redmond, humbly, between a couple of sniffs, recognising the girl's superior strength by her self-command.

"Leave me here. While one remains in the hotel the man will not leave it. Take the train after lunch when you feel more composed."

"And you will send on the things to London to-morrow—to be left till called for?"

"No. I shall go away to-night, and I shall take nothing with me."

"But I haven't got anything. Here's only three sovereigns," she exclaimed in despair, opening her porte-monnaie.

"I must ask you to lend me one to take me to London."

"You can get up for four and sixpence."

"Then give me four and sixpence," said Nessa, quietly, trying to overcome the feeling of shame in asking this last favour.

Lunch and a liberal dose of brandy and soda restored a little courage to Mrs. Redmond, and with courage, the gambler's hope of recovering losses and winning fortune returned. She had sense enough to know that the day for making a great hit by her personal charms was past, and that thirty shillings a week was about the market value of her "theatrical ability," as Nessa

will not even ask you to let me accompany you to London. I would not even suggest which part of London it would be most advisable for you to live in (though I must warn you against the North and West End), for fear you might suspect me of a wish to take advantage of your position. We will part here, and I will walk on to Rottingdean while you go to the station, if you will only consent to take this."

Exalted by true gentlemanly feeling Mr. Levy spoke like a gentleman, and looked like one, despite his particularly Sunday get-up. As he concluded, he offered a very new purse, which looked as if it had been bought for the occasion.

"Oh, I cannot accept that," Nessa replied with dignity, though with warm recognition; "though indeed, indeed I thank you with all my heart for your kindness and generosity. I can never forget what you have just said to me. Besides," she added, after a moment's pause, "I must warn Mrs. Redmond of her danger."

"I will undertake to do that. Men are watching the place to-day. If they see you leave the house together you will surely be followed."

"Now, what am I to do?" Nessa asked herself, seeking earnestly to find the right course by the light of conscience. After brief reflection it appeared to her.

"I must go back to my friend, Mr. Levy. I feel that it is my duty to do so," she said. The young man remonstrated feebly, but she was firm now that she felt she was doing right, he held her in such reverence that he then gave up the attempt to dissuade her from her purpose.

CHAPTER XVIII.—A NEW OPENING.

Like other shallow persons who think themselves deep, and who are headstrong and reckless while confident in their own security, Mrs. Redmond was helpless and panic-stricken in the presence of disaster. She listened with growing dismay as Nessa related clearly and truly all that had passed between herself and Mr. Levy, and sat speechless with fright for a minute or two when all was told.

"He said they could send me to prison for three years!" she gasped at length.

"Unless you separate yourself from me; in that case you would be perfectly safe from any further pursuit."

"Then that is what I must do. I will go by the next train. Ring the bell; I must have a brandy and soda. Order a fly. Where's my bag? Get those things out of the next room."

"We must take nothing away from here. Nothing belongs to us. And—" seeing that the old discussion was likely to recommence and that a more powerful argument was necessary, "I believe that the man over there at the corner is one of the detectives who are watching us."

Mrs. Redmond, looking through the blinds, declared she recognised him as one of the men whom she had evaded at St. John's Wood. Then in the fury of impotence she turned upon Nessa and burst out into a torrent of silly regrets and unjust reproaches—wishing she had never been born, that she had never seen Nessa, that she had never left her husband, and accusing Nessa of being the cause of her ruin; finally, having exhausted her passion, she burst into tears.

Nessa waited calmly till the storm was past, and then said, quietly—

"Your position cannot be worse than it was at Grahame's. It may be very much better. You have nothing to fear when you leave me, and with your theatrical ability you can obtain an engagement wherever you please, I dare say."

"Then, what would you advise me to do, dear?" asked Mrs. Redmond, humbly, between a couple of sniffs, recognising the girl's superior strength by her self-command.

"Leave me here. While one remains in the hotel the man will not leave it. Take the train after lunch when you feel more composed."

"And you will send on the things to London to-morrow—to be left till called for?"

"No. I shall go away to-night, and I shall take nothing with me."

"But I haven't got anything. Here's only three sovereigns," she exclaimed in despair, opening her porte-monnaie.

"I must ask you to lend me one to take me to London."

