

There was no sound about save the sound of dumb life in the woods, and of the wind and cascades in the dell.

Marianne was passing through the hall on her way up to her room when the two hunters entered. They looked black and tired—Jasper the more so, it apparently being his custom to try "ornamental shooting"—such as lying on his back and trying to shoot over his shoulder. The girl surveyed them with curling lips.

"Noble creatures!" she murmured. "I trust you have had good sport. I trust you have killed something."

Aubrey laughed, but Jasper returned her look steadily.

"Nothing but wild things, Marianne—nothing of consequence. We haven't tried our hand on anything human—anything worth the name yet."

Aubrey stared, but the girl passed on without reply, with flushing cheek. Her thoughts were busy.

"He is too sure. He needs humbling," she said to herself. "He needs being 'brought down.'"

She was late when she entered the room where they were assembled for dinner, but she was beautiful. She wore a dress of emerald green velvet, its scant folds clinging so close that her tall, slim figure seemed serpent-like in its lithe movements. In the high coils of her backward-brushed hair were two small, blood-red poppies.

Aubrey looked and opened his soft, blue eyes. "Saints above! how resplendent we are tonight!" he exclaimed.

He looked again, this time more examiningly. "The dress is beautiful, Marianne; but the poppies. I don't quite fancy the poppies. Why do you wear them? There are prettier flowers in abundance I could get for you."

"Oh, I like them," answered Marianne, with a queer smile. "The poppies suit me."

"They ought to suit you, surely," said Jasper, who had sauntered up to where the two stood on the hearth-rug. "Poppies stupefy, and they can kill, if you want their service."

Fortunately, at this moment the servant announced dinner. Mrs. Lynn being a lady to whom decorum was the salt of life, wrangling before her was out of the question. They took their places at table—Aubrey opposite his mother—the other two facing each other. Marianne had not spoken again, but her blood was fiery. She had felt the sting in Jasper's soft words. The dart of keen fury was still piercing her.

"I will stupefy him," was her thought. She knows her beauty well. "He thinks he is sure. I will stupefy him."

After dinner Aubrey asked if coffee might be sent to the room—called the library, because there was a billiard-table in it. He had some "work" to do. And it was thither that fate, in the course of the evening, directed Mrs. Lynn's aimless step. She would "see what the young folks were about." Once inside the door, she stopped still, staring in angry surprise.

For the Blue Rose was smoking; she stood watching the young men at a game of billiards. They were smoking, which was nothing; but a cigarette was in Marianne's lips.

"Marianne smoking!" cried the angry lady. "Is it possible—smoking?"

"Yes, Aunt Laura," said the culprit. "I like a cigarette after dinner. I think it is good for the stomach."

Mrs. Lynn, silent with exasperation, was meditating what next to say, when Aubrey interferred.

"Mother is right, Marianne," he said, eagerly. "It is not nice to see you smoke."

"But you smoke," said the siren. "Why should not I, if I like? It is great fun to make the cigarettes."

"Why do you interfere, Aubrey?" now said another voice—a voice that cut across the talk of the other two like cold, keen steel. "Why should I not Marianne smoke if she chooses? All the women—of a certain stamp—smoke. Lovely lips! Tobacco lends a charm to them. Be wise and interfere not."

"How you two are always wrangling," said Aubrey, pettishly. "Is it not possible for you to agree about anything? It is confoundedly unpleasant for those who have to hear it."

Marianne had turned white after her first crimson flush of rage. She stood with clenched hands.

"He does it purposely. He is always putting me in the wrong. He likes to hurt me. And it is always about you—you! If it were not for you we should be friends."

She turned and darted out of the room, leaving Aubrey standing, stricken helpless by her poisoned words.

This passed away. A few days after Aubrey came in bearing a package. He unfolded it from many wrappings, revealing at last a statue, a pretty boy, some ten or twelve inches in height. "Is it not a beauty?" he said, to Marianne. "See how he laughs—and that wreath falling from his curls. Isn't he a jolly little fellow?"

"What is it meant for?" asked Marianne, looking.

"Don't you see? It's a Love."

"But it has no wings—it's a crippled love?"

The artist had purposely given it the appearance of wings that had been broken close off by the shoulders. Love with wings broken and gone would be better, perhaps, than with wings crippled and trailing in the dust.

"Don't you like him. I got it purposely for you," said Aubrey, turning to the young girl with some timidity. "Perhaps his wings will grow again."

