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THROUGH THE CASTLE.

BY MAX.

Through the old castle
Together went we;
Sweet were the odours
That came from the sea.

From the high tower
We peered o'er the park;
In the low caverns
We laughed at the dark.

This is the promise
Made unto me—
"Love, I will ever
Prove faithful to thee."

Through the old castle
I wander again;
Cold are the breezes
That come with the rain.

Dead leaves are falling
All over the park;
Frightened I listen
To sounds in the dark.

This is the message
Received from the sea—
"Dreaded"—and his name
Written under. Ah woe!

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THE DEAD WITNESS; OR, LILLIAN'S PERIL.

BY MRS. LEPROHON.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

Tremaine made no reply, but walked to the window, now closed, and leaning his forehead against it, stared blankly forth at the gloomy blackness outside.

The clock strikes. What hour is it? Midnight. The perspiration stands in drops upon his forehead. Oh! that she would die. He felt at the moment that if his lips could frame any form of prayer he would petition for that consummation, so as to be freed from the torments that now hedged him round. The suspense was terrible. No sound still save the ticking of the clock. Ah! there came a soft, rustling sound from the bed. The patient was stirring—waking. Would it be life or death?

Not long did his uncertainty last.
"How do you find yourself, Mrs. Tremaine?" questioned the attentive nurse.

"Better, oh so much better, thank you! The dreadful pain has left my poor head and my brain seems so calm and quiet now."

"Mr. Tremaine, come and congratulate your wife. She is out of danger," said the hard, distinct voice of Miss Radway.
He crossed the room to the bed and looked down slightly upon its occupant. Then he spoke:

"So you really feel much better, Margaret?"
"Yes, beyond doubt, though still very weak."
"Well, let us hope that your restoration is the forerunner of many days of health and strength. In the meantime, dear Margaret, as a token of that good feeling which, I trust, may henceforth reign between us, grant the request I have already vainly urged before, and sign this paper."

There was a pause of astonishment, as if at the strangeness of such a request at such a time, and then the sick woman faintly answered:

"Never, Roger, so help me Heaven! Firm and immovable is my determination of never yielding on that point."

"Do not torment Mrs. Tremaine with such matters now," interrupted the housekeeper, in cold, sardonic tones.

"Listen to me, Margaret; listen to reason!" hurriedly, almost impudently, entreated the husband. "Say you will do it, and I will be kinder to you and the children than I have ever yet been. For your own sake—the sake of those little ones you hold so dear, consent!"

The sick wife slowly but determinedly shook her head.

"Remember, Margaret, you are entirely in my power—out off from friends, servants, the outside world."

"Shame on you, Mr. Tremaine," again interposed the faithful nurse; "shame on you for troubling your wife with business details when she is still, one may say, at death's door. Besides, has she not clearly told you that she would never sign the paper you are worrying her about? Here, Mrs. Tremaine, is your draft, it is just the time for taking it."

Unsuspectingly the victim obeyed, and after a few minutes her eyelids drooped and closed in sleep—a heavy drugged sleep.

"Take her up now, Mr. Tremaine. There is no danger of her waking."
He hesitated as if undecided.
"Out on you croaker!" passionately ejaculated his companion. "You have neither the strength nor the spirit of a man!"
As if stung by the taunt, he snatched up the thin, frail form of his wife, round which the housekeeper wrapped the white quilt she had taken from the bed. Then, seizing the lamp, she silently led the way. Softly as two shadows they hurried on through room and corridor, descended a staircase, then traversed some more apartments, as well as another flight of steps that led to the vast cellars underlying the building. At length the door of the vault was reached—opened, and Tremaine deposited his still insensible burden on a long, oak chest, that formed the most remarkable object in the almost empty vault. The woman closed the door and set down the lamp.



THE HOUSEKEEPER, CONCEALED BEHIND A CURTAIN, LOOKED ON WITH EAGER EYES.

"Her sleep will not be long, for the potion is not strong. Go now for the will and writing desk. It is the last chance of success."

Long enough he lingered on his mission, so long that Miss Radway glanced more than once anxiously towards the door, but a length it opened and he entered.

"She is stirring now. Hand me the smelling salts beside the lamp. There, she is reviving."

For some moments the distended blue eyes wandered curiously, enquiringly round the shadowy vault, resting on the stone floor, then glancing at the chest on which she had been placed in a half sitting, half reclining position, her back against the cold, damp wall.

"My fever fancies have come back on me again," she sighed, "and with what terrible distinctness. Miss Radway, I could almost swear that we are in a dungeon, and that Mr. Tremaine is standing against his barred iron door."

"If you did so you would say the truth, Mrs. Tremaine. We are in the stone vault under Tremaine Court, and out of this you shall not go forth alive, unless you obey your husband's injunctions and sign the will."

"She has spoken truth, wretched woman!" exclaimed the former, in a loud menacing voice. "See to what a pass your obstinate folly has brought you!"

Slowly she gazed all around the narrow, gloomy cell. A slight shudder ran through her frame, her lips moved in silent prayer, and then she spoke calmly and firmly:

"My answer down here, cut off from all human hope or help, is what it was a short while ago, when I supposed myself within the reach of both. Never! I call on Heaven to register my vow. Never will I sign it!"

"Inhuman, miserable woman, do you know that your life will pay the penalty of your obstinacy?"
"Oh, Roger Tremaine!" she rejoined in a voice of indolently bitterness. "Has life with you been so happy that I should cling to it? Will its loss not rather be to me a blessed release from sorrow and suffering? All that I could have wished to live for would have been my children, and now that my death will avail them more than my life, how willingly do I yield the latter up for them."

"You speak without due reflection, Mrs. Tremaine," said the housekeeper. "Think how gloomy death will be in this dark vault, without friend or assistant nigh to moisten your lips in your parting moments."
"God will be with me, and His eternal arms

will uphold me lovingly in that last awful hour. Ah, it is not death that is to be dreaded; it is the eternity beyond. But even if this were not so, who is to assure me," and she fixed a penetrating glance on Miss Radway, before which the woman's gaze fell, "who is to assure me that even were I weak enough to sign away my children's rights the act would avail me aught?"

"It would, it would, Margaret! I promise, I swear it!" urged her husband, pressing the pen into her hand. "One stroke of this will restore you to sunshine, life, and the children you so dearly love."

"Yes, at the cost of despoiling them of the only inheritance that in future days will lie between them and want. Besides," she added, as a convulsive shiver ran through her frame, "it is no longer in your power to restore me to life and sunshine. The bringing me down from my sick bed into this death-damp place has struck like ice through my veins, and already the grasp of coming dissolution is upon me. I forgive you both as I hope to be forgiven, asking only that you be kind to my children, and now either leave me or stay, as you wish, but speak to me no more. The little time that remains must be spent entirely in communion with that God to whose presence I am hastening."

Mighty was the lesson given that glist-stained man and woman in the gloomy vault by this true and humble Christian, but closing their eyes to the light, shutting their ears to that voice thus permitted to appeal so touchingly to their hardened hearts, they swerved not from their evil path.

Soon Tremaine abruptly pulled open the door, and fiercely bidding Miss Radway remain where she was, went out. After a long interval, during which the housekeeper moodily watched the anxious features of her companion, whose thoughts seemed now wholly in heaven, she betwixt herself that the crime she had so daringly planned, so ruthlessly carried into execution, necessitated exertion and skillful plotting to ward off suspicion from herself and accomplice; and with the words "I will be back in an hour with light and food," she left the vault, locking it behind her.

Anxiously she sped upstairs, fearing that the one female domestic the house-keeper might perhaps have entered the sick room during her absence and discovered that the invalid was no longer there. Her fears were groundless. No one was stirring or visible save the master of the house himself, who, still as a statue, stood

leaning against a window frame, staring blankly at the floor. Passing into the sick room, she threw open the windows and let down the long curtains so as to admit air but exclude light, then came out, locking the door and putting the key in her pocket. Crossing the hall with the quick, stealthy step peculiar to her, she approached her master, and laying her hand on his arm, whispered:

"Is there nothing to be planned or done, that you stand dreaming here?"

He turned angrily on her and retorted, with bloodshot eyes:

"Have I not done enough, curse you, to sink me to hell without your wanting to drag me still deeper down?"

His listener's lip sarcastically curled. "Such excitement is unnecessary. All I want is that you should give me a few moments' hearing. When either doctor, child or servant makes their appearance, remember we must tell them each the same story. Mrs. Tremaine died at daybreak. She has to be buried without delay and her room door rigidly closed for fear of contagion. You had better shut yourself up in your dressing room, as would be natural to a new made widower overwhelmed with grief; leaving me to answer all questions and give directions. I will send to the porter's lodge for Brooks—that fellow Watts left us yesterday morning, sick or pretending to be so—but Brooks will bring my orders to the undertaker, so that there need not be any measuring of the dead, and he will see to arrangement for interment."

Tremaine inclined his head and precipitately retreated to his dressing-room, first menacingly whispering: "See that you bring her food, drink and light, all that she may require."

"Presently. I have some other duties to attend to first."

Taking from an isolated cupboard some powerful disinfectant, she scattered it plentifully through the apartments and halls, then hurried to the servant's chamber and roused her, communicating the mournful intelligence of her mistress's decease. The woman, a truly selfish specimen of her class, after a brief conventional expression of regret, quietly but determinedly said:

"That if she were asked to render any service to the dead, or even asked to go near the room where the body lay, she would that moment leave the house," adding, with an emphatic nod of her head, "that her life was as

dear to her as that of richer people was to them."

"As you will, Ruth," rejoined Miss Radway, soothingly. "I have neither the right nor the intention of asking you to do anything out of the round of your usual duties, you especially, who have so bravely remained with us when the others have taken flight, will render myself the last services to poor Mrs. Tremaine, unless, indeed, you could procure me assistance on so short a notice. I suppose it would be difficult."

"Indeed, Miss, you may say so; for the few women that can be got to attend fever patients are all as busy as can be; and as to the others, a hint of silver wouldn't tempt them."

"I feared so. Well, Ruth, do your own part, and you will be doubly paid. Get a cup of tea for poor Mr. Tremaine, who is worn out with grief and watching. Then, when Miss Margaret wakes, break the truth gently to her and bring her to me."

Miss Radway was fuming with great apparent solicitude the rooms adjoining that mysterious closed door, when Ruth appeared at the far end of the corridor leading little Margaret by the hand.

"Oh, take me to poor mamma!" sobbed the little one, as she darted towards the house-keeper, and with a countenance she rarely displayed towards the latter personage, buried her head in the folds of her dress. "Let me see her—kiss her once more!"

"It will be a sad sight, my child, for poor mamma is dreadfully altered in appearance already; still, it seems hard to refuse you a last look," and glancing towards the closed door with an irresolute expression, she took the trembling child by the hand.

"Oh, Miss Radway!" screamed the child, in accents shrill with terror; "to take that innocent child in there would be like short of murder. Why, she'd be down with the fever to-night, that's certain!"

The housekeeper, who had had, of course, my intention of the sort, and who had, moreover counted on Ruth's interference, rejoined with a heavy sigh:

"Perhaps you are right; but it seems a cruel thing to refuse her. Margaret, my child, go out on the verandah there, so that when papa comes you may be with him."

"Yes, indeed," obtained the child, "the fresh air is the safest place. I wish we could all live in it. And now I'll go down and get breakfast; I was at it when Miss Margaret awoke, so I had to bring her up first. You must wait a cup of tea, Miss Radway."

"Well, yes, thank you; but first go to the porter's lodge and send up Brooks to me immediately."

The man Brooks soon arrived with softly stepping foot and blanched face, and glanced timidly in the direction of the late Mrs. Tremaine's room, he said in a broken, unsteady voice:

"Poor lady! I'm awful sorry for her; for she was good to the poor, and had a kind word for all. But this isn't the only house where there's a coffin wanted. Mrs. Payne, the blacksmith's wife, died of the same fever last night, and her oldest son, a likely lad of twenty, is awful bad now. The Symmons family are down with it; and the minister's sister, good old Miss Frost, is took too."

"Yes, Brooks, the hand of God is heavy upon us; but, I suppose, our sins deserve it. Here, take this purse and go to Brompton. Tell the undertaker to send up a coffin at once—he can guess easily the size—and arrange with him for everything regarding the interment, which Doctor Stewart will probably insist on having as soon as possible. Spare nothing for our dear lady was worthy of every mark of affection or respect that could be shown to her."

Well the speaker knew that money liberally or extravagantly spent was singularly efficacious in disarming criticism, even suspicion; and she was determined to leave nothing undone that could tend towards that object.

A moment after the grinding of carriage wheels on the gravel outside announced an arrival. "Probably the doctor," thought the woman, and despite her hardness, a tremor ran through her frame. What if, from curiosity or some other motive, he should ask to look at the dead? Well, she would have to frame some plausible excuse for refusing him. But if he doing so she should excite any suspicions in his mind. Ah! that would be fatal, and must be avoided at any price.

Suddenly Margaret's small pale face appeared at the door opening on the verandah; and a sudden inspiration struck Miss Radway. Calling the still weeping child to her, she was engaged apparently in the kindly task of consoling her, when Doctor Stewart entered.

"Ah, Doctor, it is all over!" lamented Miss Radway, raising her handkerchief to her eyes. "Poor Mrs. Tremaine awoke about midnight, as you had predicted, dreadfully bad, and sank gradually, till she breathed her last a little before daybreak."

"I am very, very sorry," and the physician thoughtfully stroked his chin. "There's not a patient on my list I was so anxious to save. To be sure, she was very bad last night, but I had a sort of hope that she'd have pulled through. Is she much altered?" and he looked towards the bedroom door as if half meditating an entrance.

"Considerably, sir; and the woman's heart gave a great bound. Ominously though she continued," Miss Margaret here wanted to go in to see her; but I thought such a thing might be dangerous."

