

NOVEMBER.

The leaves are fading and falling,
The winds are rough and wild,
The birds have ceased their calling,
But let me tell you, my child.

Though day by day, as it closes,
Doth darker and colder grow
The roots of the bright red roses
Will keep alive in the snow.

And when the Winter is over,
The boughs will get new leaves,
The quail come back to the clover,
And the swallow back to the eaves.

The robin will wear on his bosom
A vest that is bright and new,
And the loveliest way-side blossom
Will shine with the sun and the dew.

The leaves to-day are whirling,
The brooks are all dry and dumb,
But let me tell you, my darling,
The spring will be sure to come.

There must be rough, cold weather,
And winds and rains so wild;
Not all good things together
Come to us here, my child.

So, when some dear joy loses
Its beautiful summer blow,
Think how the roots of the roses,
Are kept alive in the snow.

TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

A NEW NOVEL,

By the Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "Strangers and Pilgrims," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXVI.—Continued.

"Believe in her!" cried the baronet, flashing out indignantly, "do you suppose I should marry her if I did not believe her to be all that is good and pure and high-minded?"

"You have known her so short a time!"

"Sir, there are intuitions," exclaimed Sir Aubrey solemnly.

"Then settle five thousand, and back your opinion, as the racing men say."

"So be it—draw up the draft and let me have it for consideration. There will be plenty of time for execution between this and the marriage. Oh, by-the-bye, there's one document you can make as plain and brief as you please—an agreement promising to pay Mr. James Carew a hundred a year, in quarterly instalments, during the remainder of his life. I can't have my father-in-law a parish schoolmaster. I give him a maintenance which will support him in comfort and decency for the rest of his days. Perhaps you'll ask me to make it five hundred," added the baronet, with some asperity.

"No, Sir Aubrey. A hundred a year for the father I consider ample. I hope I have not offended by my regard for the interests of the future Lady Perriam."

"No, Bain. You're a good fellow, I know, and devoted to your employer, as your father was before you. I like you for taking Miss Carew's part." "I'm obliged to you. I thought you would have echoed that parrot cry about disparity of years, unsuitability of tempers, and so on. I like you for taking my future wife's part against me. Why should the heir-at-law get more than he is strictly entitled to? He'll get the benefit of all my father's improvements on the estate proper—Gad—he shall have not an acre of the land we've added. I'll settle five thousand on Sylvia, and I dare say I shall leave her a good deal more if she makes me as good a wife as I believe she will. Good day, Bain, you may as well come to dinner, by the way,—come at six, and we shall have an hour for going through the settlement before the Carews arrive."

Mr. Bain professed himself happy to obey any commands of Sir Aubrey's. He generally dined at Perriam once or twice a year, when there was some odd bit of land in the market, or some important lease to be renewed. The invitation was understood to be a condescension on Sir Aubrey's part, despite Mr. Bain's professional status and legal right to the title of gentleman. Mrs. Bain had never been invited with her husband, and in Mrs. Bain's particular circle the baronet was set down as a proud man.

"He wouldn't have the income he has if it wasn't for Bain," the lady would observe to her gossip, "but he hasn't a spark of gratitude in his nature. He'll take off his hat to me in my own hall as stiff as a Sir Chesterfield Walpole, but never so much as open his lips to wish me good morning."

Mr. Bain accompanied his employer into the street, and stood on the pavement while Sir Aubrey mounted Splinter, whose sleek neck Mr. Bain patted approvingly.

"I wish I could get such a horse as that, Sir Aubrey; I'm generally pretty fortunate in horse flesh, but I never met with anything to match him."

Sir Aubrey smiled, and bent over Splinter affectionately.

"Six o'clock, Bain," he said.

"Six o'clock, Sir Aubrey;" and Sir Aubrey shook his rein, and rode gaily down the high street, pleased in the easy manner in which Shadrack Bain had taken the announcement of his marriage.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE STEWARD IN THE BOSOM OF THE FAMILY.