"Oh, but I don't care about him," said Marianne, with indifference. "The house is full of such things already. One can't stir in this room now without knocking something over."

She turned her shoulder. Aubrey's handsome face flushed with mortified feeling. Then Jasper spoke.

"Poor fellow! Give him to me, Aubrey. I like such things. He shall have the place of honor in my room—over the mounted stag's-head."

"No, no! If you are going to hide him away up there, I will take him. At least, he will make a variety. I will find room for him, Aubrey, said Marianne, eagerly.

"Do; he will serve for a symbol," was Jasper's low-voiced comment. "He is Love, but he has no wings. He will grovel for ever on the earth. He will never soar."

Marianne looked her enemy steadily in the face. She patte! the Cupid on the back. "Poor little fellow! He's been caught in bad company: Some cruel hunter has made a target of him and torn away his wings. I shall heal him."

And Jasper was silent, not quite perceiving what her smile meant.

And after this there was a change in the mental attitude of these people—apparently a change. If the dominant wish of Jasper Radcliffe's heart had been to make himself pleasing in Marianne's eye, he could not have rendered her more subtle homage—he could not have instilled more delicate flattery into every look and speech. If, too, there was a barb sheathed now in his suave words, the sweetest rose-and lily essence smothered its keen sting.

It would seem that all his time, all his thoughts, were hers, to be used for her pleasure.

"You and Jasper are great friends now, are you not, Marianne?" said Aubrey, one day, when Jasper had brought her the latest book of the season from the city. It might be noticed that he had never called her the "Blue Rose" since that day when she had protested so vigorously against the term.

"Oh, yes, great friends—the best of friends," answered Marianne, readily. "Are you not glad?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Aubrey, slowly.

"Don't you think it nice—don't you think it much better to be friends than enemies?" asked the girl, pursuing the theme. If Aubrey's eyes had not yet discovered the dark form hidden by the hangings dropped over the western-looking window, she at least knew it was there. And it was to Jasper's ears she was speaking.

"Yes," once more says Aubrey, slowly. "I do think it's nicer to be friends; but, hang me, if I do think Jasper is quite your friend, Marianne!"

Then he colored up hotly, feeling that he had been traitorous to his friend. For of this thing he was sure, Jasper was a friend to him.

"I mean—you know, I mean to say, Jasper is the best fellow in all the world; the kindest, the strongest-hearted—one who would stand by a fellow to the death. But, somehow, for all your soft words and looks, I don't quite believe in his good will to you. And you know, Marianne, I'm fond of you."

The brave fellow's voice faltered; he could get no further. He loved both of these two so well; but Marianne, lifting her eyebrows scornfully, turned away.

"Aubrey," said Jasper, that evening, when the two young men were alone together, "I have been thinking why don't you go abroad?"

Aubrey, who had been fidgeting up and down the room, started with surprise. "Go abroad?" he repeated—"for what purpose?"

"For many purposes; for change, for amusement, to make something of your life."

"My life is well enough here," said Aubrey, coldly.

"And, then, the distinction," pursued Jasper, not heeding. "When a man occupies a special post—when he has responsibilities and commands others—he cuts a sharper outline against the world. Women, and men, too, like that."

Aubrey's eyes kindled; his color rose. *Would Marianne like it for him?*

"And you are lucky enough to have relations who can get you any post abroad," finished Jasper, tossing back a rolling ember on the hearth.

Aubrey did not speak at once; his thoughts were busy. To get a fine position under the Government, abroad—in London, Berlin, in Rome—to take Marianne with him, his wife. To make her happy, and let the world see all her wondrous grace of charm and beauty! Why, he wondered he had not thought of it before. And, too, once Marianne was his wife, Jasper could not help but like her. This strange animosity would die, and the two beings he cared most for on earth, besides his mother, would be friends.

"I'll do it," he cried. "I'll set about it at once. It is a glorious plan." He put a loving hand on Jasper's shoulder, "Your plan, old fellow, too."

After that his days were dreams of glory. And he had not long to wait, as such things go. Once his name and claim presented, then followed a good deal of "wiring." He had on his mother's side a powerful Southern influence to back him. He was young, wealthy, handsome. There was a vacancy abroad—in a word, he was successful.

"And you shall go with me, Jasper, he insisted. "This is your work. You shall have a holiday and accompany me. Then what a lever you will have, hunting up odd things."