"Quite right! quite prudent!" was the quick spoken reply.

"I want to see my mamma. Oh, let me in to see her!" wailed the child, with a sudden outbreak of passionate grief, the yearning of the morning returning with increased vehemence to that poor little foreign heart.

"Impossible, my child!" said Doctor Stewart, kindly taking the sobbing little one by the

him, and abandoning at the same time his half formed design of taking a last look at Mrs. Tremaine, a thought prompted entirely by scientific curiosity as to whether her countenance would exhibit certain characteristics he had noted on that of another fever patient, who had expired that morning just as he had entered the house. Solitude for the little Margaret, however, occupied with the recollection of urgent professional calls, decided him on abandoning his purpose, and drawing her with him to the veranda, he kindly said:

"Margaret must not cry so bitterly because God has taken her dear mamma to heaven. Run, little one, into the garden; the air of the house is not good for you. Quick! Miss Radway, while I think of it may as well give you a certificate of death. It will save time."

"Certainly, sir. Here is paper and pen. Will it be better to bury the poor lady soon?"

"Of course; to-morrow morning at latest. The danger from contagion is great. How is Mr. Tremaine?"

"Very much cast down, sir, and quite worn out. I shouldn't wonder if he would be sick on his hands next."

"Quite possible," philosophically rejoined the doctor, with whom Mr. Tremaine was no favorite. "Well, make him take care of himself, for we have too many sick as it is. You are a capital nurse, Miss Radway, worth a dozen of the usual run; and your frame and constitution seem cast in bronze. Do no account let the child enter that infected room. I suppose you have sent for help? That's right. It is very difficult to procure just now. Good morning. The great danger the least she matters with long-continued fever. Now for a visit to the vault. She may yet be induced to sign the paper."

"Putting some jelly and light refreshments suitable for an invalid into a basket, with a flask of wine and water, and providing herself with a lamp, as well as the lantern she carried for her own use, she made her way unobserved through the comparatively deserted house to her destination."

As she turned the key in the lock a terrible awe crept over her. "What would she see in the life or death? The inmate of that dismal abode still lived, though pallid and cold as death itself; but the clasped hands, the fixed, but gaze raised heavenward told where heart and thoughts were."

"Mrs. Tremaine, I have brought you a lamp, as well as food and drink. Will you take anything?" and the housekeeper placed her burden on the stone floor.

"A drink," answered the poor sufferer, whose lips and throat were parched.

"Sign the will then, first."

A negative movement of the head, slight, yet containing a volume of quiet determination, and the prisoner uncontentiously resumed the devotions interrupted for a moment.

Allowing Mrs. Tremaine to die of actual starvation coincided neither with the housekeeper's own intentions nor with the instructions received from the master of the house; so, pouring out a goblet of wine and water, she handed it to her hapless mistress. The latter drank it eagerly, mutely, however, refusing all the nourishment.

"Have you any message, any word, to send your husband, Mrs. Tremaine?"

"None, save that when we meet before the bar of God's justice, I hope I may not be compelled to bear testimony against him."

The words, so awfully solemn in their purport, were spoken softly, as if involuntarily; and Miss Radway, placing the basket close to the captive's hand, hastily went out. She reached the upper part of the house just in time for the coffin, with its shining metallic surface and silver mountings, was arriving.

It was deposited in the hall, the housekeeper having first unlocked the closed door as if with the intention of having it carried in there immediately; but then, sympathetically noticing the white, frightened faces of the ladies who bore it, she said:

"You seem very much afraid of contagion. Leave the coffin then in the hall here."

The messengers thankfully obeyed and retreated, holding in their breath till they were in the open air for the smell of Miss Radway's disinfectant was so powerful that it conveyed involuntarily a supposition that the odor of death and disease lurked amid their fumes.

With some difficulty she prevailed on Mr. Tremaine to assist her in carrying the coffin into the bed-room, and placing it in, carefully surrounded by cloths to keep it in position, the heavy mahogany gun-case she had chosen for the purpose. Then the lids were screwed down, a crown of immortelles laid on it, lighted wax tapers placed at the head and foot of the coffin; and Miss Radway, for the first time, breathed freely within the last twenty-four hours.

Whilst she was in the midst of some instructions regarding the funeral, her master retreated precipitately to his room and bolted himself in. He found the breakfast tray which the cook had brought up in desperation, seeing that no one entered the dining-room, where the table had long previously been prepared.

The day lagged on wearily to the restless woman, who flitted from room to room like some perturbed spirit, now shuddering as if some dark presentiment had suddenly pressed itself upon her mind, and now suddenly gazing at the wall as she saw herself already, in fancy, Mrs. Roger Tremaine.

The morning of the funeral was ushered in by dark, lowering skies and a sharp east wind, and the attendance, in consequence, was small.

As the procession slowly wound from the hall door the housekeeper, concealed behind a curtain, looked on with eager eyes. How cloverly she had planned and carried it out. How everything seemed to have worked for her and her hopes. Little assistance or encouragement, indeed, had she from Tremaine himself; but would not the title of his wife, which would so soon be hers, indemnify her amply for all her handsome, how elegant he looked, in his perfectly fitting suit of newables. Ah! the funeral once over, Mrs. Tremaine really dead—a thing which could not but soon happen, for the sick woman's hold on life was frail as could well be imagined—he would be his olden self again.

Time passed. The servants returned from the funeral; but the master did not. What could be detaining him? How this neglect chafed the haughty spirit of the woman who paced up and down the wide hall, her cheeks blazing, her lips parched, her eyes lurid with excitement. Summoning the porter to her presence, she despatched him to Brompton to see if he could procure any information concerning his master. The long shadows were falling across sward and meadow when Brooks returned; and Miss Radway, who was watching for him with intense anxiety, saw that he held a letter in his hand. Meeting him at the door, she snatched it from him, glanced over its contents, and then sank into a chair white to her very lips. The message was short, and ran thus:

MY DEAR MISS RADWAY.—You can easily understand that after all that has happened, Tremaine Court will be insupportable to me for long years to come, so I leave this very day for abroad. I have made all necessary arrangements with Mr. Black, the notary, who will pay you every quarter a sum sufficient for the main-

tenance of yourself and my children. It is my wish that you should all continue to reside at Tremaine Court, though, of course, if this should not prove agreeable to you, I retract the desire at once. Trusting that repose and quiet will restore your strength, that has of late been so cruelly tried, over, with friendly regard,

Yours,
ROGER TREMAINE.

"Oh, ingrate! villain!" she hissed between her clenched teeth. "I, who have perilled soul and body for your sake, to be thus contemptuously cast aside the instant my terrible task was accomplished! Margaret Tremaine, already you are avenged, for the rage and despair of hell seem burning within my heart."

After an interval spent in fierce paroxysms of alternate fury and despair, she entered round the dog-cart, and getting in, bade the man drive to Brompton. The information obtainable there was of the most meagre kind. The notary had nothing to tell beyond that Mr. Tremaine had called in at the office and made some arrangements with regard to Tremaine Court in his absence, which arrangements he was ready to communicate at once to her. They proved to be the same in substance as those mentioned in the letter written to herself, the pecuniary provision being of a very liberal nature. He had effected also a sale of some valuable property, which he had parted with at a very low price, for a cash payment. Then he had driven to the nearest railway station, dismissed the driver and his vehicle, and embarked on some train; but no one knew whether it was bound north or south.

Burning with wrath, she at length decided on returning to Tremaine Court, and when she came in sight of its ivy-grown gables and towers, her indignation increased, if possible, in violence, especially as she glanced towards the east wing and remembered the terrible secret laid away among its foundations.

"To think that he should have abandoned me at such a critical time, when I wanted from him that help of brain and arm which I dare ask from no one else! Roger Tremaine, absent son of a false pier, thou wilt never prosper henceforth; and if curses were of any avail I would sink thee to the bottomless pit with mine!"

The doors and windows of Tremaine Court were all thrown open when she returned, and on entering and looking round her, the neat housewifely instincts which she really possessed made her resolve, despite the moral tempest that raged within her, on seeking to reduce that scene of household chaos to order. She never enquired, never even thought of the hapless orphaned child who was hid away in some nook of the garden, tasting already the bitterness of that neglect and isolation destined to be her portion through so many long years of a shadowed life.

After some time spent in giving directions to the maids who had returned to their posts on hearing that the funeral was over, Miss Radway entered Mrs. Tremaine's room, and, locking herself in, indulged her curiosity and cupidity by a protracted examination of the wardrobe, dressing bureau and jewel case, searching about her person the larger and most valuable part of the gems, leaving, indeed, only those whose intrinsic value was trifling.

That night, when the household had retired to rest, she took her lantern, refilled her flask, and then descended to the vault. Ah, she felt like now that Margaret Tremaine would live, if the knowledge of the circumstance could overcome the life of the man who had so cruelly repaid her devotion; but when she entered and glanced at the white, rigid form still reclining against the wall, with fixed staring eyes that saw not, she knew all such plans or hopes were at an end, and that the soul of her victim had escaped for ever from life's bonds. A shudder shook her from head to foot.

What was she to do with this tell-tale evidence of crime; this ghastly corpse, sitting there, staring, it seemed, rigidly at her, and waiting to mutely denounce her guilt if human eye should ever look into that vault. A sudden thought struck her. Would it not be best to place it in the long oak chest, there to remain till a time would offer for more effectual concealment of it, or till Tremaine should return. In the meantime chest and vault could be carefully locked, and the keys kept in her own possession. But how address herself to her awful task? Alone she must do it, and surely, whilst the villain who had shared in her guilt, and reaped most benefit from it was already miles away, enjoying, probably, his new-found liberty, without giving a thought to her.

Bitter and deep was the anger that welled up from her heart at the thought, but that feeling and all others must give way before the pressing necessity of the stern duty that awaited her.

With rapid, breathless haste she seized the corpse and laid it full length on the ground; then tossed out the contents of the chest, which consisted chiefly of many documents and business papers, and piled them carelessly in a corner of the vault. After that she turned to the white figure lying there so still and silent. Were not those rayless, distended eyes rigidly fixed on her, with a dull menace in their depths? How could she brave their awful stare; how could she touch that rigid form with her arms, feel its icy touch on her cheek, as it would, perhaps, fall forward on her shoulder during her endeavors to place it in its unhalloved tomb? Surely, surely, if ever there were an instance in which motion or consciousness could be momentarily restored to the dead this was it.

But Miss Radway was not a woman of any nature, and resolutely raising the corpse she placed it within the now empty chest. Remembering that she had seen some unlabeled lime lying in an adjoining cellar, left there by masons who had been closing some opening in the wall, she proceeded thither and filled her apron with it. "Now, this will render the task of opening the chest again safer and easier," she thought, emptying her burden into the dread receptacle. "I shouldn't bring more, but I feel all at once unusually faint. I must leave this at once." Closing down the lid, she seized the key which stood in the chest, looked it, caught up basket and lantern and turned from the vault, drawing a long breath of relief when she had also looked the heavy door behind her.

The next morning the housekeeper went about her household tasks as usual, but the livid pallor of her cheek seemed to indicate that her sleep had not proved either sound or refreshing. It was a singular existence of which that galled, staid, hardened woman now entered. To a certain extent the dream of her later life was realized, and she really was in truth, if not in name, Mistress of Tremaine Court; but oh, how barren, how empty that position proved. Haunted incessantly by the remembrance of Tremaine's base ingratitude; harassed by plans and wishes for revenge; tortured by fears that he would sooner or later arrive with some lovely patrician bride who would rule in Tremaine Court as the first wife had never done; then stung by sudden vague fears that her crime might yet come to light to be explained, perhaps, on a scaffold. Surely, surely, her sin had wrought her, as yet, nothing but wretchedness.

As time rolled on, without bringing any tidings of the absent master of the house, sudden and desperate resolves at times seized her to

put an end to her life of isolation and solitude becoming daily more insupportable.

Among the few suitors who had ever ventured to approach her was a young, good-looking and tolerably educated man, named Stukely, a sort of sub-agent, employed on a neighbouring estate. Tempted by rumours of the comfortable sum the house-keeper had already accumulated in bank; dazzled by the position he would hold as temporary master of Tremaine Court; and, willing to ensure his livelihood without the penalty of working for it, he assiduously pressed his suit, and the woman, to whom life was growing each day more intolerably dreary, began to listen to him at times with something like patience.

News came just about this period through some fox hunting friend of Tremaine's who had met him abroad, that the latter was on the eve of being married to a young heiress with whose family he had been travelling in Italy. The affair was settled beyond a doubt, so, at least, testified Mr. Rokeby, the bearer of the intelligence.

The following day Christopher Stukely's suit was accepted, and a week after the ill-matched couple were united. Both parties had made a wretched mistake and both soon bitterly regretted it, despite that the new-made bridegroom lived now in Tremaine Court, occupying its best rooms as if he had been the master of it himself. The east wing had been entirely shut up after Mr. Tremaine's departure and his wife's death, out of regard, the housekeeper said, to the superstitious fears of the servants and the diminished numbers of the household. The harsh, repellent nature of the woman Stukely had married, and her importunate arrogant attitude rendered the stately abode of Tremaine Court as hateful to him as it had once been desirable. More and more frequently he escaped from its precincts, seeking comfort and quiet at the village inn, and mortifying his wife's overweening pride to the very quick; whilst she who had resolved that he should be named Roger Tremaine's sole agent as soon as the latter returned from abroad, felt that such a course would do anything but tend towards ensuring him the desired post.

Two children were born to the Stukelys within the first four years of their married life, and a week after the second child had seen the light Christopher Stukely absconded from home, taking with him all the money he could raise, and a portion of his wife's jewels, or rather the jewels she had abstracted from the wardrobe of the late Mrs. Tremaine.

