

corridor of the tower, prepared to cement the iron shutters outside the window of the room, and thus by excluding the air, immerse them in a living tomb; as he passed along the corridor he shut one side of the shutters, which were divided, and met in the middle; the iron changed as it shut, startling the girls into a consciousness of the terrible fact, that they were to be shut out from light and air, and thus to die!

They screamed with horror, as they saw the gray uncovered head of the fierce man staring upon them for a moment, ere he shut the iron doors which were to divide them from the living, breathing world for ever!

He did not hurry over his work, he knew there was no one to tell the tale, and he lingered, that he might revel in the sighs and sounds of despair, which he ever and anon stayed his hand to hear; but which never came, his victims knew they must die, and the strong heart of their father was given them; they would die, and give no sign.

The evil work was done, and the spirit that walketh in darkness, who had given his aid in both the conception and execution, passed by ere the stars came out, with their pale light to help men in the dreary night.

The evil one rested on the balustrade of the corridor, well pleased to see his work done. He cared not for the death of the two girls, they were none of his, they might die now, or live a hundred years if it were so ordered; to him it mattered not, but the work done then, had made Richard Carmichael sevenfold more the child of hell than he was before.

The footsteps of Sir Richard as he departed from the corridor for some time in the ears of the desolate girls fainter and fainter, telling them but too plainly that these were the last sounds from mortal foot which should ever greet their hearing.

They were struck dumb by their great despair, and folding their arms about each other, they sat in the darkness, striving to comfort themselves with the hope of meeting the father they had so loved in the Heaven they knew they would soon win.

Poor children they little knew the pangs which precede death by foul air, but by degrees the lesson began to unfold itself—the swollen veins—the fainting breath—the life pulse stopping, and the re-ascending spirit—the heart with its great throbs as if each must be the last—the distended nostrils—the staring eyes—the wide open mouth, gasping for breath which would not come—the last gasp—each fair head laid on the bare floor, while long after the stiff parched tongue refused to do its office, a cry inaudible on earth, but ringing clear and strong in heaven went up simultaneously from both young hearts to the footstool of their God and father.

"Our father in heaven, now let us die!" The wailing from side to side of the heavy, weary heads was over—the throbbing hearts still—consciousness as to place and time, pain or sorrow, had passed away.

(To be continued.)

THE OLD-FASHIONED BOY.

Oh, what shall we do with the queerest of boys? He looks with disdain on the weakness of boys; Whilst comrades are playing he never will budge; But he sits in a corner as grave as a judge.

He sighs for a coat, and he wants a high hat; He pines for a cane, and a watch, and all that; He mumbles of shaving when school days began, This dear little, odd little, dry little man.

He promises mother a house and some land, And twenty-five shillings or more to command; He keeps his own trunk on his own little shelf, And he writes funny letters, and all to himself.

His age—would you think it?—is only just four; You'd say, by his ways, he was forty or more; He begs to sit up when the rest go to bed—Say, what's to be done with this wise little head?

He has a wee sister who's just come to town; He had her and looked at her in her white gown; Then he said "good morning," he made it a point To show that his nose wasn't put out of joint.

He talks of a gun, and a pistol that shoots; His feelings are strong on the subject of boots; They call him "old-fashioned," and so let him stay, As long as he's good in the old-fashioned way.

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TO THE BITTER END.

By Miss M. E. Braddon.

AUTHOR OF 'LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET,' ETC.

CHAPTER IX.

"A FOND KISS, AND THEN WE SEVER."

It was late in the afternoon when Hubert Walgrave came back to the farm, and there was a holy calm in the atmosphere of the old house which told him somehow that Mrs. Redmayne had departed. Your household Martha is the most estimable of women, but is apt to make a good deal of superfluous clatter in her trouble about many things. There was an air of perfect peacefulness in the house to-day, which was new and welcome to the lodger. His dinner was served without the usual bustle—not quite so well cooked, perhaps, as when Mrs. James's own hand looked the joint, or made the gravies and seasonings; but he was not a man to whom a well-cooked dinner is the supreme good of life. He liked the repose and tranquillity which Mrs. James had left behind her; liked to think that when he strolled into the garden presently he would find Grace free to give him her society.

