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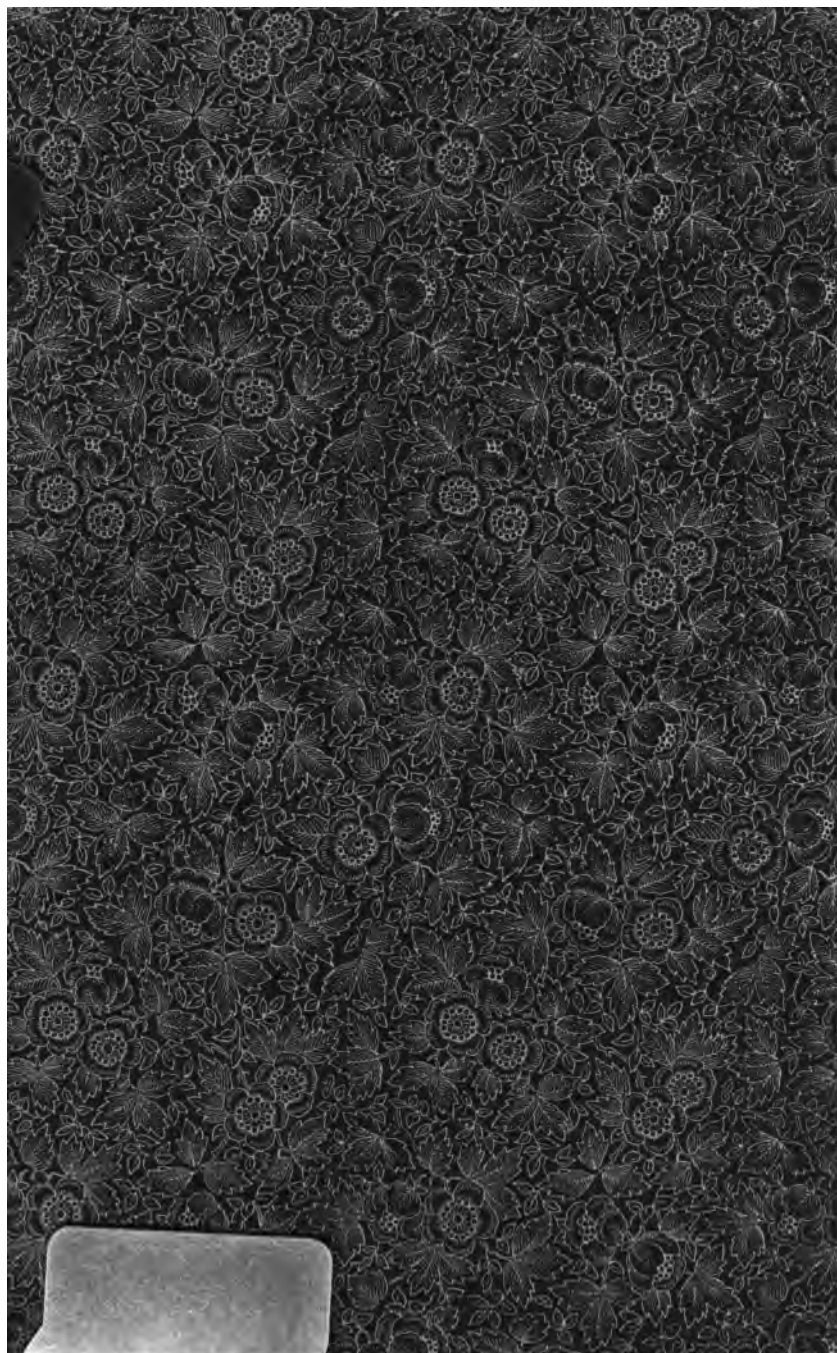