The blow pierced that callous heart to the inmost core, and humbled in the dust the head that had carried itself so haughtily. What she suffered as she lay there helpless and abandoned on a sick bed—her fierce nature untempered in any degree by the sickness and suffering she had undergone no tongue could tell; but when she at length rose from it, sterner, more fringed than ever, silvery threads mingled, for the first time, with her heavy black tresses. To no one did she complain; to no one open her heart, and that concentrated intense grief and wrath would have gone far towards destroying either life or reason had she not found a counteracting and softening influence in the deep love she bore her children. There were three now in Tremaine Court, her own two and the eldest daughter of the house, Margaret. The latter still continued fragile and sickly, but the precious lessons of piety and christian resignation inculcated by her mother from the earliest dawn of reason bore precious fruit, and enabled her to bear, in meek and patient spirit, not only bodily illness but the harsh sway of the stranger who ruled supreme in her father's household.

Ellen, the baby daughter, born shortly before Mrs. Tremaine's death, had been put out to nurse at once, and her foster-mother, a respectable farmer's wife, had become so much attached to the child that she refused to part with it. Mrs. Stukely willingly consented to the woman's proposal that she should keep her charge till Mr. Tremaine's return, and satisfied all scruples by paying a small sum monthly for the little Lillian's maintenance.

The house-keeper's eldest daughter, Ellen, was a pretty pink and white creature, excessively vain of her good looks, but gentle and affectionate to the extreme; and the youngest, however, was a source of constant grief and sorrow to her mother's heart. As if the cry of innocent blood had gone up from the subterranean recesses of Tremaine Court bringing down on that guilty woman's head the vengeance of Him who has threatened to visit the sins of the parents on their children to the third and fourth generation, Dorothy Stukely was from her birth a hopeless idiot, comparatively harmless, but devoid of any ray of intellect.

The cross was a fearful one to the mother's undisciplined spirit, and as the conviction of her daughter's imbecility forced itself day by day on her fully, she grew more and more stern and misanthropic, till even the solitary servant whom she had retained when the other domestics had all been paid off after Mr. Tremaine's departure, found her harsh rule intolerable.

The lapse of years brought no softening influences with them to that granite heart, nor did they bring tidings either of her absent husband or her absent master.

One chilly windy March evening that she and the children were taking their evening meal in gloomy silence, the house-keeper feeling unusually dull and sullen, it being the anniversary of her luckless marriage, a heavy step strode up the stairs—the door was swung flung back, and a man entered, announced, Roger Tremaine stood in their midst.

Throwing himself on a chair he moodily surveyed the group, whilst Mrs. Stukely recovering from her first overwhelming surprise rose to her feet and somewhat faltering said:

"You are welcome home Mr. Tremaine."

"Thank you, Mrs.—Mrs.—they told me your new name at the village as I came along, but I have forgotten it."

"Stukely sir."

"Ah well, Mrs. Stukely"—a strong ironical emphasis laid on the name—"please get a treading mangle or a cup of tea? Who are these young people may I ask? I think the eldest—a he indicated Margaret with outstretched fingers—mine, but I do not feel inclined to acknowledge the other two."

"They are mine," replied the housekeeper with a vivid red overpowdering her sallow cheek.

"You are richly dowered, I see!" was the sneering reply. "What is your name?" he asked of Mrs. Stukely's eldest daughter.

"Ellen, sir."

"Your little one?" and whilst he spoke his keen gaze sharply scrutinized the youngest.

An idiotic grin and stare followed by some uncouth attempt at speech was the only rejoinder.

With a slight look of disgust he turned from the child and said: "But it seems to me I had another daughter, a mere infant when I left. Where is she?"

"With her foster mother who could not consent to part with her, alleging that you had placed the child in her keeping and that she would not give her up till your return."

"Well, Mrs. Stukely, you will please despatch that eldest girl of yours to a boarding school where youngsters of her age are taken, and the youngest to an asylum. In both cases I will pay expenses. Send also for your youngest child

to-morrow and let her be kept in future here in her own home. She will be a companion for her sister there who looks as if she wanted amusement of some sort, and seems to be it possible more sickly and ailing than she ever was."

The housekeeper merely bowed her head in assent to all this, and taking the children with her left the room; notwithstanding her apparent outward calmness considerably agitated.

What did this sudden unannounced return of the master of Tremaine Court mean? Had he come back as he went, or was there a proud stately wife waiting in Brompton village till the notice of her arrival had been given to the inmates of her future home, so as to have things prepared for her reception?

Hastily putting the children to bed, she then assisted in preparing a dainty supper and carried it up herself to the dining room. Mr. Tremaine was buried in deep thought, his eyes fixed gloomily on the floor when she entered, whilst his travel-stained habiliments and mud-covered boots announced that he had as yet taken no steps towards removing the tokens of his long journey.

Whilst the housekeeper poured the tea into the delicate china taken out in honor of the master's return, the latter sarcastically asked:

"May I enquire how is that fortunate individual Mr. Stukely?"

"I know nothing of him, Mr. Tremaine, since he left me whilst I was on a bed of sickness, taking with him all my money or jewels of value that he could get possession of. You will confer a great favor to me by never mentioning his name to me again. And now can I enquire after the health of the present Mrs. Tremaine?"

"No by—there is no such person. I went more than once for an address whilst I was abroad, but signally failed. At one time it was all settled, the girl, young—well born,—very wealthy, but my ill luck clung to me, and I was jilted by the jade. I have returned free as a lark, but ruined in pocket, poor—aye poorer than I was the day I married Margaret O'Halloran."

"What is all the money that was forwarded you at different times from the sales of timber and property gone?"

"Every shilling."

"How?" she questioned in a low tone.

"At the range of tables of Baden-Baden, and other gambling resorts on the continent. I tell you I've led a fast life and a merry one since I left here, and am now come back bankrupt in health and fortune, to do penance in sack cloth and ashes for the remainder of my days."

"Ah how indeed would have been my time!" thought Mrs. Stukely with a mental pang whose sharpness amounted to agony. "Now indeed, but for the link that binds me, miserable woman that I am to a low ruin. I might have seen the one sole bright dream of my life realized. Well I acted like a fool and merit a fool's punishment!"

Mr. Tremaine now addressed himself to his supper but ate sparingly and at intervals, like a man pre-occupied by some weighty thought. Twice he looked up as if about to ask a question, then each time subsided into silence. At length, with evident difficulty he pronounced the words:

"My wife—what of her?"

The housekeeper's eyes flashed as the remembrance of all that she had suffered after Tremaine's departure rose upon her recollection and she retorted in an angry though cautious whisper:

"As to time for you to ask. She died the very day you left home, and I placed the corpse in the oak chest where it will remain till you remove it to some surer spot, or dig a grave for it in the adjoining cellar. Ah, Roger Tremaine! you played a low game, seeking safety at one's flight, and leaving me to contend alone with the dangers and difficulties that followed on her death."

"You were fully equal to the task, Hannah, but let us have done, now and for ever, with recriminations of all sorts. I have returned to Tremaine Court, beggared not only in purse, but in hope, health and all things else. I hate society—I hate my kind. No illusion is left me, nothing to look forward to—nothing to hope for. All I can expect now is perfect, stagnant quiet, and that at least I must have—it will cost nothing to the visitors who may come say I am from home, to those who refuse to be put off thus, plainly answer that Mr. Tremaine never receives calls or visits. You will make all purchases necessary for the household to save me as much as possible from going abroad, whilst you will also remember that pecuniarily crippled as I am, rigid economy is absolutely necessary."

The plan of life thus laid down was rigidly carried out from the day of Mr. Tremaine's return to that on which we introduced his two daughters to the reader, only that Mrs. Stukely's never becoming ill, and absolute and tyrannical with time her injustice to the children of the house more flagrant, and the system of penance she indulged in more daring and unscrupulous.

She undertook to bestow on Lillian and Margaret the elements of a sound English education, a task to which she was fully competent, and both girls, intelligent and quick, profited to a remarkable degree of her instructions. When the time came that these latter ceased, Margaret naturally studious continued to educate herself by a course of reading, judicious and well-chosen, commencing at the same time, in great part, her literary tastes to her younger sister. The library of Tremaine Court was about the most complete department of that strangely ordered household, so that the sisters had always within their reach the works of the best authors, and with these latter they spent many a pleasant hour, shut out as they were from society and the usual amusements of their sex. Deficient in accomplishments, they were certainly far richer in point of mental culture than most girls of their own age.

Now for Mrs. Stukely's daughters. The eldest left the boarding school in which she had passed so many years of her life, a pretty, vain and thoughtless girl. At the early age of sixteen just one month after the close of her school life, and whilst she was still on a visit with a relative of her father's, she contracted a stolen marriage with a handsome dissipated fellow residing in Brompton, a mill wright by trade. Almost from the first days of their union he gave up work and lived on the money with which Mrs. Stukely liberally furnished them. The other girl, Dorothy, remained in the asylum to which she had been sent after Mr. Tremaine's return, her mental malady unabated, but all inducements that money could procure were at her disposal.

One evil habit that the master of Tremaine Court had contracted during his sojourn abroad was that of indulging occasionally in stimulants to excess. During the day time such a thing never happened. On Mrs. Stukely's energetic remonstrating with him against this vice, and declaring that he was able to control himself at night as well as he did during the day, he was early answered:

"If the presence that haunts me at night and the thoughts that oppress and torture me like furies as soon as darkness sets in, visited you also, you might perhaps be driven to the same remedy, or to some other equally desperate."

What amount of remorse troubled Mrs. Stukely no human being ever knew, and she went

about her daily duties with the apparent calmness and self-confidence of one whose conscience was entirely at ease.

(To be continued.)

STRIKE THROUGH THE KNOT.

I well remember, years ago,
How I, a little lad,
To split a knotty stick essayed
With all the strength I had.
I vainly lugged about that knot,
And chips flew round the floor;
And, wearied, I laid down the axe,
And thought I'd try no more.

Just then, an old man passing by,
Who chanced to see my plight,
Cried out aloud, "Hold, hold, my boy!
You have not tried aright!
The hacking splinters will not gain
The object you have sought;
But split it through the knot, my boy,
Directly through the knot."

I tried once more, and on the knot
Struck hard to make it twain;
Once, twice, thrice, and the stick was split:
I dropped my axe again.
"And now," quoth he, "by this you see
Just how it is in life:
All the way through, you'll find hard knots,
And sorrows, care, and strife.

"And, should you only luck at them,
You'll find but sorry success;
But, if you strike them manfully,
You surely will succeed.
The lives of great men always lead
Through many a troubled way;
And would you walk therein, my boy,
Remember what I say."

Thus he spoke; and, ever since,
I've found his words so true,
That I will give, as I received,
The same advice to you.
And, if you heed it, you'll find that,
As others have I wot,
The wisest plan and surest way
Is striking through the knot.

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TO THE BITTER END.

By Miss M. E. Braddon.

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

CHAPTER XXXI.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

Sir Francis and Lady Clevedon left the Swiss mountains and valleys early in August, and came to their Kentish home, desparately in love with each other, and altogether a most foolishly devoted couple, as Sibyl Clevedon informed them after a day or two spent in their society.

"You really do flirt abominably," she said, "and I don't think I shall be able stand it, if things are always to go on in this way. My existence here will be a perpetual state of doing gooseberry. Don't you think you might find some eligible person to fall in love with me, Frank; so that I may set up a rival business?"

The present state of affairs is awfully slow."

Not slow for the principals, however to whom life just now seemed a summer holiday. The young couple certainly made the most of that happy week of perfect liberty which preceded the arrival of their visitors. They wandered in the park all through the sultry summer morning, exploring their territory like a married Robinson Crusoe and his wife, "running about," as Percy Shelley's wife, called it, when she spoke of herself and her boy-husband in their Welsh cottage. They rode about the surrounding villages, made themselves familiar with the boundaries of the estate, and formed the acquaintance of numerous small tenants and farm labourers, all of whom wanted something done, and took advantage of Sir Francis Clevedon's defenceless state in a ruthless manner. John Wort rated his master soundly for such folly.

"If you go, giving 'em everything they ask," he said, "you may as well divide your estate among 'em at once, and go and be a Plymouth Brother. Lett come to the same thing; for I'm blest if ever you'll get sixpence a year of the property, if you listen to your tenants' whims and fancies. I never give 'em anything; that's my rule. Don't you like that place?"

"I ask, if you come whining to me. Because if you don't, you've got your remedy next quarter-day. There isn't an acre of land or a house on the estate that I couldn't let over your heads three deep; so if you want to better yourselves in some other direction, pray don't stop out of politeness to me." That generally brings them to their senses. But of course, if the proprietor goes tampering with the tenants, I'm done. Once given 'em anything, and they'll never leave off asking; and if you begin by giving inches, you'll find yourself let in for all before you know where you are."

Sir Francis looked penitent, and referred to a dainty little note-book of George's with a gruesome countenance.

"I'm afraid I committed myself to a new chimney or two, and a little improvement in the way of drain pipes, where I found the cottages hardly as sweet as Breidenbach's shop; and here's a case where I think something inexpensive in the shape of a stable would be an actual charity, for the family have a donkey which lives with them in their common sitting-room—uncomfortable for the donkey, which must find himself hustled about when the family are busy, and perhaps a check on the freedom of conversation; for who can tell what a donkey may or may not understand? My wife pleaded piteously for the brute. I'm afraid her compassion went to the donkey rather than to the family who were compelled to have him in their parlour. Here's an oven, I see, to which I certainly did pledge myself, at the request of a woman whose cottage was a perfect model of cleanliness. And if she had an oven she could give her old man a bit of pie for his supper, or a toad-in-the-hole for his dinner. What is a toad-in-the-hole, by the bye? I've heard of viper broth being given by the Italians to people in extremity, but a toad is a new idea. Come, Wort, be philanthropic, and rudder all my promises without any more grumbling. I daresay I've been a fool, but you see a man does not get married many times in his life, and may be excused a little weakness on such an occasion."