He found her sitting at her work—those inexorable pillow-cases—quite alone under the cedar. James Redmayne was by no means a man of dissipated habits; but liberty is very sweet to those who taste it rarely; and he had snatched the opportunity of walking over to Kingsbury, to discuss the ruling topics of the day with the small politicians of the place in the comfortable parlour of the Moon and Seven Stars. Harvest was near, and every man had a good deal to say about his crops. The burrs were beginning to show on the bine. What with politics and agriculture, Mr. Redmayne was in for a long evening. As to Jack and Charley, they never stayed anywhere except for meals. Their normal state was locomotion.

So Grace sat quite alone under the cedar; and all that evening the lovers roamed in the garden and loitered in the orchard, and there was no one to interfere with their happiness.

O, halcyon time! O, summer-tide of joy, shadowed by no thought of to-morrow! Grace abandoned herself to her happiness as simply as a child at the beginning of a holiday. He was with her—he had dreamed that life could hold so much joy. And yet it was only the old story: passionate protestations of unending affection—a love which was vast enough for anything except self—worldly wisdom—a mixture of sentiment and worldly wisdom—a good deal of melancholy philosophising after the modern school—and the perpetual refrain, "I love you, Grace, but it is not to be."

One sweet summer day followed another, and their liberty was undisturbed. Uncle James made the best use of his freedom, contrived to have business at Tunbridge one day and at Kingsbury the next, and had what the Yankees call "a good time." Grace went out fishing with her lover—went wandering along the winding bank of a delicious streamlet that twisted here and there through that not too well-watered country, and saw him do battle with the ancient pike, or capture an occasional barbel or half a dozen roach. A great deal of walking went to a very little angling in these rambles. He cut her name upon the silver bark of an old beech, like any rustic Corydon. He could not help wondering what Augusta Vallory would have thought if she could have seen him engaged in that sentimental labour, with Grace watching him, enraptured.

Well, it was a sweet life, if it could have lasted. He thought of his own world with a dreary sigh.

"And yet by the end of a month I should be tired to death, I daresay," he said to himself. "How much better to break with my darling while our love retains all its freshness—to have each a sweet poetic memory to carry down to our graves! How much better not to have worn our emotions threadbare! I shall marry Augusta, and Grace will marry one of her cousins; and in the secret drawer of our desks we shall each keep a withered flower, or a lock of hair—only a woman's hair—in remembrance of a buried love."

This was very comfortable philosophy, and for the man of the world who meant to make a name and a fortune, and live the life which seemed to him altogether best worth living, highly satisfactory—not quite so consolatory, perhaps, for the girl who had given him all her heart, and was to be left behind to vegetate with a farmer.

The days slipped away. The week was very near its end. Aunt Hannah wrote to inform the family that Priscilla Sprouter was going on admirably, and the baby in perfect health; and that, with the blessing of Providence, she, Mrs. James, would be home early on Monday morning—in time for the wash.

This was a signal for Hubert Walgrave's departure. He did not care to encounter the scrutinising gaze of the matron in his altered relations with Grace. The rustic idyl had lasted long enough. It was best that it should come to a sudden close. And yet—and yet—(this man of the world counted the hours that were left to him before that black Monday, and looked forward with a foolish delight to the quiet of the long Sabbath—the church bells ringing the tones across the golden corn-fields—the drowsy blissfulness of the old-fashioned garden, where flanking hollyhocks proclaimed that autumn was at hand.)

Grace woke with a strange tremulous feeling of mingled joy and sorrow on that Sunday morning. Another long day—with him! It was the last; but while it still lay before her it seemed such a sum of happiness. At twilight it would be different; but with the morning sun still shining she could not think of the evening. The garden was still bright and dewy when Hubert Walgrave came in quest of her, and she brighter and fresher than the morning itself. They walked together until breakfast time—went to church together afterwards—were together, more or less, all day long. There was no one to interrupt their perpetual *à-à-tête*, even upon this day of rest; Mr. Redmayne improving the shining hours by refreshing slumber, sleeping off the effects of his unwonted dissipation at Kingsbury, that he might meet his wife with a serene front on the morrow; the two young men loafing about anywhere and everywhere—sitting on gates for the greater part of the day—conversing with stray ploughmen, or descending to the intellectual level of a passing crow boy.