Mr. Bain went back to his office, seated himself at his desk, and gave himself up to deepest thought. It was not often that Mr. Bain thought. His active prosperous life was too busy to allow much margin for meditation. No twilight hour did Mr. Bain waste on those waking dreams in which some men let their fancies wander, pleased with shadows; nor did sad retrospective musings, tender memories of days that were gone, ever beguile Mr. Bain into forgetfulness of the present. He was a man who lived essentially in the life of to-day. The business in hand, however petty, was the supreme business of his existence. He brought all his forces into life's daily battle; and it was perhaps on this account that no one ever took him at a disadvantage.

But when Shadrack Bain did think, he thought with all his might. See him now, elbows planted on his desk, chin set firmly on his clasped hands, and you see a man with whom thought is the impalpable scaffolding of a substantial edifice. The man does not think only—he builds. The constructive faculty—strongest organ in that strong brain—is hard at work. The closely knit brows denote that the architectural design in hand just now is complicated; there are difficulties even. For some time the thing seems impossible; then the keen eyes take a more resolute look, the firm lips tighten, and now relax into a slow smile. The difficulties are conquered, the airy scaffolding stands firm; he sees it perfect in every angle, and the smile becomes almost triumphant. The plan of his future edifice is complete.

"Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write fifty," repeated Mr. Bain, in a musing tone. "I think I have made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness this morning."

It was some time before Sir Aubrey's land steward settled to his daily work in his usual brisk manner. He opened a handsome japanned case on which were painted the magical words—Perriam Estate—and looked over a number of title deeds. Some he threw on his left hand and others on his right, until the parchments made two separate heaps.

On one of these he laid his hand firmly.

"All these my father and I added to the estate," he said to himself. And it seemed him that Sir Andrew and his son Sir Aubrey were as cyphers when weighed in the balance with his father and himself.

"Why not five thousand a year?" he mused. "Why not seven? But no doubt Sir Aubrey will leave her all he has to leave if she behaves well to him. What could a weak little thing like her do to offend him—a parish schoolmaster's daughter. I saw her once standing at the gate of the school-house garden—a slim, fair-haired girl, with brown eyes. Pretty enough, I daresay. But I was driving too fast to take much notice. A girl that could be moulded to anything, no doubt. There'll be a fine estate by the time she's a widow—a fine independent estate. And if the heir-at-law should turn me out of the old property I shall still have my grip upon Perriam."

Rarely had Shadrack Bain spent so much time upon meditation—upon thought which soared out of the narrow circle of the present into the wide cloudland of the future—as he spent this morning. He had no actual work, no file of sharp, short, decisive letters ready for the copying machine, to show for his departed morning when the brazen tongue of the family bell gave note of the one o'clock dinner. He started up from his chair with a surprised look, and made haste to wash his hands at the well appointed lavatory in a little room beyond the clerk's office.

It was an established rule in Monkhampton—strict as Jewish law—that the middle classes, the simple respectable people, who prided themselves on their simplicity and respectability, should dine at one o'clock. However laggard appetite might be, the family board was spread with plain, substantial fare at that particular hour. Families who hungered after fashion, or even what was called gentility—might dine later if they pleased—might have an untidy scrambling meal in the middle of the day called luncheon, and an early supper at seven—disguised under the name of dinner—and call that fashion. By so doing they cut themselves off from those prouder burghers who clung tenaciously to the manners and customs of their forefathers. Mr. Bain was of the old school, and though there had been vague half-expressed aspirations on the part of his daughters for late dinners and equestrian exercise, those yearnings had been stifled in the birth. Neither Matilda Jane nor Clara Louisa had dared to give them utterance in their father's hearing.