"Of course, if you say I'm to do these things, Sir Francis, I must do them," replied John

Wort, with the sigh of resignation. "It isn't my place to make objections. I suppose you know that you've let yourself in for a couple of hundred pounds, at the least."

"We'll save the money somehow, Wort, depend upon it," answered the delinquent gaily. "You have no idea what a financier I am. Lady Clevedon and I were planning a Swiss cottage in the loveliest corner of the park to-day—a sequestered nook where we might spend our afternoons when we wanted to be alone, in order that our servants might tell people we were not at home without outraging their own moral sense. We'll defer the building of our Swiss cottage, and that will balance matters."

"This hero feet-shampeter will cost no end of money, I reckon," observed the unappeasable steward, who, conscious of having made the shipwrecked estate un-worthily by his own exertions, was inclined to consider that he had a prescriptive right to grumble. "O, dear no; it will be the simplest thing in the world. Besides, that's out of your jurisdiction, you know, Wort; a mere domestic expense."

"I know that, Sir Francis. I know there ain't many masters as would let me speak that free as I do to you. But, you see, I've worked hard for the property, and it's almost as near and dear to me as if it was an only child; and I don't want to see you ruin yourself, as Sir Lucas did. Shampeters was in his line, you know, sir."

"Don't alarm yourself, Wort, I've graduated in the science of economy. Remember what I lived on abroad. And you don't know what a treasure of a wife I have secured. There'll be no extravagance in this household, depend upon it. O, by the way, Wort, if you're not in a hurry this morning, I should like to ask you a question."

"My time is your time, Sir Francis."

"Sit down, then, and make yourself comfortable. I'll ring for some sherry and soda. I've been looking over the maps of the estate, and the family history, intermarriages of great-uncles and great-aunts, ramifications of cousins, and so on; and I find there's a small estate my father got rid of about seven years before I was born, a place I never heard of in my life, called Ravenhurst. It seems to have been a farm of about three hundred acres, with a house of some importance upon it. I wonder I never heard my father speak of it."

"I don't," said Mr. Worton decisively.

"But why not?"

"Does a man ever care to talk about a thing he has parted with?" asked the steward philosophically, as he removed the wire from a soda-water bottle. "It's always a sore subject."

"But how did my father come to sell this Ravenhurst estate?" inquired Sir Francis.

"Wasn't in the entail."

"No, sir; it was your grandmother's property. She was an heiress, you know, a Miss Blanford, only daughter of Colonel Blanford, who made no end of money in the Canarie—what ever that may be—and brought a good deal of land herabout."

"Humph! Curious! I should never have heard of the estate. My father's difficulties had begun, I suppose, when he sold it?"

"Well, yes, sir. He didn't sell it without a strong necessity."

"And did his creditors get all the money?"

"Not the common run of his creditors," replied Mr. Wort, who had a thoughtful air, and seemed indisposed to be communicative. "They didn't touch a penny. It was a debt of honour, which Sir Lucas settled with the price of Ravenhurst."

"Ah, that fatal day! Fox, and that card-playing set, who made it the fashion for a man to ruin himself, had a great deal to answer for. Who bought the estate?"

"Mr. Quilman, a gentleman farmer, whose property it joined; but the land was sold again at his death. Ravenhurst has been through other hands since Sir Lucas sold it; seven-and-thirty years ago, you see, sir. It belongs to a retired builder now, who has divided it into three small farms, and sold the frontages for building ground."

Sir Francis was satisfied. It was strange, certainly, that his father had never mentioned Ravenhurst, and yet like his father to have avoided an unpleasant topic. He put the subject out of his mind. Ravenhurst was gone from him and his heirs for ever. He had not the insatiable hunger for land which possesses some men. It was hard upon the poor old Colonel, who had fought, and possibly plundered, in the Canarie, that his estate should have been thus lightly disposed of, but it was scarcely a hardship for Sir Francis.

"That idle happy week with his young wife seemed the briefest of his existence: one long ride through shadowy woods and sunny green lanes, where the hedges were full of flowers; one lazy morning, dreaming under the chestnuts in the park; one tranquil evening, made musical by two sweet girlish voices blended in old familiar melodies such as the heart of man loveth."

They spent the peaceful evenings of this initiatory week in George's morning room, that very chamber with the oriel window in which Grace Redmayne's girlish form had first been folded in a lover's arms, that room which in Hubert Walgrave's memory held a place as solemn as a mortuary chapel. The furniture had not been changed; the old Indian cabinets—Bombay backwood—and Poonah desks and cardracks, which had been good enough for Colonel Blanford's daughter, the heiress of spoils from the Canarie, were good enough for George. A new Persian carpet, with new blue silk window-curtains, and blue silk covers for the antiquated chairs and sofas; a dainty maple-wood cottage piano in a snug recess by the fireplace; a huge eagle of Australian birds, and a prettily carved ivory frame, containing all the photographic portraits that had ever been taken of Francis Clevedon—from the boy at a German University to the Master of Clevedon Park: such trifles as these had sufficed to make the room perfect in the eyes of George.

The fifteenth of August—the day upon which their guests were to arrive—came too swiftly for the wedded lovers.

"Francis, do you know I'm afraid I hate visitors?" George said, with a solemn face expressive of profound self-abandonment, as she stood by her husband's side at an open window in the square parlour in the early summer morning.

"What a horrible confession for the head of a county family! And yet you were anxious that Mrs. Harcross should come to you George."

"Was I, Frank? Mrs. Harcross! Well, you

know, Mrs. Harcross was very good to me about my trowsers. You've no idea what trouble she took. But for her you might have had such a dowdy wife. She said Aunt Chowder's notions were a quarter of a century old."

"I don't think it would have disturbed my peace of mind very much, George, if that calamity had occurred. I should love you just as well if you had only one faded gown—like Enid. Indeed, I have serious thoughts of putting you to the test, as that young lady was tested; or taking a loaf out of the *Decameron*, and making a modern Gristel of you. I wonder how you would come through that kind of furnace."

"You can't say I'm wanting in fortitude, Frank, when I parted with Pedro for your sake. But don't let's be silly, please. I want to talk very seriously."

"I am all attention."

"No, you're not, sir; you're staring out of the window with all your might."

"Look at the shadows of the chestnuts, George, and that group of deer; don't you think those are worth staring at?"

"Yes, of course; but I want you to talk of the people who are coming to-day. First and foremost, there is Aunt Chowder. I had a tremendous discussion about the rooms with Mrs. Mixer, and I really thought we never should settle things so as not to offend any one. Aunt Chowder is to have the yellow room, with the little dressing-room, which by rights belongs to the blue room; but that we give to a bachelor—Mr. Weston Vallory—and he can do without a dressing-room."

"Weston Vallory!" exclaimed Sir Francis, with a wry face. "Did we ask that?"

"Why, Frank, you know you invited him yourself!"

"I know nothing about it, my dear. A man who is going to be married may be expected to be a little off his head. I suppose I did ask the fellow in some expansive moment."

"Don't you like him, dear?"

"Do I like cobras, or skunks, or musk-rats, or any other unclean things? I should think Weston Vallory was of the musk-rat species; and that if he ran across the bottles in my cellar, he'd poison the wine inside them: *ça sent le snob*."

"How can you be so unjust, Frank? Mrs. Harcross told me that her cousin is a most good-natured man. He is quite devoted to her."

"Yes; and hates her husband with all the venom of a small nature. I tell you, George, Weston Vallory belongs to the venomous tribes. I was a fool to invite the two men together. However, I suppose in good society one must have people who hate each other. Go on with your list, my dear."

"The tapestry-room for the Harcrosses," said George, pointing on her fingers; "the room the prince slept in for General Cheviot and his wife; the oak room for your friend Captain Hardwood; the cedar room for my friends the Miss Stalmans; and one of the best rooms on the top story for your learned friend Mr. McGill, the Scotchman who writes for all the reviews. I think that's all. Papa is to be with us every day; but he won't sleep away from the Bungalow, you know, if he can possibly help it, for fear there should be a fire in the night, and all the animals should be burnt."

"Like Barzani's Museum," said Sir Francis irreverently.

Although George was inclined to lament the advent of her visitors, it was by no means an unpleasant thing to receive them, and to feel the full force of her position as mistress of Clevedon brought home to her by their presence. She did the honours of the old house nobly, escorted her lady guests through the rooms and galleries, showing them the various points of attraction—the family pictures, the music-room with the new concert-grand, the billiard-room with its two vast tables, the spacious library, sustained in the centre by three massive porphyry columns—a room which had been added by Sir Lucas Clevedon's father, Mr. and Mrs. Harcross were the last to arrive. Their luggage had come down by an early train with the ruck of the victors, three monster trunks that might have held an Indian outfit, with Mrs. Harcross's name and London address engraved upon a brass plate on each, and a modest portmanteau or two belonging to Mr. Harcross. Fullon had brought these and the inevitable travelling-bag, now more gorgeous than of old, being in fact a wedding present, silver-gilt tops and all the jars and bottles, with Mrs. Harcross's monogram in pink coral on everything from the scent-bottles to the hair-brushes. The Harcross themselves came by an express that brought them to Tunbridge late in the afternoon; so that Weston Vallory had been installed some time, and was making himself agreeable at a five-o'clock tea in the garden when his cousin and her husband arrived.

Augusta insisted on going to her friend at once when she heard that Lady Clevedon was in the garden. She was not a person whose toilet was ever disordered by travelling, and all the puttings and flouncings of her gray silk dresses seemed as fresh as when they left the hands of her milliner. So, conscious of her fitness to meet the gaze of society, she begged to be shown at once to the garden, and followed the butler across the great hall, and along a passage leading to the garden door, with Hubert Harcross in her train.

The oak-panelled passage was just a little dark, and a flood of summer sunlight streamed in at the opening of the door. Was it this sudden burst of light that dazed Mr. Harcross, as he stood in the threshold of the house for a moment, looking out at the garden?

It was the garden in which Grace and he had wandered all through that thoughtless summer afternoon. How well he remembered it! The arches garlanded with roses and honeysuckle, the passion-flowers, the stone basin of gold fish, where no fish had been when he last saw it, only shallow stagnant water covered with duck-weed. Poor old neglected place! They had trimmed and improved everything, of course, but not with an inexorable hand. The garden still belonged to the old world, the sweet-scented flowers still grew in a wild profusion; nor had the form of beds or grassplots been altered. In the midst of his pain, which was of the sharpest, he felt glad to see that the place was so little changed.

Lady Clevedon was pouring out tea in the very arbour where Mr. and Mrs. James Redmayne and Mr. Wort had sipped their milk punch with the old butler and his wife. There were a few garden seats scattered round the bowers, and on one of these Weston Vallory was balancing himself, making himself agreeable after his kind. Sir Francis was absent, pleas-

santly engaged in showing the stables to his friend, Captain Hardwood.

"What a magnificent woman!" said Mr. McGill, the gentlemen who wrote for all the reviews, looking up from a meditative cup of tea as Mrs. Harcross came along the gravel path, her glistening gray dress and dainty pink bonnet resplendent in the sunshine. "Is that one of your Kentish friends, Lady Clevedon?"

"No, that is my friend Mrs. Harross."

"What! the wife of Harross the barrister? I've met him once or twice. O, here he comes in the background, looking rather fagged. He's said to work as hard as any man in London."

Mr. Harross performed his share of all the greetings; gave the ends of his fingers to Weston, was presented to General Cheviot and so on, and said at all that could have been expected of him under the circumstances. But he looked wan and haggard in the sunshine, and was glad to drop into a chair by George's ten-tray presently, after a little talk with the General.

"You look so tired, Mr. Harross," Lady Clevedon said compassionately, thinking that her husband might come to look like this some day, worn and weary, and with an air of premature age; "I hope the journey was not very fatiguing."

"No, Augusta did not seem to feel it at all; but I suppose I am growing old and nervous, and that the vibration affects me more than it did a few years ago. I worked rather hard in the season, and since then I have been yachting a little; and I dreading that sort of thing, with a sixty-ton yacht on one's mind, is not so complete a rest as a professional man requires."

"I should think not," cried George; "and you have been at the Isle of Wight, yachting. How I envy you your yacht!"

"And how I envy you!"

"What, Mr. Harross? What can such a successful man as you are find to envy in any one's life?"

"A great many things. Your youth, to begin with, and the freshness that belongs to it; the power to envy anybody anything. Do you know, I sometimes look round the world, and wonder whether there is anything in it I should care to have if the mere act of wishing would secure it for me; and the answer is doubtful."

"That means that your life is so full already. You have fame, fortune, a charming wife. I desire anything more you could wish for?"

"Can't you imagine something? Children, for instance—you remember what Wordsworth says about a child? But I don't wish for those. I don't feel myself the sort of man who ought to have them."

He said all this carelessly enough, yet with a certain earnestness beneath that outward lightness. He had been drawn out to speak more unreservedly than his wont by something sympathetic in George's face and manner. "She is the kind of a woman a man might trust," he said to himself. "I like that firm mouth and rounded chin, which give such character to the sparkling face. I like the tone of her voice and the touch of her hand."

Mrs. Harcross had become the centre of a circle by this time: the elderly gray-haired General prostrating himself in the dust before her, stricken down by her beauty; while his wife conversed apart with the eldest Miss Stalmans, on the alarming tendencies of the English Church, undisturbed by the pangs of jealousy. The stable clock struck seven while the party were still pleasantly engaged, and the ladies moved off to dress for the eight-o'clock dinner, leaving the gentlemen to contemplate the first cool zephyrs of evening with the odour of premature cigars drifting from the quarter of an hour which they could safely spare from the labours of the toilet.