He got up, walking back and forth through the long room, imagining things, while Jasper listened.

"I can fancy you, Jasper, early and late, exploring out-of-the-way unknown picture shops. You will smell deliciously of old rags and turpentine. You will haunt the stalls for old books, old manuscripts. What a fever you were in when you found that bundle of yellow old letters up in our garret. How you looked."

Jasper Radcliffe could not, one might have thought, have looked much more death-like reading the old letters than he did now.

"Yes," he said, slowly, "it was a shock-reading those. They were like flashes of lightning from my dead father's soul. They were written to one woman—poems of passion, each word weighing like gold."

A sort of pale illumination transfigured his face. His eyes gleamed with light, under which was darkness.

"My dear fellow," said Aubrey, putting an affectionate hand on the other man's shoulder, "you are tired out. I happen to know you haven't slept much for two nights. Burns tells me you wander through the grounds. You are killing yourself. Come, now, don't think of those things so much."

"Oh, I shall sleep to-night. I shall take enough chloral to insure that, and as for not thinking, why, sometimes I wake at dead of night roused by that pant of pleading passion in those letters. He pleads for very life as well as for his happiness at his false love's hands. Pauline! Pauline!"

"Was that the woman's name?" asked Aubrey.

"Pauline! Pauline! Can you not hear it? Why, a heart-choir snaps at each word."

He was getting wilder. But just then a hand put aside the curtains of the window—a flower-wreathed head, dark but bright as Love itself, appeared.

"Who is calling Pauline? That was my mother's name," said Marianne, looking in. "How will you look? May I come in? Are you quarreling?"

She leaned against the sash, like some flower of dark tropic bloom, hiding a poisonous blood.

"Oh, yes, come in," exclaimed Aubrey; but Jasper, dark and wild and angry, flung a lightning glance towards her, and then walked swiftly from the room.

"Why, how strange he looks!" exclaimed the frightened girl. "Is anything the matter with him?"

"He is only a little restless. He has been working rather hard for me in this matter, and is tired out," was Aubrey's answer, given a little at random.

"Do you think—do you suppose he is—that he will be like—like his father?" whispered Marianne, shrieking closer to him. "You know he put an end to his life."

"I know," said Aubrey, who was beginning to untangle some threads of memory. "But he suffered early in life from an unhappy love; he never was the same after it. Jasper is all right."

"Of course he never will suffer from that cause," was the girl's answer, tossing her head saucily.

"Don't think of it. I'll look him up presently," was Aubrey's hasty reply. He was not quite satisfied that Jasper was "all right," after all. "You know he always has these wild moods after working hard by day and not sleeping of nights."

But later, at dusk, when he sought Jasper, his friend was not to be found. Burns had seen him "prowling about in grounds, looking quite ill." Aubrey himself, feeling quite "used up," went to Jasper's room. It was warm and still, with one wide set, uncurtained window through which stars and moonlight streamed. At the far end was a desk, partly shaded by a rich hanging drape from his view of the room.

Aubrey flung himself into the easy chair before the desk. A *carafe* holding iced water stood there, and a half-filled glass. He was thirsty and glad of the water. So he emptied the half-filled glass at one swallow. Then he filled it from the *carafe* and drank it again.

"I'll wait till Jasper comes up," then said Aubrey, leaning comfortably back in his chair. Time swept on. Star and moon still through the clear stillness shone a id watched solemnly. How calm the night grew. No sound, no stir.

Did angels watch there, looking down, waiting?

Jasper, coming in with softened tread, crossed the room and flung himself down on the floor prone by the open casement. His mood had softened with the softening hour. It was at such times as this that his young mother had drawn him to her knee and told him stories of the far Bible-world that haunted him even now.

He could hear her soft voice, he could see the soft flush of her cheek; she had been the angel of his darkened home in that sad youth of his when he remembered his father's presence as always something baleful, terrifying!

"Mother, mother!" he sobbed. "I will believe! You are an angel now; and there has been one good woman in the world, for you have been here. Oh, help me now—help me!"

He grew calmer. The wild fire in him died down the solace of sweet, falling tears was his. And then the strange stillness in the room seized on him, and a great awe fell about him as a mantle might, oppressing him. He could not tell how late the night was, but more than one hour had passed while he wept there.