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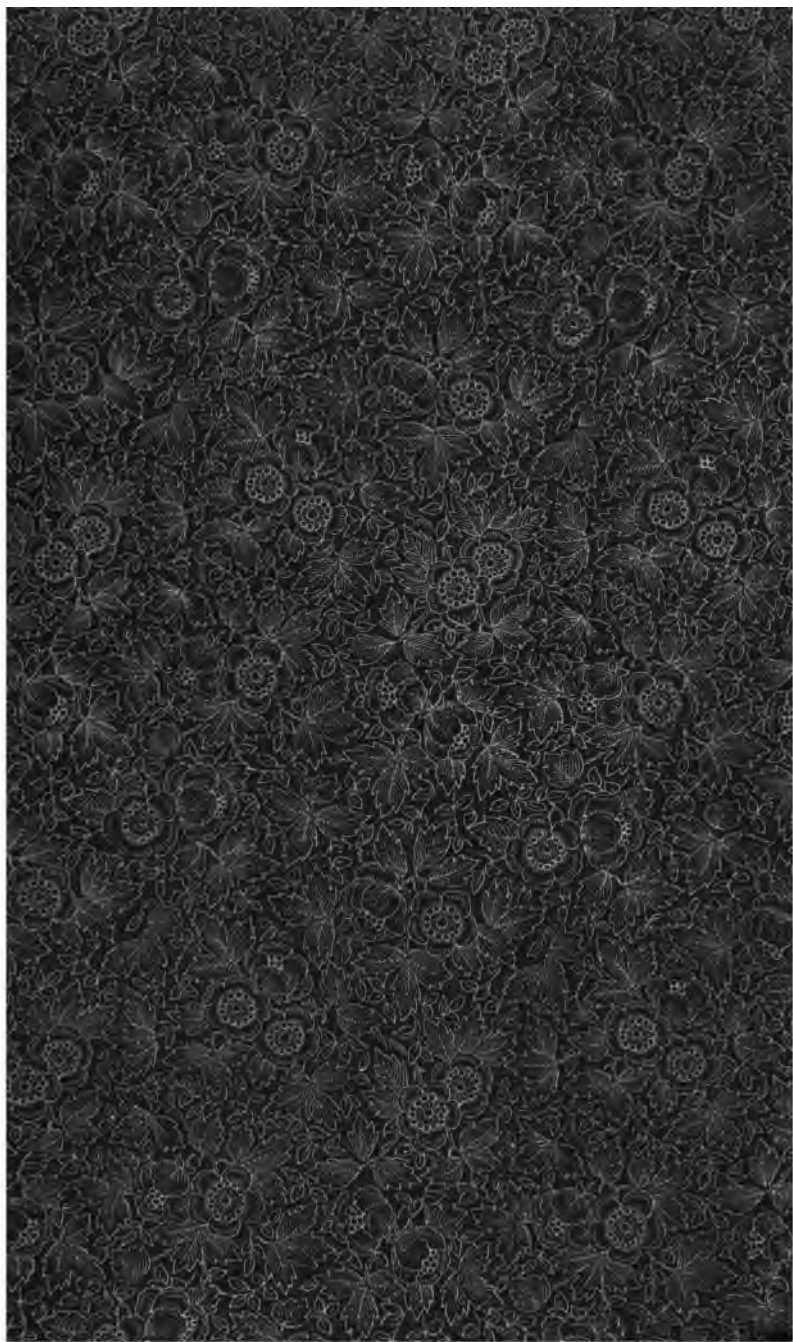