"You can get up for four and sixpence."

"Then give me four and sixpence," said Nessa, quietly, trying to overcome the feeling of shame in asking this last favour.

Lunch and a liberal dose of brandy and soda restored a little courage to Mrs. Redmond, and with courage, the gambler's hope of recovering losses and winning fortune returned. She had sense enough to know that the day for making a great hit by her personal charms was past, and that thirty shillings a week was about the market value of her "theatrical ability," as Nessa

will not even ask you to let me accompany you to London. I would not even suggest which part of London it would be most advisable for you to live in (though I must warn you against the North and West End), for fear you might suspect me of a wish to take advantage of your position. We will part here, and I will walk on to Rottingdean while you go to the station, if you will only consent to take this."

Exalted by true gentlemanly feeling Mr. Levy spoke like a gentleman, and looked like one, despite his particularly Sunday get-up. As he concluded, he offered a very new purse, which looked as if it had been bought for the occasion.

"Oh, I cannot accept that," Nessa replied with dignity, though with warm recognition; "though indeed, indeed I thank you with all my heart for your kindness and generosity. I can never forget what you have just said to me. Besides," she added, after a moment's pause, "I must warn Mrs. Redmond of her danger."

"I will undertake to do that. Men are watching the place to-day. If they see you leave the house together you will surely be followed."

"Now, what am I to do?" Nessa asked herself, seeking earnestly to find the right course by the light of conscience. After brief reflection it appeared to her.

"I must go back to my friend, Mr. Levy. I feel that it is my duty to do so," she said. The young man remonstrated feebly, but she was firm now that she felt she was doing right, he held her in such reverence that he then gave up the attempt to dissuade her from her purpose.

CHAPTER XVIII.—A NEW OPENING.

Like other shallow persons who think themselves deep, and who are headstrong and reckless while confident in their own security, Mrs. Redmond was helpless and panic-stricken in the presence of disaster. She listened with growing dismay as Nessa related clearly and truly all that had passed between herself and Mr. Levy, and sat speechless with fright for a minute or two when all was told.

"He said they could send me to prison for three years!" she gasped at length.

"Unless you separate yourself from me; in that case you would be perfectly safe from any further pursuit."

"Then that is what I must do. I will go by the next train. Ring the bell; I must have a brandy and soda. Order a fly. Where's my bag? Get those things out of the next room."

"We must take nothing away from here. Nothing belongs to us. And—" seeing that the old discussion was likely to recommence and that a more powerful argument was necessary, "I believe that the man over there at the corner is one of the detectives who are watching us."

Mrs. Redmond, looking through the blinds, declared she recognised him as one of the men whom she had evaded at St. John's Wood. Then in the fury of impotence she turned upon Nessa and burst out into a torrent of silly regrets and unjust reproaches—wishing she had never been born, that she had never seen Nessa, that she had never left her husband, and accusing Nessa of being the cause of her ruin; finally, having exhausted her passion, she burst into tears.

Nessa waited calmly till the storm was past, and then said, quietly—

"Your position cannot be worse than it was at Grahame's. It may be very much better. You have nothing to fear when you leave me, and with your theatrical ability you can obtain an engagement wherever you please, I dare say."

"Then, what would you advise me to do, dear?" asked Mrs. Redmond, humbly, between a couple of sniffs, recognising the girl's superior strength by her self-command.

"Leave me here. While one remains in the hotel the man will not leave it. Take the train after lunch when you feel more composed."

"And you will send on the things to London to-morrow—to be left till called for?"

"No. I shall go away to-night, and I shall take nothing with me."

"But I haven't got anything. Here's only three sovereigns," she exclaimed in despair, opening her porte-monnaie.

"I must ask you to lend me one to take me to London."

"You can get up for four and sixpence."

"Then give me four and sixpence," said Nessa, quietly, trying to overcome the feeling of shame in asking this last favour.

Lunch and a liberal dose of brandy and soda restored a little courage to Mrs. Redmond, and with courage, the gambler's hope of recovering losses and winning fortune returned. She had sense enough to know that the day for making a great hit by her personal charms was past, and that thirty shillings a week was about the market value of her "theatrical ability," as Nessa