The first dinner at Clevedon was a success. Cook and housekeeper, butler and subordinates, had nerved themselves for a grand struggle. Now or never the new establishment was to show what it was worth. "Don't talk to me about your Regency dinners, Mr. Moles," the modern butler had said to his ancient brother, in the expansiveness of social intercourse. "What elegance or artistic effect could there have been about a dinner in those days, when every blessed thing was put upon the table?"

"I don't know about the table, Mr. Mumby," said the ancient butler, with an offended air; "Sir Lucas's plate was as fine a sight as you'd wish to lay your eyes on—fourteen feet long, with gadroon edges, and ramping lions for supporters at all the corners; and our silver covers and side-dishes nowadays, with this mean sneaking way of handing everything round, you might as well be without 'em, for all the credit they do you. I'm past my time, I dessey, Mr. Mumby, and I'm glad of it, when I see the present low-lived way of doing things. Why, one of our dinners would have made six of yours in solid butler's meat; and where you've one side-dish in your menu, we had half-a-dozen."

"I don't know what you mean by side-dishes, Mr. Moles," said the modern domestic; "we have nothing but hongtrays and hongtraynays."

The inaugural dinner was a success. Tristram Moles was allowed to peep into the dining-room before the banquet, a wan feeble figure amid all that glow of colour and sparkle of glass under the soft light of waxen tapers. Pale as a ghost revisiting the scenes of its earthly joys, he gazed upon the glittering board with a faint approving smile, and confessed that it was nicely arranged.

"I never did hold with flowers on a dinner-table," he said, shaking his head at the pyramid of rare hot-house blossoms, and the dwarf forest of fern and geranium reflected in the crystal plateau; "but if you must have 'em, I allow you've arranged 'em tastily. It's all very pretty, Mr. Mumby, like a young ladies counter at a fancy fair; but I'm an old man, and I shall go down to my grave with the opinion that your top and bottom and your six side-dishes is the best decoration for your dinner-table."

Thus, with a deprecating shrug and a mournful survey of the frivolous board, Mr. Moles having come like a shadow, so departed.

The dinner, as well as being a success from a gastronomic point of view—there was a parmesan soufflé towards the end of the feast, which the eldest Miss Stalmans, who was gifted with an epicurean taste, dreamt of—was a social triumph. The hum and rattle of conversation never ceased; there were no awkward pauses, in which people simultaneously awake to the discovery that no one is talking, till the most audacious member of the circle plunges into the gulf of silence with some insane re-

mark, which being gratefully received by host or hostess, bridges the dreary chasm, and leads the way to pastures new. To-night at Clevedon there were plenty of good talkers. General Cheviot and Colonel Davanant helped and sustained each other, yet were judiciously placed far enough apart to have each his auditory. The two Miss Stalmans were of the agreeable-rattle species: could talk croquet or theology, fine art, horses, or botany with equal facility; could draw out the dullest neighbour and outtake the coldest cavalier in the meshes of one of those confidential conversations about nothing particular, which, seen from a little distance, look like flirtation of the deapest dye.

(To be continued.)

THE WAGERS.

Some years ago I took my seat in the diligence from Marseilles to F—. The railway that now connects those cities was not yet completed.

There were five passengers in all. Of these one was a short, fat man, with smooth cheeks and a red face. He wore a plain dress, his clothes were very good; he had a great number of rings on his fingers, and across his waistcoat he wore a thick gold chain, which he was careful to let me see was attached to a handsome watch, on the back of which was a cross in jewels.

There was no doubt he was a rich man, and that I, at all events, might have no doubt of it, he informed me that his income exceeded fifty thousand francs a year, and that he had fair to double it before five years were gone, so prosperous was his business.

I was partly amused and partly disgusted by his locquety. Why should he have made a confidant of me in particular I don't know, unless it was that I happened to sit next him. Among other bits of information he gave me to know that this was the first holiday he had indulged himself with for three years.

"Where do you go out?" I inquired.

"At F—," said he.

"But why do you go so far from Marseilles for a holiday?" I inquired.

"Monsieur," he answered, "I am going to get married."

"The deuce!" I exclaimed, laughing; "and you call that taking a holiday?"

"Why," said he, "that would depend. If I were going to marry an ugly woman, now, I should call this tour by another name. But, my friend, the lady I am engaged to is an angel, she might have set for one of Mohammed's hours. Her eyes—"

Here he went off into a long account of his mistress's perfections, decorating his fluent description with all manner of shrugs, grimaces and gesticulations.

"You are a very fortunate man, sir," said I, "and I wish you joy."

"Yes, and you may wish the lady joy, too, and congratulate her as well, for give me leave to say it is not every woman who has the luck to meet with a husband who unites to the splendours of wealth the accomplishments of genius and the graces of courage."

I smothered a laugh.

"So you have genius and courage as well as money?"

He nodded vehemently.

"Without boasting," said he, "I think I may pride myself on being possessed of all the qualifications that recommend a man to the ladies."

"So long as they are sufficient to recommend you to the lady of your choice you should be satisfied."

"They should be sufficient," he replied, "and in my own mind I am persuaded that they are sufficient; but, though the young lady is beautiful as an houri, I regret to say that she is rather perverse in her taste, so that for a long time I could hardly make any headway in her affections. Indeed, she was weak-minded enough to avow a preference for a cousin of hers, a young lieutenant—a beggar, sir, and a mighty impudent dog to boot. What she could see in him I could never tell. I'll allow that his nose is straight, his eyes good, and his teeth white and regular, but what is the use of these things in a man without money?"

"To be sure," said I, drowsily, for the day was warm, and the tendency to sleep was aggravated by my drooping companion. "I'll be perfectly frank with you," he continued. "I confess I don't think she would ever have accepted me had it not been for her father, who is a poor man, and is very eager to have me for a son-in-law, thinking I shall pay off his debts. I wish he may get it! But I've allowed him to think anything he likes, for his thinking costs me nothing, and being anxious to wed the girl, who, I declare to you, is beautiful—"

And here he went off again into another long description, which he liberally garnished as before, with shrugs and grimaces.

"Then you don't care about her love?" said I, sleepily.

"Not a fig!" he answered, "not a fig! I only want her. At my time of life, sir, we know the hypocrisy of love, it is counterfeited. I have a ring at home with a paste stone in it. I declare to you it flashes like a diamond, and is thought as costly as the best of the real stones I wear. So with love. The counterfeit passes for the real thirty-nine times in the hundred; but I'll be perfectly frank with you: I would rather have the real, if I can't get it, I should be just as well satisfied with the sham."

He then branched off into some very cynical remarks on the nature of love, which, however, I am ashamed to say I do not remember, as I fell sound asleep very shortly after he had commenced them.

I was awakened by the diligence stopping at the Gaidon Lion Inn, in the principal street of F—. The fat, red-faced babbler, who, it seems, had been awake during the whole journey, and had been boring a mid-looking gentleman who sat opposite him when he had found me asleep, got out, and I followed him.

He pulled out his watch, which sparkled most gorgeously as it took the sun's rays, and exclaimed, turning to me—

"A quarter to four, sir. Half an hour after time."

"I bet you that it is not," said a gentleman, with very fierce mustaches, who stood smoking a cigar before the door of the low-roofed apartment.

"I should know," retorted the little-red-faced man, turning sharply upon him, "for this is one of Leroy's best watches. It cost me two thousand francs."

"I'll bet you ten louis that it is not one of Leroy's watches," said the mustached smoker, coolly.

The red-faced man shrugged his shoulders and went into the traveller's room, saying to me—

"Don't dine here. We can do better at a café."

"I'll wager you the value of the watch that the watch is worth nothing; and if you win you will receive what you will not find it worth your

while to take," said the gentleman with the mustaches, following us.

"I did not address my remarks to you, sir."

"I'll bet that you did," said the other, with the most provoking coolness.

The little man, amazed by this persécution, touched his forehead, to signify that the gentleman with the mustaches was mad.

"I'll bet you don't prove that I'm mad," said the other.

There was a pause. They looked like two dogs waiting to be slipped for a fight.

"Upon my word," said the red-faced man, "I know nothing of this fellow. He is a most impudent rascal, whoever he is; and I have a good mind to make him march off."

"I'll make you any bet you like you don't make me march off!" exclaimed the other, pulling his mustaches; "and I'll further bet you anything you like that I make you take the road back to Paris, and that, too, without any delay."

The little man, whose face was now a deep crimson with rage, blurted out—

"You won't find that a very easy matter, for I came here to get married."

"One hundred napoleons you do not marry!"

"Sir, you are an impudent scoundrel, and I will pull your nose."

"I'll make you any bet you like you do not pull my nose."

The little man stamped with rage. He glared around him for some moments in silence, then exclaimed—

"Do you want me to shoot you?"

"I'll bet you don't shoot me."

"Where can we procure pistols?" exclaimed the red-faced man, breathing short.

"The landlord will accommodate us," answered the other.

He hurried into the house, and reappeared with a box containing a brace of pistols.

I had hitherto treated the affair as a joke, laughing in my sleeve at the red-faced man's rage and the other's cool insolence. But I thought it was now time to interpose.

"Gentlemen," I began.

But the mustached man turned upon me with a frown.

"I believe this gentleman to be a coward, sir," said he; "and if you interfere, I shall consider you are conspiring to prevent him from proving himself a coward."

I said no more, but followed the two men to a lonely spot in the park, where the cigar here was snuffed by an officer of the garrison, who was willing to become his second.

Having loaded the pistols, we placed the men. It was agreed I should give the signal, which was to throw a five-franc piece in the air.

My position was a peculiarly disadvantageous one. Up to the last moment I had believed that the whole business was only a rather cruel practical joke on the part of the man with the mustaches; and as my curiosity was excited to follow this adventure to its conclusion, I had volunteered to be the red-faced man's second; but it seemed now that one or the other or both must be killed.

"Sir," said the man with the cigar, turning to me, "I believe Monsieur Jacques to be an honest man, but though I can vouch for his word, I can't vouch for his pistols. Before that gentleman and I make a target of one another, he is good as to throw that five-franc piece in the air to see how his pistol carries."

I did as he desired, and tossed the money about seven yards high.

I heard the report of a pistol, and the piece of money fell indolent.

"Bet," said the man with the mustaches, "that I pierce that leaf vibrating at the extremity of your bow!"

And before the other could answer the trigger was pulled, and the leaf was pierced.

"Bet," continued the man, with the most ridiculous coolness, "that I shoot you clean through the pupil of the left eye, and lay you dead, and that you miss me."

The other was white as a ghost.

"I believe you," he said, trembling from head to foot, and throwing his pistol down. "I guess your motives and mine are your strength, and, as I am not yet prepared to die, shall take my road back again to Marseilles."

In fact, we saw him deposit himself in the *Impériale* of the diligence.

I turned to the mustached gentleman for an explanation. He invited me to take a glass of wine with him in the traveller's room, and with great good humour proceeded to solve the enigma.

It was a friend of the young lieutenant, and famous as the most deadly shot in France. He had received a letter only ten days before from his friend, begging him to come to F—, and help him to carry out a ruse, which, he trusted, would enable him to marry the girl he was passionately in love with.

The mustached gentleman complied, left Paris, and reached F— in time to receive from his friend's lips particulars of the stratagem he and the young girl had concerted between them.

That stratagem was perfectly successful. The little red-faced man, as I afterwards heard, on his reaching Marseilles, wrote to the father of his intended bride, apologizing for not having been able to keep his promise to go down to them. You may believe he took good care not to inform the father of the real reason that had prevented him from paying his duties to his betrothed.

The red-faced man, however, had no intention of breaking off the marriage; until acceded one morning in the streets of Marseilles by the mustached gentleman, who asked if he still persisted in his intention to marry the young lady.

"Certainly," was the reply.

"Then," said the other, "if you want to reach her hand, you will have to mount, first, on my dead body, and secondly, on the dead body of the lieutenant. Are you prepared to scold these propositions?"

"These go home; write to the lady's father that circumstances compel you to abandon your promise to wed her. I shall know by the day after to-morrow if that letter has been written. If yes, I will be your friend, and help you, as I have helped the lieutenant, in any honourable love scheme you may choose to me enter upon; if no, be prepared to meet in the evening."

The letter was written, and six months after the young lady was married to the lieutenant.

W. C. R.

Handwritten scribbles and signatures at the bottom of the page.

"SO THE STORY GOES."

"It was once upon a summer day—
So the story goes—
The Franklin's daughter chanced to stray
Where the mill-stream flows.
And as the rustic bridge she crossed—
So the story goes—
Over the rail she stooped, and lost
From out her breast a rose.
The stream ran fast, the stream ran strong—
So the story goes—
And on its waters bore along
The careless maiden's rose.
The miller's son stood by the bank—
So the story goes—
He stopped the wheel; and, ere it sank,
Caught up the maiden's rose.
Then in his cap he placed the flower—
So the story goes—
And boldly to the maiden's bower
He hid at daylight's close.
"Is this thy flower, sweetheart?" he cried—
So the story goes—
The maiden blushed, the maiden sighed,
"Oh I give me back my rose."
"Two flowers," he said, "so sweet and fair"—
So the story goes—
"Where shame to part—one breast should bear
Thyself and this red rose."
What more the youth and maiden said,
That summer eve, who knows?
But he hid the flower and won the maid—
So the story goes.

BROOKDALE.

BY ERNEST BRENT.

Author of Love's Redemption, &c.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AFTER THIRTEEN YEARS.