TWO MEN
AND
A MAID.

By
HARRIET FAY.









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TWO MEN AND A MAID:

A TALE.

BY

HARRIETT JAY,

AUTHOR OF 'THE QUEEN OF CONNAUGHT,' 'THE DARK COLLEEN,'
'MADGE DUNRAVEN,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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TWO MEN AND A MAID

CHAPTER I.

RESURGAM!

THE whole scheme of my mysterious return was one after Owen Glendower's heart. He appreciated it at once, with a relish worthy of a more intellectual creature. He, like Tremaine, was a misogynist, and had no belief whatever in women, and I found that I had to discount many of his statements before getting at the truth concerning Alice

Chepstow. Little by little, however, I extracted from him the little positive knowledge that he possessed, discarding as I did so the cunning leaven of malignity and suspicion with which it was surrounded.

‘ First, I discovered for certain that Alice had suffered greatly on receiving the news of my violent death. She had, in fact, been dangerously ill for some time. Then on recovering she had gone away for several months for change of air and scene. A few weeks before my arrival at Plas Ruthven she had returned, greatly improved both in health and spirits. The day after her return she had come alone to Plas Ruthven, and old Owen peeping out had seen her standing upon the lawn, dressed in deep black, and weeping bitterly.

‘ So far the old man’s tale brought hope and

comfort. A little further questioning, however, elicited further information of a less pleasant character. Alice had no sooner returned than she was visited frequently, indeed almost daily, by Mr Philip Kingston. It was reported, moreover, in the village, that Kingston had been in her company abroad, and had there made her an offer of marriage.

‘So, after all, Tremaine had told me only the bare truth. There *was* a lover in the case, and that lover was Philip Kingston. It remained now for me to discover with my own eyes and ears whether the man’s suit really met with any encouragement from Alice herself.

‘Had I trusted the croaking of old Glendower, I should at once have been convinced that Alice was already false to me—at least in thought. There could be no

mistaking the significance of his looks and words as he described what he had heard and seen, and I could have strangled him there and then in the new fury of my jealousy and hate. But knowing his character, I was not yet satisfied. I determined to see with my own eyes, hear with my own ears, to judge her fairly before I suffered myself to condemn. . . .

‘ . . . Since that dreary night when, like a spirit from the grave, I emerged from the shadows of night and entered Plas Ruthven, twelve days have passed, and yet, though I have chafed and fretted like an imprisoned bird, I have never crossed the threshold. Whenever I go to the door, some strange invisible hand takes hold of me and drags me back, and I, weak fool that I am, I yield, because, forsooth, I am afraid.

‘ Afraid? Yes, actually afraid ;—though I

have in my lifetime faced the wrath of God and man. I shrink from the blow that can be dealt me from a woman's eyes.

'I am a mass of contradiction,—hard as iron, yet weak as any babe.

'For the last twelve months the hope within my breast has kept me alive. Yes, when I lay in China, with grim death hovering within an inch of my pillow, it was the hope of seeing her once again that raised me as it were from the dead. And now I am within a mile of her, I gaze upon the very roof that shelters her, breathe the same air with her, and yet I shrink from the first sight of her face.

'Alice, my darling, it is because I love you—because I dread to find you false—that I fear to take a first long look into your eyes. . . .

' . . . The die is cast—another step

is taken on the road which is to lead me to all the delights of heaven, or all the tortures of hell.

‘To-night, issuing like a guilty thing from my abode, I took my first walk through the village. It was an ordeal, but I have passed through successfully, so successfully that I have gained courage, and feel more prepared for that greater ordeal which is yet to come. I have not seen Alice! Well, perhaps, so far God has been merciful. I can yet live on, hoping that she is true.

‘When I resolved to show myself in the village, I determined to wait until the sun had gone down; for being so well known, I feared that if I faced the broad daylight, despite my disfigurement and disguise, some sharp eye would recognise me, and so bring to a sudden and ignominious termination all my well-laid plot. No, I could not, dared

not, brave the daylight. I issued forth at dark.

‘It was not so late but that many people were abroad, and ere I had left the Plas Ruthven woods a quarter of a mile behind me, I had braved the keen glance of many eyes.

‘At first feeling within me a certain sense of shrinking fear, I walked with bowed head and eyes cast down; but by-and-by gaining courage, I raised my head, and at first somewhat timidly, but afterwards more boldly, returned the glances of my neighbours. I saw at once that my fears were vain. In the eyes that met mine I detected no recognition, only idle curiosity.

‘How could *they* tell that the dead had risen—how could *they* know that in the body of a man whose head was frosted with the snow of many winters, whose shoulders

were bowed down beneath the heavy hand of time, was the soul of Richard Glamorgan, troubled and storm-tossed—seeking for that one thing in all the world which could bring him peace.

‘ I passed through the village and up the hill, never pausing to draw breath until I stood in the churchyard amid the green graves of the dead ; then, still leaning heavily on my staff, and keeping my cloak wrapped well about my form, I paused, looked at the clustering hamlets below me, the flat stretches of marshes beyond, and beyond, again, the glorious sweep of the open sea.

‘ Heavens, how my pulses throbbed ! how the life-blood within my veins seemed to turn to fire ! Wherever I looked I seemed to see her face smiling up into mine, and to hear her sweet voice murmuring, “ I love you ! ”

‘ But such thoughts were not to be nurtured.

I quickly dismissed them from my mind ; and, in order to turn my thoughts into other channels, I entered the church. Here, again, pleasant memories assailed me. The first thing that met my eye was the pew wherein I had so often sat beside her, and, as I looked upon it, it seemed that the calm air about me was sweet with the perfume of her breath. Feeling like an intoxicated man, yet subdued a little, perhaps, by the sweet, calm silence of the place, I passed on. Day was fading fast, night rapidly advancing ; yet the pale grey light which fell in fitful gleams through the diamond panes of the church windows at length showed me what I sought.