Halcyon Sabbath happy summer time among the flouting hollyhocks and fading roses! It was meet this should be the end. In all Grace Redmayne's young life this one bright week made up the sum of perfect happiness. In the fashionable world there are experienced beauties who count their happy seasons—summers that are one perpetual festival who look back regretfully to the golden years in their calendar; but Grace's season was bounded by the span of seven days. She had her brief day of delight and brightness, like a flower or a butterfly, and that was all.

Towards evening Hubert Walgrave saw her face change. She grew very pale; her hands trembled as they touched the flowers; and when, in the course of their purposeless sauntering to and fro, one little hand rested on his arm he found that it was icy cold.

"My darling, is there anything the matter?" he asked tenderly.

"Nothing; except that you are going away to-morrow. You do not expect me to be very happy to-night, do you?"

"But, my sweetest, you have known from the first that it must be so. We agreed to make your aunt's return the signal for our leave-taking. This parting has been before us from the beginning."

"Yes, it has been before us; but I did not know it would be so bitter," she said, and then burst into tears.

on the breath of attorneys, has an important card to play in his marriage, and may make or mar himself thereby. Hubert Walgrave did not mean to imperil his chances. He had begun his career when a young man fresh from college with the determination to make a name for himself. There were circumstances in his life that made this desire keener in him than it is in most men. Nor had he ever swerved by a hair's breadth from that intention. This reckless passion for a farmer's daughter was his first folly.

He comforted her as best he might, dried her tears, beguiled her into smiling at him, a very faint wan smile.

"Shall I ever see you again after to-morrow morning, I wonder?" she said pitiously. And then she quoted *Romeo and Juliet*, which they had read together in the garden:

"Oh heaven, I have an ill-divining soul! Methinks I see thee now I'm parting from thee, As one dead in the bottom of a tomb."

"My dearest, we shall meet again. I shall come to see you one day, when you are married perhaps."

"O no, no, no!" she cried, shaking her head. "O yes, yes, yes, Gracey! This has been only a sweet, poetic dream, this love of yours and mine. We are each to go our way in the world, and live our lives. You remember what your beloved Longfellow says:

"Life is real, life is earnest."

And my sweet Grace will be an honoured wife and the happy mother of children. That is what a woman's life was meant for, after all, Grace, to watch beside a cradle. I shall come to see you, and find you the fair central figure of a happy home. Your father will have returned by that time."

The pale face whitened in the moonlight.

"My father!" the girl repeated with something like a shudder. "You have almost made me forget my father."

The morning came; rosy-fingered Aurora in her opal car, and Mrs. James Redmayne in a chair-cart. She arrived at Brierwood about breakfast-time—a metropolitan breakfast-time, that is to say—having risen at a preternaturally early hour in order to do forty miles and be at home in time for the washing. All the poetry of the cool shadowy old homestead seemed to vanish at the sight of her. There are people at whose coming all mystic creatures disperse; people who carry with them everywhere a delightful atmosphere of commonplaceness, whose conversation is as interesting as a rule-of-three sum, whose countenances are as expressive of tender emotion as the back of a ledger. Mrs. James was one of these.

She gave her niece a mechanical kiss, with her eyes exploring the corners of the room all the while to see if the solemn rite of cleaning had been duly performed in her absence; and finding nothing here to complain of, turned her scrutinising gaze upon the girl's face, and pronounced immediately that she was looking "billions."

"You've been lolling about indoors all day, I daresay," she remarked, "instead of taking a healthy walk every morning."

"No indeed, aunt Hannah," protested Grace, blushing; "I've been out a good deal—for long walks."

"O, you have, have you?" said her aunt; "and pray are those pillow-cases mended yet?"

"I've—almost—finished them."

"Almost! You've never done more than almost finish any work I ever gave you to do. But that comes of sending girls to stink-up boarding-schools. I've no common patience with such trumpery."

"Is the baby a very nice one, aunt Hannah?" Grace inquired meekly, in the hope of giving a pleasant turn to the conversation.

"He's got the red-gum," Mrs. James answered sharply; "I don't believe I ever saw a child so speckled!"

"But he'll come right, I suppose, aunt?"