The dining-room—that apartment whose crimson moireen curtains were visible from the street, was a comfortable square room, with pannelled walls, painted and grained, in the semblance of dark oak, and graced with family portraits, in which the high-waists and floral head-gear, the buff waist-coats, ponderous watch chains, and formidable shirt frills of the George and William period were preserved for the gratification of posterity. The furniture was of the same era, and was as solid as it was ugly. The silver of the neatly laid dinner table was of the Puritanic fiddle pattern—the delf dinner service was of honest willow—but a superior willow, relieved about the rims and handles of vegetable dishes and soup tureens with a little gilding. The damask napery was of spotless purity. Everything indicated that honest middle-class prosperity which follows not the changes of fashion—house-keeping which goes on to-day exactly as it was begun twenty years ago.

Had Mr. Bain been of an epicurean temper he might have made some murmur against the placid monotony of his daily fare. The endless procession of legs of mutton and wing ribs of beef, varied occasionally by a roast of pork, a sabbath fillet of veal, a Michaelmas goose, a Saturday beef-steak pie. But if not altogether an intellectual man, Mr. Bain was certainly not a slave to his senses, and provided he eat when he was hungry cared but little with what viands he was fed. The joint was well cooked and cleanly served, the potatoes were well boiled, and the cook had her gamut of substantial old English puddings with which to embellish the meal. Pudding every other day was the rule of the Bain household. They could quite as well have afforded themselves pudding every day, but Mrs. Bain, who looked at life from a pious standpoint, considered daily pudding a pampering of the flesh. There was always a blank look upon the faces of the younger members on off days, and Mrs. Bain felt that those lenten deprivations all the year round were a blessing to her offspring. A provident wife and a thoughtful mother of the old Puritan type, this Mrs. Bain, and her husband felt that in Louisa Pawker he had secured a treasure, even putting her six thousand pounds out of the question. Unhappily, for the last three years, Mrs. Bain had been more or less of an invalid—obliged to wear a respirator all the winter—unable to go out of doors after sunset, even in summer, keeping her bed at times, and suffering much from complicated ailments of lungs and throat, which as the family doctor had whispered must some day prove fatal, but bearing up bravely through all, and keeping her husband's house vigilantly even when illness made her a prisoner in her bedroom. Summer was a kindly season for Mrs. Bain, and while the warm weather lasted she seemed tolerably brisk, and took her seat at the head of the table, and carved the joint for the seven healthy sons and daughters, Mr. Bain not caring to be troubled by the wants of these young ravens. He liked to review his morning's work, and plan his afternoon's labours as he eat his dinner.

Mrs. Bain was a small pale woman, with an honest, intelligent face, and dark eyes that had a pleasant softness in them. She had never been pretty, and falling health had now set the stamp of decay on her pallid countenance; but she looked what she was, a good woman. Her children loved her, despite her somewhat Puritan rule, which exacted a good deal of self-denial from those young people; and her husband respected her.

To-day the head of the household eat with less than his usual healthy appetite. So languidly indeed did Mr. Bain ply his knife and fork as to draw upon himself the notice of his family.

"Aren't you well, father?" asked Matilda Jane, the oldest daughter, "you're hardly eating anything."

"I hope the beef isn't too much done for you, father," said the house-mother with affectionate solicitude. "I always tell Betsy to do it with the gravy in. And it's a very fine wing rib to-day. The joint weighed fifteen pounds eleven ounces. I saw it in the scale myself."

"The beef's very good, mother, but I've not much of an appetite, and this is only to be my luncheon. I'm to dine with Sir Aubrey at seven."

"Another lease, I suppose."

"Something in that way," replied Shadrack.

"I heard Sir Aubrey's horse stop before our door while I was in the kitchen talking to the cook," said Mrs. Bain, "and I thought it must be something particular to bring him here so early."

"It was some rather particular business," replied the lawyer.

The family evinced no curiosity. Leases, and small purchases of land, alterations, improvements, drainage, waste bits of ground reclaimed, were not subjects to engage the interest of the female mind. Mr. Bain's sons were too young to sympathize with his industry. Their minds were absorbed by football, cricket, and the fourth book of the *Æneid*. No one questioned him further about Sir Aubrey's visit.