"I'll take a few drops of the chloral now," was his thought. "Careless! I must have left it all standing there in the tumbler."

He rose and pulled the curtain by the desk aside. He stopped, stood there and looked. He could not cry out, for he had no voice with which to speak.

It was the vigil of the dead Jasper had kept.

The dead! the dead! the dead!

Who shall bury them out of sight? Where is the soil deep enough to cover them from our eyes? Where is the space so wide the sound of lamentation cannot pierce and wake no sound but echo?

"I hear not the voice of my love! I sit in my grief. I wait for morning in my tears."

Jasper was ready to go; such few possessions as he wished to take with him he had gotten together. He could have carried them in a knotted handkerchief in his hand—memorials of the dead—priceless!

He was stealing silently across the grounds, when out of the stillness of a sudden Marianne's figure, clothed in black, rose; Marianne's sad eyes fronted him. A long shudder shook Jasper from head to foot; he shrank back, speechless.

"So you are going!" she said, sadly. "After all the trouble, after the ruin you have wrought, you go like this?"

He was silent; not so she. Her words ran on like flame.

"It was your work; you did it—you! But for you he would be here with us now. You thought he loved me—you came between us with gibes, with mockery of me. I did not love him, but I would have been as a sister to him always, and made him care for me as such; only you meddled—you meddled to his harm."

Jasper found tongue at length to break through this wild inconsequent flow of resentful speech. He took a step forward.

"Hush!" he cried angrily. "You are saying things you will be sorry for. You go too far."

"Too far?" Her scornful laugh was like flame in Jasper's ears. "How far did you go, Jasper? Did you care when you came between us—him and me? True, I did not love him, but you meant to harm me. Always you worked to harm me in his good, true mind. Why did you? You hated me always. Why did you hate me, Jasper?"

Her eyes were soft with tears now; their fire dead. Old letters—letters written by a hand dead and dust now—speak, "Answer this question, why did you hate me, Jasper? Then you planned to take him away, and you made me believe—oh, it was wicked—wicked—you used soft words and looks—you looked promises you would not speak—you swore oaths in your glances that your lips did not dare make, falsely. Jasper—Jasper!"

He stood stricken—a new fire about him, torturing and kindled by his own hands. Suddenly he stirred as a man out of a trance might, looking up.

"Oh, just God!" he cried. "I never once dreamed of this. I never even thought of this, that you loved me—me! I never thought that, God knows."

Her face was dropped into her hands now. Large tears rolled from her tight-clasped fingers, dropping to the leaves where their feet stood. Jasper hesitated a moment; he looked about him—around—above—helpless! He pitied her with all his strong being, he pitied her, knowing what he knew—what was in store for her—but he would give her her choice.

"If you love me, Marianne, if you dare be my wife, then come with me."

She turned pale, but her dark eyes flashed sweet and clear of sorrowing tears once more.

"I am going," said Jasper, again. "If you dare to be my wife come—come now!"

"As we are?" she faltered.

His look hardened. "I am Cain! What is there in the place I could take—or you? The world lies before us. Come!"

Still she glanced backwards. Here was life, soft with ease, sweet with luxury, shut in from care and riotous ways, graceful and bright, made soft to tired feet and grateful to harrowed ears. Still, robbed of his presence what would even this luxury be? She loved him.

"I will go." She burst into sobs. "I am a most unhappy woman, more sinned against than sinning, Jasper. And you do not love me?"

He did not answer. He pulled her shawl up more closely about her shoulders.

"Come!" he said, simply.

And they went away together.

ONE who finds out little piquant matters relative to London antiquities points to Debenham House in Hammersmith, and tells us to make a note of it, as it is one of those old-fashioned houses to be talked about on account of its former illustrious residents. No other house in London, he says, could boast such a succession of great players for its occupants. It appears that Mrs. Siddons lived there, as did the Kembles, and the Keans, Mr. Charles Mathews, Mrs. Weylett, and Madame Vestris. The house was an old one when Mrs. Siddons took it. Her successors have become occupants perhaps as much on account of the traditions of the house as because of its intrinsic convenience and its surroundings, which have been very pleasant.

SILVER CREEK, N. Y., Feby. 6, 1880.

GENTS—I have been very low, and have tried everything, to no advantage. I heard your Hop Bitters recommended by so many, I concluded to give them a trial. I did, and now am around, and constantly improving, and am nearly as strong as ever.

W. H. WELLER.