"O, he'll come right soon enough, I daresay; but as for your monthly nurses, of all the lazy lumber I ever had to do with, they're about the worst. If children could only be brought up to the month by machinery, so as to get rid of them, it would be a blessing to families. How's Mr. Walgrave?"

"He's very well, aunt Hannah. Uncle James told you in his letter that he was going away, didn't he?"

"Well, yes, he said something about it; but it was as much as I could do to make top or tail of it. Your uncle's a poor scribe. When is he going?"

"To-day," faltered Grace, dragging one of the ill-fitted pillow-cases out of her work-basket, and studying a darn.

"To-day! That's uncommonly sudden. However, he's a good paymaster, and free to go when he likes. If one must take a lodger, one couldn't have one that would give less trouble. And we've made a fair profit out of him. I shall put from ten to fifteen pound in the savings-bank for your father out of what he's paid me."

Mrs. James took off her bonnet, washed her face at a sink in the back-kitchen with the strongest yellow-soap, and a most profound indifference to the effect of such ablutions on her complexion, put on a clean cap, and then went to pay her respects to the departing lodger. His portmanteau and carpet-bag had been brought down into the old-fashioned low-ceilinged lobby, which served as a hall; the Kingsbury fly was at the door. Grace stood at the parlour window, pale as a ghost, watching. Would he seek her out to say good-bye? or would he leave her without a word? The eyes of the world were on him now—would he play his cruel part coldly, and without heed of her anguish?

She heard his voice in the lobby, talking commonplace to her aunt, and listened as if every word had been inspiration.

"So sorry to leave you, Mrs. Redmayne," he said, in his slow languid way. "I did not believe I could have enjoyed country life so much. I have to thank you a thousand times for all your attention; nothing but an actual necessity to perform other engagements would induce me to leave you. I hope to be allowed to come again someday."

"We shall be pleased to see you anywhen, Mr. Walgrave," replied Mrs. James, in her blandest tones. "I'm sure there never was a gentleman gave less trouble."

not quite iron; and he had a guilty feeling that his presence in that house had wrought evil.

The fly was at the door, his portmanteau and book-box bestowed upon the roof, and he had only a given time for the drive to Tunbridge junction; yet he lingered, looking round him doubtfully.

"I think I ought to say good-bye to your niece, Mrs. Redmayne," he observed at last.

"You're very polite, I'm sure, sir; and I daresay Grace might take it unkind if you went away without wishing her good-morning. She's been brought up at boarding-school, and is full of fancies. Bless my soul, where is the girl? Grace?"

The parlour-door opened quickly at that shrill cry, and Grace appeared on the threshold, pale to the lips, scarcely able to stand. Happily for her, Mrs. James's attention was distracted at that moment by her son and heir, who had just contrived to smash a pane in the half-glass door with one end of the traveller's fishing-rod.

For a long time Grace Redmayne's image, as she looked at that moment, haunted Hubert Walgrave. The pale plaintive look, the despairing eyes, with a kind of wildness in them, her image in many shapes was destined to haunt him all his life, but he never forgot that one look, that mute unconscious appeal.

He went to her as she stood by the door, and took her hand.

"I could not go away without wishing you good-bye, Grace," he said. "I have been telling your aunt how happy I have been here, and that I mean to come again—some day."

He waited, half expecting her to speak, but she said nothing. The pale lips quivered slightly, and that was all.

"Good-bye," he repeated; and then in a lower voice, "Good-bye, and God bless you, my darling!"

He turned quickly away, shook hands with Mrs. Redmayne, and then with the elder of the lady, on whom he bestowed a couple of sovereigns for fishing-tackle; the house-servant had been already fed, and was smiling the smile of gratitude from the background. In another minute the driver smacked his whip, the wheels grated on the gravel, and Hubert Walgrave was gone.

"It makes us a full hour late for beginning the wash," said aunt Hannah; "but everything's in soak, and we've got a good drying day, that's one blessing."

Grace dragged herself up to her room, somehow, groping blindly up the familiar staircase, with a mist of bitter washed tears before her eyes. O weary limbs! O heavy heart! Was there never again to be any joy for her upon this earth?

CHAPTER X.