The deep thrill of joy that ran to Margaret's heart at this moment told her she still loved the man. Theirs had been a strange courtship, if indeed, it could be called a courtship. She could remember now how quickly he accepted her rejection of him, and smiling at her with his proud dark face, told her he would come back for her when he was rich enough, because he knew she loved him. He had been true to that belief. He gave her a simple promise that he would wait for her no matter how long, and he repeated to her, as he walked by her horse's side, how he had worked, and hoped, and waited. She heard the history of these thirteen years with a tranquil pleasure she had never thought to realize. "Yes, I have kept my promise," he said, quietly. "I had an instinct that you were true to me, and I felt sure when I came back I should find you here at Brookdale or near; but I did not think of meeting you as soon. I meant to come into the neighbourhood as a stranger, and make inquiries to find out what had become of you, and if I had not found you as you are the whole labour of my life would have been lost." Her groom stood in the background, wondering, perhaps, who this gentleman could be, or Mr. Fleming might have said more. Miss Grantley's attendant never could have suspected how cruelly he was in the way of these two long-separated lovers. He kept a discreet watchfulness upon them, deeply as he was apparently absorbed in the study of hills and landscape. "Why would you have lost the labour of your life?" she asked. "It was for you I worked. It may seem strange to you, Margaret, that I rarely had a doubt or a misgiving till within these last few months. It was not till my task was finished, and my arrangements were made for coming home, that I began to be haunted by a fear that you might have been taken from me." Margaret returned his tender smile with one of sympathy. She returned her horse's head towards home, and he walked by her side till they reached Brookdale. The pace was slow for such a cheerless, wintry day; but it brought them to the stately house before they were aware of it. "You will see Everard, as you are here," Miss Grantley said. "If you can spare the time from other ties, you will not find Brookdale much changed." They went in together. He thought how little changed she was. These thirteen years, which had made him a bearded man, looking much more than his age, had only changed her from a womanly girl of nineteen into a splendidly-developed, beautiful woman of two and thirty. He was a man of the world and had travelled well, and he knew that thirty or so is the age at which genuine beauty begins to grow upon a woman. They went in together, and entered the drawing-room. Mr. Fleming took Margaret into his arms when he saw that she were alone. He had never dared to do this thing before; but he felt that she was his by right of patient love and patient waiting, and he held her in a long and passionate embrace, from which she did not try to escape. He felt her lips tremble under the close and clinging pressure of his. Proud as she was, she could not repress that silent token of her passion. "Our love has stood a long test," said Mr. Fleming. "Our future ought to be happy, Margaret. I wonder what your brother will say to me. There was never much sympathy between us; but I suppose he will be glad to see me here again." "I am sure he will." Alexander was not so sure. He had a rather distinct remembrance of Everard's proud treatment of him; for Grantley was reserved and haughty even in his youth, and the difference between the son of a gentleman farmer—a man whose ancestors had, not many generations back, been tillers of the soil—and Margaret, the daughter of Grantley, the diplomatist, was too wide to be bridged over by a marriage. "Whether or not," he said, "you can make your own choice now. I said I would come back when I was rich enough, and I have realized sufficient for comfort. I cannot give you a home like this, Margaret, but I will try to make you content with your lot." He told her frankly what his position would be. He had gone out as an emigrant, with a couple of hundred pounds, and taken to agriculture because he understood it. But land was cheap, and there were plenty of facilities for the profitable raising of stock. Shorn of its romance the incident of travel and adventure, Alexander Fleming's life had been one of serious, simple hard work; and he had gained the practical knowledge of farming to the best account. He was worth rather more than two or three thousand pounds, he told her in conclusion, and that with well-invested would, with the help of his own industry, provide them with a fair income. It was not the destiny Margaret had pictured to herself. Her dream of a stately, princely husband, and a home of palatial splendour, had faded with the fancies of her girlhood, and she

loved Alexander for his solid, sterling strength. She was grateful to him for having come back to rescue her from a fate she had dreaded—a lonely, loveless life. She was a very beautiful woman and she knew that therein lay her danger. Men are apt to be awed by very beautiful women—these regal creatures who seem much more unapproachable than they really are. June, with all her stately haughtiness, is apt to be as simple-hearted and impulsively passionate as Hebe, in spite of her dimples and her childish innocence. It was not the destiny Margaret had pictured, and some few old dreams faded before the prosaic prospect of her wedded life; but she felt that there was infinite peace and happiness in store for her. She had rather Mr. Fleming had made his money in some way that gave more scope for sentiment than runs of sheep and herds of oxen. If he had lived in the bush, or gone gold-digging, or hunted buffaloes with a rifle, she would have liked it better. He might have given her several reasons why neither of these things would have supplied him with salt and shoe-leather; but he knew nothing of her discontent, though it was scarcely discontent. "Everard will sneer, I know, at his hard hands and his rugged simplicity," she thought, "or tell me I have not waited much longer. He always spoke of Alec as my friend the grazier; but I love him, and he is of all men the one to make me happy." Mr. Grantley extended a very cordial welcome to Margaret's old lover. There may have been some genuine pleasure for his sister's sake at the bottom of his warmth.

lion, gentleman, in all simplicity of heart; "black fellows, you know." "I have seen some few Hottentots," said Mr. Fleming, with a smile at the utter absurdity of the question. "What are they like?" "Very, black, as a rule; not remarkable for good manners." "How do they dress? Not like they do in pictures, do they?" "Their dress is extremely unfashionable—you would think so, I fear. Twenty yards of linen would dress a whole family handsomely, and leave something to spare." Mr. Colburn retired from the conversation. He thought that the experience of a traveller amongst Hottentots did not make good table talk. "If an old-fashioned country Christmas has any attraction for you, you may as well remain," said Grantley to their new visitor. "Thank you, Mr. Grantley—there is nothing I should more enjoy, and I hope I shall be able to return in time; but I undertook a mission for a friend just before I left America, and it may occupy me for a week or more. It is rather a curious business." "Yes." "Four or five years ago I met a man in the colonies, and we became fast friends. I scarcely know why, for he was twenty years my senior, and there is very little in common between us. A reckless, indomitable, iron-willed man he is, ready to grapple with any danger, and caring for no man's opinion. His nature must have been noble at the beginning; but some bitter

believe he has considerable property here if he liked to claim it." "He seems a misanthropical person, rather," said the gentlemanly George. A sort of Timon of Athens. "There may be a little of that spirit in him." "Most ungentlemanly person Timon was," said the Hon. Mr. Colburn; "spent all his money and then used bad language to his friends. He invited them to dinner, you know; and had nothing but hot water in the dishes, you know; and because they didn't seem anxious to go in for it, he threw it in their faces, you know; and then he went and lived on grass in a cave, like Nebuchadnezzar, you know." "I think I have seen the story in Shakespeare," smiled Mr. Fleming. "By the way, Mr. Darrill, a gentleman of your name is concerned in something I have to do." The gentlemanly George flinched uneasily in his chair. "Indeed?" "My friend Danvers left a child behind him when he sailed in the City of Dublin," Fleming went on. "A little boy. He would be a young man of about twenty now. When Danvers went to Philadelphia for him, he ascertained that he had left for England in company with a gentleman named Darrill, and I have promised to find that gentleman if I can." "That gentleman made himself a promise that Mr. Fleming should know nothing of the kind if he could help it." "I cannot care so much for the boy after leaving him so long," said Grantley. "How much he may care depends upon the

not have told her so. In his time of trial, he was forgetful even of her. "Everard," she said, gently, "I can see a way now by which you might retreat, and escape the danger that I feel must come. Even if, by no matter what desperate means, you pass the present crisis, new complications must rise, and you cannot be prepared for all." "Well, what is your way?" "Send the Darrills out of the country. They and the wretched boy who threatened you yesterday are but puppets in your hands. You can dismiss them when you like. You are rich enough without Brookdale. You can explain to Uncle Clarence, when he comes, that it was you who had his son brought over here, and that you intended in time to tell him the truth as to his parentage." "But Eugene?" "Will forgive you for my sake. I will go to him." He shook his head. "The stake I have played for is Brookdale," he said, with deliberate emphasis, "and Brookdale shall be mine. There is no alternative. I shall only fall if you desert me. Keep Fleming with you on Monday. Let him hear nothing of the change that has taken place here. I will deal with Eugene to-day." "What will you say to him?" "That which will bring him in any terms, if he sets the value of a pin upon his life." He took the key of the closed wing from his pocket, and went towards the picture-gallery. There was such full purpose in his face that Margaret followed him with a terrible fear in her soul. He thought she had stayed behind, and was not aware of her presence till he had the key in the lock. Then he felt her hand upon his shoulder. Soft and slender as that hand was, the resolute grip made him frown. "Everard," she said, putting her back against the doorway before you enter here give me your solemn promise that he shall not be harmed. I have been faithful to you from first to last. I have had it in my power to set him at liberty many a time, and loving him as I do, it has been hard to see him pine as he has pined in his captivity. He is dying, I am sure; but for your sake I waited, hoping that in time he would take your terms, and so relieve us of a heavy burden." "He will take my terms." "If he does not?" "You shall have an answer after I have seen him." "I must have an answer now," she said, with determination as deep as his own. "So long as he is safe I will say nothing; but if, in the event of his not complying, your intentions are as dangerous as I think, dismises them for your own sake. Surely as I love you—deeply as I have loved for you—I would denounce you if he were injured." "You, too, Margaret? You turn against me?" "Only in this. You have not found me timid, and you will not so that he is always safe. Promise me." "Well, if you would rather sacrifice me than him, he is so?" "I would sacrifice neither, but save both." "And that," he said, under his breath, as she stood away from the door to let him in, "is impossible."



MARGARET GRANTLEY PLEADS FOR EUGENE.

"I had given you up long since," he said, returning the traveller's hearty grip of the hand; "but Margaret knew better, it seems. I am glad that I was a false prophet, Mr. Fleming." Mr. Fleming was as glad. He thanked Grantley feelingly for his reception. It was the one he valued most, for it placed him at home in the midst of old friends, and few of those he had left behind when he went from England thirteen years before remained to greet him now. Old associations had died out, old friendships dropped asunder, and he had found it, as he said, like coming back to the grave of his former life: everything was so changed. "I should like to redeem my promise soon," Mr. Fleming said. "I have waited for Margaret long enough, and if I can satisfy you on the score of circumstances, you will not, I suppose, insist upon much delay?" "Margaret is her own mistress, my dear Mr. Fleming. I can only give her choice my approval, and that you have." This was better than Alexander had expected. He recollected Everard as a reserved and stately gentleman, who had always kept him somewhat at a distance. The change was pleasant to him. Everard left them till luncheon-time. He was careful not to touch upon the alterations which had taken place at Brookdale, and he did it hesitantly, as if he were waiting for Alexander to wonder why he acted like the master of the house, he kept the wondering to himself. Edward Danvers Temple did not appear at the table for the midday meal. The night, more than the violence, to which Grantley had subjected him, had laid him prostrate—shaken his nervous system thoroughly. "Mr. Temple is indisposed," Margaret said. "You will see him in a day or so." "Not seriously indisposed, I hope?" "No; he has delicate health generally, and is apt to be affected by any sudden change of weather." The Hon. Mr. Colburn opened his round blue eyes wide. He did not know precisely what had happened, but he was not without some suspicion, and he knew it was no change of weather which had rendered his host unable to leave his room. "Had a deal of travelling, I suppose?" Mr. Colburn hazarded, at a safe venture. He had travelled in the usual way. He had been on the Continent; followed the well-worn footsteps of the tourist parts of Rome; climbed with much repugnance up the Alps. Because it was the thing, you know," as he said to Fleming a little later; gone to the Holy Land, the condition of which he described as disreputable, and touched at Constantinople, which he said was the dirtiest place in the world. He reckoned himself a very accomplished traveller indeed, and had quite a collection of guide-books as a matter of proof. "Yes, I have travelled a little," replied Mr. Fleming, "though by no means to the extent you might infer. I spent the most of my time in the colonies." "Didn't find the colonial people very fashionable did you?" "I found them very much like other people. The men work harder, perhaps, than they do here, and have a more independent tone; but the women are just as much slaves to the dress-maker as here. There is throughout a more even tone of society, but it is slightly varied, and we have a few imitations of the London dandy—the highest point to which our civilization has arrived." "Did you ever see a Hottentot?" inquired the

trouble or disappointment has warped it. He lost his wife at sea. He told me once that the course of life was upon him, for no matter what the peril might be he was sure to be saved to taste himself." "Naturally. Though she was not his first love, and his moral character had been by no means free from reproach. He married her in Philadelphia, and started for England in the City of Dublin—the ship that was never heard of, you may remember." "Yes," said Mr. Grantley, quietly, "I do remember. Every soul was lost." "I said the same words to my friend Danvers, and he smiled in his singularly bitter way. 'Every soul and everybody but one,' he said to me, 'and the soul of that had been lost long before.' But the one saved was himself." "Your friend?" "Yes, my friend, Mr. Danvers." "Is he an Englishman?" "Yes. There is some mystery attached to him—Danvers is not his real name. He told me as much; but he did not tell me what his real name was. He used rather strong and graphic language, as all men who have suffered much seem to, and he said he had buried his identity with the past—buried it with an old man's curse upon it, and he did not care to have it disinterred. He took the name of Danvers from his wife." "What is his Christian name?" "Clarence." "I know—or did know—a young man named Danvers," said Mr. Grantley, with a cold thrill—part fear, and part desperation—at his heart. "How was your friend saved? I should like to hear, because, as you are aware, the loss of the City of Dublin excited considerable interest at the time. Advertisements were put in every European newspaper, requesting any one who may have been saved to come forward in behalf of the relations of those who were lost." "That I remember, too; but the only one who could have given information was Mr. Danvers, and he then, and for some time afterwards preferred to let it be thought he was dead. He has been a cynic and a sceptic all his lifetime, with a few rare intervals of better feeling; and he was a cynic and a sceptic when I first knew him. He told me he had relations here." "Here?" "In England," said Mr. Fleming, surprised at the tone in which the question was uttered. "And he seemed to contemplate with some degree of pleasure the possible effect his return would have upon them after his many years of absence." "Those family experiments are rarely satisfactory," said Mr. Grantley. "When a man has been away long enough to be forgotten, long enough to have had his place filled in the hearts of his old friends, he had better stay away altogether, or come back as a stranger. Tennyson is a gentleman whom I do not much admire, but I like the philosophy of Enoch Arden. The man came back, and found that his wife had very naturally taken another husband, and he went away without making himself known. You will say it was a noble piece of self-sacrifice, I think it was simply his duty." "There are a good many Enoch Ardens in the world, Mr. Grantley," said Fleming, with a grave look at Margaret. "He was no fancy portrait, painted by a poet; but it is in no such spirit Mr. Danvers would return. His chief delight would be in watching the disappointment his return would produce, the hopes it would break, the old enemies it would revive; for I