"You were at Hedingham Fancy Fair, you two girls, weren't you?" asked Mr. Bain, presently.

"Yes, father," replied the elder. "Mrs. Thomas Toynbee asked us to go with her daughters. The Toynbees are Church of England people, you know, and Mr. Thomas Toynbee is first cousin to Mr. Toynbee of Hedingham, the rich manufacturer. Mother said we might go—she thought you wouldn't mind for once in a way, though they're not chapel people."

"I've no objection," said Mr. Bain. "Did you see Miss—Miss Carew, I think it is—the schoolmaster's daughter, while you were there?"

"Yes, father. We went into the orchard to see the children at tea, and she was there."

"A very pretty girl, isn't she?" enquired Mr. Bain. His daughters looked at each other and deliberated.

"That's a matter of taste, father," said Clara Louisa.

"She's not my style of beauty," said Matilda Jane.

"But, I suppose, some people admire her," added Clara Louisa, "for it is the common talk that Mr. Standen of Dean House is in love with her, and is most likely to marry her, if his mother doesn't interfere to prevent him."

"Do you know anything about this Miss Carew? You've heard people talk about her, it seems. Have you ever heard what kind of a girl she is?"

"Lor, no, father; you don't suppose I know anybody who knows her, a parish schoolmaster's daughter? The Miss Toynbees of Hedingham teach in the Sunday-school sometimes, and they told their cousins that they considered Sylvia Carew excessively vain, and very much above her station in all her notions; a girl who wanted setting down. That's what the Miss Toynbees said."

"Humph," said Mr. Bain, "that's what the Miss Toynbees said, is it? And then within himself he reflected that perhaps it would be Sylvia's privilege to set down the Miss Toynbees, rather than to be set down by them."

Not a hint of Sir Aubrey's marriage did Shadrack Bain give to his family circle. Sir Aubrey had announced that event to him in the strictest confidence, and the agent showed himself worthy of the trust.

He was hardly up to his usual standard of mental activity all that afternoon. This business of Sir Aubrey's marriage was too startling to be easily put out of his mind. He wrote letters, looked over the rent book, saw two or three Monkhampton clients, and got through his work tolerably well, but his mind was only half in it. He was glad when it was time to order the dogcart for his drive to Perriam, glad to turn his back upon the common work of the office, and go up to his own room to dress.

He looked as good a gentleman as the best in Monkhampton when he came down stairs, at a quarter past five, clad in a suit of plainest black, with neat boots, slender gold watch chain, faultless shirt front of unadorned linen—clean—well brushed—a model country gentleman. Thus attired, his family looked up to him with reverential admiration.

"How well you would look in the pulpit, father, dressed like that," said Matilda Jane.

Mr. Bain smiled as he adjusted his neckcloth before the looking-glass over the dining-room chimney-piece, while his admiring family sat round the table taking their tea.

"How much better I should look in the House of Commons," he said to himself, not ill pleased with his own image in the glass; "and who knows what may happen, if I keep my grip upon the Perriam property?"

"Do you think you shall be late, Shadrack?" asked Mrs. Bain, meekly. There was no such thing as a latch-key in the Bain household. The head of the family was all sobriety and steadiness. But he was the undisputed master of his ways, and if he chose, for some wise purpose of his own, to stay out late, nobody would question his right.

"No, my dear; Sir Aubrey never sits up late, as you know."

"I thought there might be a party, Shadrack."

"Party?" cried Mr. Bain, "as if Sir Aubrey ever asked me to his parties, or ever gave any, for the matter of that. What could put such a notion into your head, Louisa?"

"I don't know," answered Mrs. Bain. "You've dressed more particularly than usual. That's the last new suit Frazer sent you home, isn't it? You said you shouldn't begin to wear it just yet."

"The old one's an uncomfortable fit. Besides, what's the use of having good clothes lying hidden in a chest of drawers? There's the trap. Good-bye, Louisa; good-bye, girls and boys."

To be Continued.