M. WALGRAVE IS SATISFIED WITH HIMSELF.

The ten a.m. express whisked Mr. Walgrave up to town in something less than an hour. The fair Kentish landscape shot past the carriage window, little by little losing its charm of rural seclusion, growing suburban, dotted thickly and more thickly with villas, here newly whitened stucco of the rustic Italian style, there fresh red-brick of severely gothic design; for oaks came laurels, for mighty beeches of half a dozen centuries' growth monkey trees planted the day before yesterday; every house had its glittering conservatory, trim lawn, and geometrical flower-beds, all ablaze with Tom Thumb geraniums and calceolarias; everywhere the same aspect of commonplace British prosperity. Then the bright well-ordered suburb melted into the crowded southern fringe of the great town. The air became flavoured with soap-boiling, tallow, new boots—on the right hand a far-off odour of cordage and far from Deptford; on the left, the dismal swamps of Brompton. Then a clang and a clatter, a shrieking and puffing, and jerking and snorting; a stoppage or two—apparently purposeless—and lo, Mr. Walgrave was at the London-bridge Station; and it seemed to him as if Grace Redmayne, and the life that he had been living for the last few weeks; could scarcely belong to such a world as this. It was a dreary awakening from a delicious dream.

He called a cab—a four-wheeler—since he had the responsibility of his luggage, and no one but himself to take charge of it, and drove through the grimy myriads. Even at this densest period of the year the city was noisy with traffic, and full of life and motion; but O, what a dismal kind of life after the yellowing corn-fields, studded with gaudy field flowers, and the rapturous music of the lark, invisible in the empyrean!

"O, to be a country squire with twenty thousand a year," he thought, "and to live my own life! to marry Grace Redmayne, and dawdle away my harmless days riding round my estate; to superintend the felling of a tree or the levelling of a hedge; to lie stretched on the grass at sunset with my head on my wife's lap, my cigar-case and a bottle of claret on the rustic table beside me; to have the renown that goes with a good old name and a handsome income and to have nothing to wrestle for, no prize to pluck from the slow-growing tree that bears the sour fruit of worldly success—sour to the man who fails to reach it, ashes to the lips of him who wins it too late! And yet we strive—and yet we persevere—and yet we sacrifice all for the hope of that."

The cab took him to one of the gates of the Temple, and deposited him finally in King's-bench-walk. Here he had his chambers, a handsome suite upon the first floor, where he chose to live in defiance of fashion. He fully knew the value of externals, and that well-made chairs and tables are in a manner the outward expression of a man's mental worth. There was no *bric-à-brac*; nor were the doors shadowed by those ruby velvet *portières*, which seem to prevail more in light literature than in the houses of everyday life. The rooms were large and lofty, and had all the charm of fine old mantelpieces, deep window seats, and well-preserved panelling. The furniture was solid and in good order—a little old-fashioned, and therefore in harmony with the rooms. There were books on every side, but no luxury of binding—such books as a gentleman and a lawyer should possess—in sober decent garb, and arranged with an extreme nicety in fine old mahogany book-cases of that Georgian period whereof the furniture seems always to bear on its front a palpable protest against any pretensions to beauty. There were two or three comfortable easy-chairs, upholstered in russet Morocco, a writing-table with innumerable drawers and pigeon-holes, a pair of handsome brown modester lumps; and over the high

mantelpiece in the principal room one picture, the only picture in Hubert Walgrave's chambers.

It was a portrait of a woman, with a face of almost perfect loveliness—arch, piquant, bewitching, with hazel eyes that had the light of happy laughter in their brightness. The costume, which the painter had made a little fanciful in its character, was obviously old-fashioned; between thirty and forty years old at the least. As a work of art the picture was a gem, a portrait which Reynolds or Romney—the man in Cavendish-square—might have been proud of.

A quiet-looking middle-aged man-servant received Mr. Walgrave, and busied himself with the carrying in of the luggage. He was half butler, half valet; slept in a closet off the small kitchen which lurked at the back of those handsome rooms; and with the aid of a landlady, who might often be heard scrubbing and sweeping in the early morning, but was rarely beheld by human eye except his own, conducted Mr. Walgrave's household. He was altogether a model servant, the result of a good many experiments in the domestic line, was efficient in the duties of a valet, and could broil a chop and boil a potato to perfection, and conducted in no small measure to Hubert Walgrave's comfort. His name was Cuppige—Christian name Abraham—not by reason of any Jewish element in his race, but on account of the biblical tendencies of his mother, to whom he still proudly alluded, on familiar occasions, as an unequalled clear-starcher and a staunch Bible Christian.