‘It played in tremulous rays upon a tomb.

‘A white scroll falling from the hands of two white-robed angels, ornamented

with a black border, and engraved with my own name:—

RESURGAM!

Sacred to the Memory of

RICHARD GLAMORGAN,

Who was Murdered in the Chinese Seas on the
31st day of August 188—.

“MAY HE REST IN PEACE.”

‘As I gazed, a tremor as if from the touch of death’s cold fingers passed over my frame, and I seemed for the moment to feel the salt ooze in my hair, and the foul things of the sea crawling about my bones. Ay, it seemed as if I lay out there in the Chinese seas, far from home and kindred, forgotten, unanelled, far from her whom I prized more than all the riches of the world.

‘I walked forward to look at the tomb ;
I bent down, and stretched forth my now
trembling hand. The light which revealed
the tomb, revealed now a wreath which lay
thereon.

‘A wreath of immortelles, spotless and
pure as the soul of her whom I knew,
must have placed them there—enduring as
her love.

‘I lifted the flowers reverently, tenderly ;
I pressed them to my burning lips ; then
I felt that my better soul was rising within
me—my eyes were full of tears.

‘I replaced the wreath upon the tomb,
left the church, and stood again amidst
the graves, gazing down upon the village.

‘How peaceful it looked lying there in the
evening light of that chill November sky !
There was the vicarage, the little green
gate where we had so often met and parted,

the house half buried still in clustering ivy leaves! In imagination I entered, and saw her sitting there. Was she weeping? No; the time for violent sorrow had gone past, and, perchance, left the pale, sweet face with a grave sad look which it had never worn in former years. Oh, yes, my darling had suffered—none could deny that, for I myself had just kissed the flowers which she had placed upon my tomb.

“Go to her,” whispered a voice within me. “She has suffered enough. Brush the tears from her eyes; bring back the roses to her cheeks, and with one fond, sweet embrace blot out the memory of the past. For is not her love very dear to you? What will your life be worth if you prove her false? Better, dead man, that you were lying out yonder in the pitiless ocean or beneath that icy marble slab that bears your name.”

‘ My blood was up ; my brain on fire. In one wild impulse I passed from the church-yard, when that pitiless unseen hand griped me and turned me again to stone ; for a devil arose within me and made me doubt again. “ Go to her ? ” I cried, “ not if the lawyer’s story be true. Perhaps even now another hand is brushing away the tears ; another voice is calling back her smiles and making the light of love shine once more in her beautiful eyes.”

‘ No, I did not go to Alice ; but, cold and sick at heart, I returned to my desolate, ghost-haunted home. . . .

‘ . . . I have seen her at last ! The veil between us has been lifted. I have seen her—my love ! my darling !

‘ Let me try to be calm, and write the record down.

‘ To-day was an anniversary. On this

day twelve months ago they brought her the news that I was dead. On this day of all days my eyes hungered for a sight of her face.

‘The longing within me was becoming intolerable. Go forth I must, see her I must—but how and where?’

‘It was a dark day, cloudy and cold, giving every indication of a coming storm. The trees were groaning around Plas Ruthven, the old house seemed to creak and moan. As I sat at my open window I could hear the sea roaring, and see storm clouds gathering ominously in the sky.

‘While it was still early in the day I left the house.

‘I had no definite purpose in my mind, only a wild mass of thoughts, knotted and confused as a tangled skein, kept whirling in my head. I knew that at that time of

day the village was no place for me, so I turned back into the Plas Ruthven woods. Here at least I was safe; were I so inclined, I could pluck off my disguise, gaze fearlessly around me, and in my old natural voice call aloud on her I loved. None would hear or heed, or, if they did, it would only be to murmur, "It is the ghost of Richard Glamorgan come back to-day to the place where he was born."

'But I did nothing rash. Locks of snow-white hair still fell upon my shoulders, the folds of an old-fashioned cloak concealed my form, and my hands still grasped the staff which always helped me on my way.

'Thus equipped, and with my body bending like a willow above a stream, I walked in deep meditation through the woods.