boy himself. It is not his intention to make himself known at first. He will begin by cultivating his acquaintance, studying his character, and seeing what he's worth before he acknowledges him." "It seems a dangerous experiment," Mr. Grantley said. "The safest plan is to take one's friends as we find them, and shut our eyes to what we do not wish to see. I would commend that advice to families in general and husbands in particular. When do you expect Mr. Danvers?" "By the next vessel, the Egeria. It is expected on Monday. He stayed behind to make inquiries, but he is sure to come by the Egeria." When luncheon was over Mr. Grantley left Alexander Fleming to the care of Colburn and the gentlemanly George. He was strangely quiet now; the fierce, feverish restlessness had left him for a settled, stern resolution. Margaret knew that he would not flinch now from the path he had determined on. "This is a new complication," he said, between his teeth. The very Fates are against me, Margaret. What but the hand of Fate could have thrown your lover into Clarence Temple's way?" "Are you sure it is Clarence Temple?" "Can there be a doubt? His character—his adoption of his wife's name—the place he comes from! Yes, he is Clarence Temple, and should he arrive in London, all will be over. You must get Fleming away from here. He knows nothing yet, but he could not remain in ignorance long if we had him in the house." "What pretext can I offer?" "That I leave to you. I am sorry for you, Margaret. It would be better had Fleming never returned. He is one more to fight against, and I am hemmed in on every side. Yet—and he uttered such a bitter oath that his sister shrank from it as from a blow—"I will triumph in the end, or Brookdale shall crumble to a heap of ruins. It shall be my tomb, and the funeral pyre of those who conquer me." "Everard?" "I have played too desperate a game throughout to shrink from the last throw now. My way is clear, in spite of the many perils, and there is no barrier that I will not break or trample on. On Monday the Egeria arrives. Fleming would, perhaps, go to meet his friend. That you must prevent." "Tell me why," said Margaret, seeing something deadly and dangerous in his eye. "Our sin is deep enough already, Everard. I cannot help you to commit a crime. Let the work stop even now, before it is too late. There is time for forgiveness, and I will plead for you. I am so changed since this morning," she added, clasping her hands imploringly. "I want to be worthy of this good man's love." "You would be that at your worst. Do you think, because he has the one merit of fidelity, he has lived the life of a saint? You think it was your memory which kept him faithful. Any bachelor might say the same—in fact, it is a thing which bachelors are fond of saying. The worst of the unmarried reproaches who grow saintly would, if you asked him why he never married, bring up a sentimental sigh, and hint at some story of early youth and blighted affection. You are a splendid woman, Margaret—well worth the waiting, had such a man waited twice as many years. He did not happen to be suited while he was away, so he came back, on the chance of finding you still single. It is only by the law of accident that you and he have not been married long since—to some one else." But for the bitterness in his spirit, he would

CHAPTER XXXIII. INCAPACITY. He opened the door, and went in. The dull light reflected through the window from the ceiling of the next room showed him Eugene Temple seated at a table with a book before him. Eugene, with a patient, wearied look of resignation in his face, and a drooping, fragile air, which had grown upon him during the time of his captivity in the closed wing. Everard's heart smote him as he met his cousin's gaze. He had had but a poor return to his generous young benefactor for years of kindness and affection; but a poor return to the dead man who had left two orphaned children in his and Margaret's care. Nothing worse than this captivity had happened yet. Faithfully as Grantley's ambition to be master of the stately pile and the broad lands that belonged to it had taken him step by step into crime, he shrank, in his darkest hours, from the contemplation of the deed which his evil genius suggested to him as the surest means of safety. Cruel as he had seemed, cruel as he had been, no one had regretted more than he the fatal chance which revealed to Eugene the secret of the cabinet, and rendered the keeping of that secret and him who knew it a matter of most stern necessity. He had taken his measures well as far as the interests of the house were concerned. The servants knew nothing that transpired. No one but Everard or his sister, or Everard's valet, ever entered the closed wing, and Everard's valet was so thoroughly in his master's power that, no matter what he thought, he dared not speak. He was as glad of a hiding-place as Everard was of an assistant on whom he could depend. There was a warrant out for his apprehension on a charge of forgery, and Everard had promised to get him safely out of the country when his task of watching the captive was done. Everard represented Eugene as a harmless invalid of weak intellect, whose existence was not to be made known to the household. They had treated Eugene kindly. After that first terrible hour when he was shut in, Everard had gone to him again, and told him what his fate must be. "You know my secret," Grantley had said, unmoved and tranquil even then; "you know the truth, and perhaps can see my purpose, Eugene. I never intended you should know either. I wanted to be master here; but I did not wish to sacrifice you. Give me your word you will never reveal what you know as to my interference with the arrangements as they stand, and I will let the entire income shall be yours, and you shall leave on the instant." But Eugene would not temporize with him. He shrank with a shudder, but with no fear from his cousin, on whose soul there was the stain of blood. He would not give up his birthright, and leave his father's house to one who had been guilty of so much villainy. "I never should denounce you," he said. "The retribution for the crime which sent him poor fellow to his death I leave to heaven and its ministers of justice; and I will not make terms with a felon. I will not leave Brookdale to you and your ingenious accomplices. You cannot keep me here long." "Can keep you here till you die," was the reply, "and I shall do so unless I have your solemn promise that you will take my terms, and give the public sanction of your presence to appearances here. The boy I brought here is your cousin, though he is not Clarence Temple's lawful son, and he suits my purpose better than the real one would, and I have the real one here in England." "The legitimate child of Clarence Temple?" "The legitimate child of Clarence Temple and Ellen Danvers. He does not know his father's name, and I am not going to enlighten him. His half-brother suits my purpose better." "I never thought you could be so great a villain!" "I am surprised myself sometimes. Such a perversion of the proprieties is never preced-

ated at the outset. It grows by degrees, and one adapts oneself to it as the occasion requires. I never should have thought of it had you not put the chance in my way by insisting upon having your cousin sought and found. To be master of Brookdale has been my life-long dream. You will admit that I am better fitted for the position than you. I am a villain as you say, but you must blame destiny, and not me. Destiny gave you a splendid inheritance, and you would have been just as happy without it. Destiny made me a poor relation, and I have the soul of a Sardinian. You would have bowed to destiny; I bent it to the shape I require.

"And burden your soul with crime?" "The burden is light one, I assure. What was there in that wretched betting-man to give me a single thought of remorse? He was a worthless, useless member of society; he had no home, no friends. He loved to eat, drink, idle his time at gambling, and prey upon his fellow creatures. I did society a service when I sent him over the cliff into eternity. He did not lie in his throat, for had he not said that he had sent you I should have had no purpose in silencing him."

"That sin will find you out, Everard Grantley. The Creator, who saw all, will not permit the murder of that poor man to go unpunished."

"My dear Eugene, you talk like a schoolboy. Men, and women too, are drowned and poisoned, outraged and beaten to death, in dark places and in daylight, and the perpetrators are never discovered. In the last twenty years there have been as many undetected murders, and those who did them, if not dead, still at large. Under certain conditions, properly arranged, putting an objectionable person out of the way is safer and easier than picking a pocket."

"Strange as the situation was, Eugene could not help wondering how he had lived so long with this man, and never suspected the awful depths of sin lurking under the quiet polish of his character."

THE HOUSE WHERE WE WERE WED.

BY WILL M. CARLTON.

I've been to the old farm house, good wife, Where you and I were wed; Where the love was born to our two hearts, That now is cold and dead. Where a long-kept secret to you I told, In the beams of the yellow moon, And we forged our vows out of love's own gold, To be broken so soon, so soon, wife I To be broken so soon, so soon.

I passed through all the old rooms, good wife I I wandered on and on; I followed the steps of a flitting ghost— The ghost of a love that is gone. He led me out on a vine-wreathed porch. Where with myrtle I twined your hair; He sat me down on the old stone step, And he left me nursing there, wife, He left me nursing there.

The sun went down as it used to do, And sunk in the sea of night; The two bright stars that we called ourz Came slowly into my sight; But the one that was mine went under a cloud, Went under a cloud, alone.

And a tear that I would not have shed for the world Fell down on the old gray stone, wife, Fell down on the old gray stone.

But there be words can ne'er be unsaid, And deeds can ne'er be undone, Except, perhaps, in another world; When our life's once more begun: And may be some time in the time to come, When the days and years are sped, We'll love again, as we used to love, In the house where we were wed, wife, In the house where we were wed.

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IN AFTER-YEARS; OR, FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER ROSS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The forenoon of the Duchess of Theism's party Margaret Cuninghame entered her sister's dressing-room, looking flushed and mazy, a thing very unusual with her. Throwing her hat on the sofa, on which she had seated herself, she said: "Agnes, send Matilda away; I want to speak to you alone."

"The order was given and the maid retired. "What is the matter, Margaret?" said her sister; you look as if some sudden misfortune had happened to you."

"I cannot say that there ought to be anything the matter with me, and I am sure nothing evil has happened, yet I cannot help feeling very uneasy by something Lady Hamilton said, or rather asked of me, while we went out driving this morning."

"What could she say? what did she ask?" "You are aware she came to ask me to drive very unexpectedly?"

"Yes, I know, Matilda told me after you were gone. I was in the green-house with Arthur while she was here, and did not know of her Ladyship's visit, or I would have come into the house. I am always sorry when I miss seeing her."

"It is perhaps as well you did not. I have never seen Lady Hamilton look unhappy before, which she certainly did this morning. Ernest De Vere is going to India at once, and perhaps she feels pining from him; and the turn in which she looked, and even spoke, seemed to me as if it were something connected with myself, or perhaps both you and I, which made her feel and look so sad."

"What did she say, Margaret? Do not keep me in suspense; you almost frighten me."

"I shall tell you as quickly as I can, but it seems such a long story; I can scarcely realize that all could have passed during a two hour's drive."

thought the same until the day dear papa died, but of course I did not say so. "I have been told," her Ladyship resumed, "that in the top of the eastern tower there is an iron cage, which in the dark ages (Haddon Castle is such an old place, and people were so cruel then) they used to keep human beings fastened up like wild beasts. I trust these were wild tales which never actually took place, and were only invented to make ignorant people—like and shiver with horror when the fierce north wind blew round the old Castle on winter nights. I dreamy it is to such that the old saying of the country people owes its origin:

Haddon for ever, and Haddon for aye, May the wind blow cold about Haddon for aye."

"I did not answer. I tried to look unconcerned, but I had no power to look other than a guilty creature, trying to hide what I saw but too plainly was well known."

"Lady Hamilton sat looking in my face; I knew she did, but I dared not look up into her eyes. I never felt so before; oh! I hope I shall never feel so again. Those few minutes seemed to me like a long, dark day. At last she said, 'Margaret, will you tell me truly if you and Agnes ever saw the inside of that lower chamber, over saw the iron cage I spoke of just now?'"

"I thought of the love and confidence our dear father reposed in us, and a greater courage than ever I felt in my life came to help me, as I inwardly prayed, 'Almighty Father, if ever the dead come back to earth, let my dear father hear and see me now. My fear left me; I was as composed as if I was telling Adam to bring me a branch from yonder tree. I looked up in her face, into her eyes, and said, 'Yes, we have both been in the tower chamber and seen the iron cage you spoke of?'"

"I shall never forget the look of sharp pain which passed over her face while I said these words."

"We were both silent, but I think God heard my prayer, and my eye did not quail beneath her sad searching gaze, nor did my cheek burn, nor my heart beat quick."

"We were at the gate of the villa here, the carriage passed in; still she spoke not. We were close to the steps leading to the verandah, the footman came to open the door of the carriage, Lady Hamilton signed to him to leave it shut, and he went forward and spoke to the coachman. A blackbird flew from a low branch of the fir-tree in front of the verandah, and perching on the topmost bough, sang loud and clearly. I shall ever remember those little things, even to my dying day."

"Lady Hamilton observed the bird, and stooped down her head to look at him. At last she said: 'Margaret, will you tell me why Agnes and you went to that chamber?'"

"I answered as fearlessly as I ever answered to my father: 'No, Lady Hamilton, I will not tell that to you nor to any living being.'"

"She signed to the footman; he came and opened the door for me to get out."

"Farewell, Margaret," said she, without taking my hand; 'I go to Scotland to-morrow. It is not likely we shall ever meet again on this green, beautiful earth, which we ourselves make so polluted. May Israel's God give us grace to meet before His throne.'"

"I would have spoken but I could not. After the carriage began to move I looked in her face. Its expression was one of deep misery, as if she had bidden good-bye for ever to a darling child who went to meet a felon's doom."

"I wish we could tell Lady Hamilton that strange story. That it will be a cross and a thorn in our path through life, making us to walk with bowed heads and bleeding feet in ways that for others are moss-grown and strewn with roses, I am as sure as that I believe in the blessed Trinity. Lady Hamilton's good opinion is to me almost as dear as that of my husband."