"Any letters, Cuppage?" Mr. Walgrave inquired, flinging himself into his favourite arm-chair, and looking round the room listlessly.

It was a very pleasant room, looking westward, and commanding a fine view of that one feature which London has most reason to boast of, the river. It was a comfortable room, stamped with the individuality of the man to whom it belonged, and Mr. Walgrave was fond of it. His books, his papers, his pipes, all the things which made life agreeable to him, were here. In this room he had worked for the last seven years, ever since he had begun to earn money by his profession; and the book-shelves had been filling gradually all that time, every volume added by his own hands, picked up by himself, and in accordance with his own special tastes.

He began to be reconciled to the change from that shady old house in Kent, with the perfume of a thousand flowers blowing in at every window. London was dull, and empty, and dingy, but he had the things he cared for—books and perfect cases.

"I think I was made to be an old bachelor," he thought. "I should hardly care to leave those rooms to inhabit a palace, unless—unless it was with Grace Redmayne. Strange that a farmer's daughter, educated at a provincial boarding-school, should exercise more influence over me than any woman I ever met—should seem to me cleverer and brighter than the brightest I ever encountered in society. I don't think I am so weak a fool as to be won by beauty alone, though I would be the last to underrate that charm. I don't think I should have been so fond of that girl, if she were not something more than beautiful!"

"I should have been so fond," Mr. Walgrave put his passion in a past tense, tried to consider it altogether a thing of the past; and then began to walk slowly up and down his room, now and then pausing by one of the three windows to look absently out at the sunlit river, with its fleet of black panting steamers and slow coal barges, with here and there a dingy sail flapping in the faint summer wind, thinking of Grace Redmayne.

What was she doing just at this moment? he wondered. Wandering listlessly in the garden, quite alone and very sorrowful.

"I shall never forget that white despairing face of hers," he said to himself. "The thought of it gives me an actual pain at my heart. If—if I were a weak man, I should take my carpet-bag and go back by the afternoon train; I can fancy how the sweet face would light up at sight of me. But I should be something worse than a fool if I did that. The wrench is over. Thank Heaven, I acted honourably; told her the truth from the first. And now I have only to make it my business to forget her!"

There were letters for him. Cuppage had arranged them symmetrically in a neat group upon the writing-table at the right hand of the morocco-covered slope on which Mr. Walgrave was wont to write. He ceased from his promenade presently, and directed his attention to these, as some sort of distraction from meditations which he felt were perilous. They were not likely to be particularly interesting—his letters had been forwarded to him daily at Brierwood—but they would serve to occupy his mind for an hour or so.

There was one, bearing the Kensington post-mark, in a hand which surprised him. A large thick envelope, sealed with a monogram in gold and colour, and directed in a bold firm hand, square and uniform in style, which might be masculine or feminine.

It was very familiar to Hubert Walgrave. He gave a little start of surprise—not altogether pleased surprise—on seeing this letter, and tore open the envelope hurriedly, to the utter destruction of the emblazoned monogram, in which the initials A. H. V. went in and out of each other in the highest style of florid gothic. The letter was not a long one.

"Acropolis-square August 10th.

"My dear Hubert,—You will no doubt be surprised to receive my letter from the above address. Papa grew suddenly tired of Ems, and elected to spend the rest of the autumn in England. So here we are for a day or two, deliberating whether we shall go to some quiet watering-place, or pay off some of our arrears with friends. Papa lent the Ryde villa to Mrs. Filmer before we went away, and of course we can't turn her out. The Stapletons want us at Hayley, and the Beresfords have asked us for ever so many years to Abblecupp Abbey, a fine old place in the depths of Wales. But I daresay the question will resolve itself into our going to Eastbourne or Bognor.

"I hope you are getting quite strong and well. If there were any chance of your being in town for a few hours—I suppose you do come sometimes on business—between this and next Thursday, we should be very glad to see you; but I do not wish to interfere with your doctor's injunctions about rest and quiet. Ems was dull *à faire frémir*. Half a dozen eccentric toilettes, as many ladies who were talked about, a Russian prince, and all the rest the dreariest