"But we cannot tell Lady Hamilton, Agnes, or any one else; I wish we could. The very fact that we are obliged to conceal it seems to make it half a crime; yet that there was a necessity for my father confining Sir Richard we were not long in having bitter experience. But for Adam he would have killed us both. Dear papa told us if ever he got loose he would turn Haddon Castle into a scene of desolation and misery, and as he not done so? It is as silent as the grave. His very wife, although, loquacious enough in his absence, fears to speak a word in his presence. If God had permitted him, he would have made it our tomb. Here in London he would have killed Adam had not young Cox been so energetic. We have known and suffered from his wickedness little more than one year. Papa had to bear his ill-usage, and was cognizant of his evil deeds all his life. Oh, Agnes! however it may appear to others, we know papa was in the right."

"Yes, indeed," replied Agnes, "and not only you, but every one who knew our dear father loved and esteemed him, while no one speaks well of Sir Richard. Those who will not detest their lips or tongues with evil-speaking are scrupulous, denounce him unsparingly."

"However our knowledge of Sir Richard's captivity may affect us, of one thing there can be no doubt, papa did what was right and best, and had he lived everything would have been different. He most likely possessed a knowledge of Sir Richard's mania for killing people, and by this means could have confined him in some low terrible way, even after he escaped; and whatever suffering it may bring on us, I have always been thankful to our Almighty Father, who know our weakness, and therefore, just at the time it would have fallen to us to care for him, ordered it so that he escaped. You have always, Agnes, had a stronger mind and frame than I have, and perhaps you could have kept the promise you made for us both; but to me it would have been death in life to know that any creature was shut out from fresh air and motion in a place like that, never to walk on the green grass, never to see the trees blossom nor hear the birds sing—oh! I could not have borne it; every sweet sound, every pleasant sight would have stung my heart with the bitterest self-reproach. Whatever my fate may be, my heart will always find cause to rejoice that I was saved the misery of helping to keep that bad man in his prison one hour."

"You are right, Margaret; it would have been a misery by night and day, and one, if it had ended in a week, we could never have forgotten all our life long. Oh! I do so wish we had never seen the room in the eastern tower, or the iron cage."

"I did not answer. I know we always

She stopped short; her husband's hands were on her eyes. He had entered through a door connecting her dressing-room with the bedroom. The sofa the sisters sat on was placed so that their backs were towards the door, and they knew not of his entrance until his hands were on his wife's eyes.

"What tower and what iron cage were you wishing you had never seen?" said Colonel Lindsay, as he half-soaked himself on the arm of the sofa; "I thought such things were only to be found in the romances of the middle ages."

He was looking down upon his wife and her sister as they sat beside each other. To his surprise the faces of both expressed great consternation.

Margaret rose immediately, looking as white and cold as a marble statue, while Agnes' neck and face, even her forehead, were red as a crimson rose.

CHAPTER XIX.

Fair Margaret, and rare Margaret, and Margaret of verity, Gin ever ye love another man, Ne'er love him as ye've done me. —Old Ballad.

The party which met at the Duke of Theism's mansion consisted of the Duke of London—the Duke of Wellington, the Marquis and Marchioness of Dango, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, the Duke and Duchess of Athole, the Duke and Duchess of Gordon, the crême de la crême of the English aristocracy.

The house was a villa residence at Sydenham, a long rambling, many-roomed cottage, originally in the Elizabethan style, which had been added to by nearly every Duke of Theism's since he succeeded his father for generations back. The addition made by the present Duke was a suite of music and drawing-rooms on the one side, leading into conservatories and terraces covering nearly an acre of ground, laid out in broad and smooth walks, so that they formed a delightful retreat from the crowded, heated rooms; and, on the opposite side into a picture gallery, which was esteemed one of the best private collections in London.

Amid these crowded rooms, filled with the high birth, wealth, and beauty of the land, Margaret Cuninghame shone a star, a pearl, surpassing all competitors. Her white silk dress, with its cloudy gauze covering, unrelieved save by the pearls twisted in her pale brown hair, her beautiful hair, that at times allowed fair, at others golt, as the light fell directly down or ains upon it, and which had never known other form than the wave or curl which nature had bestowed; in that gay assembly she was almost a stranger, and amid the dresses of gold and silver lams, the rich velvet and satin that shone around, she was unmistakably arrayed in the simplest apparel there, yet Duchess and Peer alike put the same question to each other:

"Who is that beautiful girl?—What grace in every step,—refinement speaking in every feature, in every gesture;—such a demure look of maiden modesty over all!—so different from other girls!—no aid of dress, and yet such rare grace and loveliness."

The beautiful Duchess of Sutherland, she herself considered the most beautiful woman in England, sought an introduction to Margaret. Her son said:

"Because she is so beautiful." "Where she was allowed by all to be the most beautiful, perhaps she was the very happiest girl in these lucky rooms."

Notwithstanding the cloud which had troubled her in the morning, her heart beat high with hope, her face was radiant with happiness. The morning with its shower of chill rain was forgotten. Ernest De Vere was by her side, the courtly boy so handsome in his gay scarlet uniform, which he wore by request of the great Duke; his sweet voice speaking of endless love, the lights above her head like dropping stars, the music a joyful peon, the flowers and statuary by which she was surrounded Fairy Land. In all that gay, courtly throng there was not a happier heart than Margaret Cuninghame's.

"You said the other day you had never seen a Fernery. The one here is perhaps the finest in London. Shall I bring you to see it?" said her companion.

"I should like to see it so much. Ferns always remind me of the Scottish woods. I would like to bury my arms deep amid their green leaves and stems as I used to do, to the great dismay of Adam, when he brought us into the Forest at Haddon; he feared my arms would get torn by thorns, as they did sometimes, and used to beg of me to copy Agnes, who always did as she was bid, and even occasionally threatened never to bring me to the woods again; and I am ashamed to say I often promised to be still and staid, but nature was too strong; when I came to the deep ferns, down my hands and arms would go again."

"Come, then, and I will allow you to bury your arms as deep in the ferns as you like, but I confess I would not like to see them scratched by thorns."

"There would be little fear of thorns in a Fernery, and I am old and cautious now." "I will trust you with the ferns," said Captain De Vere, as Margaret, taking his arm, they walked along towards the conservatory; "and as I know they are not chary of their flowers here, I will get you a bouquet of white roses to match your dress."

They entered the conservatory. The time seemed to fly on angel's wings as, with drooping head, Margaret listened to the sweet words which every woman loves to hear, and hides in her bosom, and will never tell again.

The air of the conservatory was warm and heavy with perfume, and they sought the cool shade of the Fernery.

"My head aches with the perfume of these flowers. Can you get me some water?" "Do you feel ill?" "Not in the least, but I seem to need fresh air and water."

"You shall have both, the first in an instant. Sit down here under these tall ferns; I will slide back the glass above your head, and the outer air will come in softly through the broad leaves."

She sat down, and the sweet air of the autumn night came in, tempered through the beech leaves without and the tall ferns within. "This is delicious," said she, leaning back among the green leaves; "I think the Garden of Eden must have been like this."

minutes, as I shall take it from a spring in the grounds. It used to be one of my play places when I was a boy. You know, I believe, that the Duke is my uncle."

He was gone in search of the water, and Margaret Cuninghame sat with closed eyes, leaning back in that bower of green beauty, thinking there was never youth as handsome as Ernest De Vere, never maiden so blessed in her love as Margaret Cuninghame.

A sound in the trees outside, as the wind stirred their light leaves with a twitter and the rustic peculiar to the beech attracted her attention; a second more, she heard Lord Nairn's voice say in an undertone, but so close above her head, as she sat under the opening in the Fernery, that she could not avoid hearing distinctly every word:

"Sir Robert Cuninghame was father to these girls, and it was he, you will observe, who confined his father during eighteen years in an iron cage in one of the towers in the main's own Castle."

Margaret felt her head reel, and her eyes became sightless. She grasped the stem of a tree fern; without that support she would have fallen to the ground.

"Most atrocious," replied a voice which she knew was Lord Cromartee's.

"A cage with bars as thick as a man's arm, six feet by six, the two girls—a rustle of the beech leaves drowned the rest of the sentence."

"A dreadful fate for poor Lindsay," said Lord Cromartee.

"Shocking," replied Lord Nairn; "better he had married the poorest dairy-maid in the land than entail such disgrace upon himself and his children."

"Oh, horrible!" another rustle of the beech leaves.

"If Lindsay comes to know it, I should not at any time be surprised to hear that he had shot himself."

"It would be my resource were I in his place."

"Mrs. Lindsay,"—"beautiful woman,"—"young De Vere,"—"caught in the sister's toils,"—"crime in sentences broken by the beech leaves, through her ear to her heart, as if to still it forever."

"Goes to India to-morrow,"—"Will soon forget her,"—"The ruin to the poor boy,"—"A history of crime,"—"To Scotland in a day or two,"—"Poor Lindsay, very sorry for him,"—"Easy to avoid them,"—"came in detached sentences, stalking heart and brain, each one like a funeral knell. Heavy footsteps passed slowly down by the side of the Fernery, the beech leaves rustled and twittered in the night breeze."

Margaret Cuninghame in the last ten minutes had passed through a life of woe; henceforth to her life was nothing, death all.

She was alone, trying to make her heart beat quickly, but it was impossible. She longed to weep or pray, but it could not be; her very brain seemed warped and wrung; her power of hearing had gone with that last scathing sentence:

"Easy to avoid them." Her eyes had lost their vision; for anything she knew or felt, she might have been sitting on a barren rock, with the waves of the salt sea lapping her feet. Her eyes were wide open, staring; yet fern leaves, beech trees and flowers were gone from her sight. Sight and speech and hearing were dead; yet her mind was never more widely awake, more painfully conscious. All the long, arid, sandy desert of life she must henceforth tread alone was vividly before her,—the drooping arching head, the cross clasped in silence to her weary breast, the sharp flint and thorns piercing her bleeding feet,—all her red roses dead roses.

An arm was round her, a face laid to her's; she knew who it was—who clasped her and laid her head on his breast—she feels his touch and knew it so well, her heart beat in great wild throbs.

"Margaret, dear Margaret, try to speak." She hears that, and wonders why he shouts so loud. A great sigh heaves her breast, her eyes are open, she sees and hears him now.

"Margaret, dearest, you are better; try and drink this cool water." She drank, a long cool draught; how strong it made her.

"What a fool I was to leave you here alone! You are much better now. Were you frightened?" Her breath came softly back, and the great beate at her heart ceased.

"You are cold; we will go into the conservatory." She tried to move, but her strength had not come.

THE CARAT.—Possibly, many people have seen, lately upon the occasion of the great cat, an inauspicious weight, that expresses the fineness of gold, or the proportions of pure gold in a mass of metal; thus, an ounce of gold of twenty-two carats fine is gold of which twenty-two parts out of twenty-four are pure, the other two parts being silver, copper or other metal; the weight of four grains, used by jewellers in weighing precious stones or pearls, is sometimes called diamond weight—the carat consists of four smaller grains, the lighter than four grains troy, or seventy-four and one-sixteenth carat grains being equal to seventy-two grains troy. The term of weighing carat derives its name from a bean, the fruit of an Abyssinian tree called karna. This bean from the time of its being gathered varies very little in its weight, and seems to have been, from a very remote period, used as a weight for gold in Africa. In India, also, the bean is used as a weight for gems and pearls.

COMPOSITIONS OF THE EARTH.—At the city of Modona, in Italy, and about five miles around it, wherever the earth is dug, when the workmen arrive at a distance of sixty feet, they come to a bed of iron, which they bore with an augur five feet deep. They then withdraw from the pit before the augur is removed, and upon its extraction the water bursts through the aperture with great violence, and quickly fills the newly-made well, which continues full, and is affected neither by rains or droughts. But what is most remarkable in this operation are the rays of earth as we descend. At the depth of fourteen feet are found the ruins of an ancient city, paved streets, houses, floors, and different pieces of mosaic work. Under this is found a soft, sandy earth, made up of vegetable, and twenty-six feet deep large trees entire, such as walnut trees, with the walnuts still sticking to the stem, and the leaves and branches in a perfect state of preservation. At twenty-eight feet deep, a soft chalk is found, mixed with a large quantity of shells, and this bed is eleven feet thick. Under this vegetable are again found

COME INTO THE GARDEN, MAUD.

Come into the garden, Maud, With a brickbat and a stone, Here's the buzzard you ever saw'd!

THE MANIAC'S FREAK.

BY MISS D. P. H.

"By-by," Arthur; come home as early as you can," and with a long, lingering look at the retreating figure of her husband, Cousin Fanny shut the door, and approached the fire, where our little Cousin Maud and myself were sitting.

on my way to school, I heard Mrs. Irving's voice in the sitting-room. I was about to bid her "good morning," as was my usual custom, when I heard her exclaim— "Oh, Arthur! you are the last man I expected to see to-day, and you know you are the best boy in the world to give me such a glad surprise."



THE FIRST BEAM OF MORNING.

and locked myself in my room. I was almost dead with fright, but I re-lighted my lamp as quickly as possible. "What could it have been?" I questioned. I knew that I was the only inmate in that part of the house, and I tried to persuade myself that it was a dream. Still, the pressure on my hand seemed so real. All night long the terrible whisper rang in my ears, and I slept little.

for I heard something fall to the earth. A chill-like death-stole over me, the blood in my veins seemed to be turned to ice. Honors of agony went by. Ages, to me, rolled away, and then I saw a gray streak at the opening of my prison, and I knew it was day. I knew that I should not be missed from school, as it was Saturday, and I thought with a feeling of horror, that Mrs. Irving might imagine I had gone home in her absence to town. Gradually I made out some of the features of my prison-house. I knew that I was underground, for I could see that steps had been cut in the rock, that led from the opening above. Wild vines drooped down through the aperture, but not a ray of sunshine penetrated the gloomy place.

ing seen. You know the sequel. What he means by leaving us here I know not, for it is not easy to read the purposes of a maniac, and I know now, although I had no suspicion of it before, that he is really insane. "Then he reproached himself for ever trusting the major to any other keeping than that of the asylum. "If I could only release you," he said, "I would not care for myself."

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