'How long I walked I cannot say; my mind was too much occupied with specula-

tions as to my future to take account just then of the flight of time, but when at length I raised my eyes and recalled my wandering thoughts, I found myself close to the bridge which spanned the river running tumultuously through Glen Ruthven.

‘I raised my eyes, gave one sharp glance about me. I paused, staggered back, and gasped for breath, while a strange trembling seized me from head to foot, and a sweat like the cold dews of death broke out upon my forehead.

‘The deadly solitude of the place had no terror for me, though the trees groaned wearily around, the sky was blackening above, and all the air about me seemed full of the whispering voices of the dead. I had looked at the bridge, partly covered now with oozing moss and slime, at the river roaring and foaming below; then my

eye, restless and wandering, became fixed on a shape that stood below.

Alice, evidently unconscious of any presence but her own, stood quietly beside the Devil's Pool.'





CHAPTER II.

‘HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ME?’

MY first instinct was to utter a cry, to rush forward and clasp her fondly in my arms. May God forgive me for not obeying that one kindly impulse of my nature. I paused, and as I did so the voice of my familiar, my haunting Demon, seemed to whisper in my ear,—

‘Watch and wait, Glamorgan ; watch and wait !’

I walked a few steps forward, leaned with folded arms on the stone parapet of the bridge and looked down.

God! there she stood, the same, and yet so changed! She was clad from head to foot in black, in widow's crape, with a widow's bonnet and veil. I could not see her face; it was half turned from me, and bent above the roaring river.

What was she doing, of what was she thinking, why was she standing there?


For a time she remained motionless as a statue, then suddenly she stepped forward, reached forth her hand, and plunged it into the silent water in the Devil's Pool.

I rose from the parapet, and staggered back like one who had been shot. Was I dreaming? I passed my hand across my eyes and looked again. No, I was not dreaming; there she stood with the black robes clinging about her—her hand beneath the bubbling water of the pool.

No need for any unseen force to restrain me now—no need for any ghostly voices to whisper warnings in my ear—my wild impulse to rush forward had fled, for the past, vivid and clear, shot up before my vision, and turned me heart-sick. Once before I had seen her stand like that ; mine was the second hand which she had clasped beneath the water, and now with her black robes clinging about her, she had crept away into solitude to try the charm again.

As I gazed on her in fascination she rose, and our eyes met.

I saw the pale, sweet face I knew so well, and my heart throbbed wildly. Her name was on my lips, but I could not utter it, for my head swam, and had I not turned away I should have swooned. Unable to bear more, I left the hedge and crept into the darkness of the woods.



An hour later I reached Plas Ruthven. I was wet to the skin, for a thunder storm had broken over the village, and during the last hour the earth had been deluged with heavy streams of rain. Old Owen, having grown uneasy at my long absence, was looking out for me; yet he did not seem much relieved at my return; something in my face startled him, I suppose, for he clung piteously to my hand—addressed me by my name.

I was in no mood to be questioned, and the mention of my name—which I had forbidden him to utter—ruffled my already irritated temper. I flung him aside and ascended to my room.

The chamber was occupied. Tremaine had arrived during my absence, and was now making himself at home.

Of all men on the earth he was the

one I least wished to see just then. Perhaps he read my thoughts in my face, for after one swift glance he turned his head away. His eye had lighted on my saturated clothes.

‘The storm has found you out,’ he said, ‘though it spared me. My dear Ravenscourt, before you utter a syllable let me beg of you to change your clothes.’

Tremaine was a cautious man, and never, even in the utmost privacy, did he suffer himself to breathe my real name.

I withdrew, as he bade me, not because I wanted to get my wet garments off—I was not in a mood to care for them—but because I wished for a while to be quit of his presence. When I returned to the room Tremaine was gone.

With his usual astuteness he had noticed that his presence just then was most un-

welcome to me. I thought my brusqueness might have offended him and sent him back to town, and I was about to summon old Owen, when that worthy came creeping into the room.

He had come to explain the lawyer's absence. 'Mr Tremane had gone,' he said, 'to transact some business in the village; he would return when his business was done, and hoped to spend the night at Plas Ruthven.'

When the lawyer returned we were both in a better frame of mind. Reflection had pointed out to me the folly of visiting my dark moods upon Tremaine, and his business had evidently made him unusually self-satisfied. I shook hands with him cordially this time, and made him as comfortable as the house would permit.

We sat and talked on various subjects,

but avoided the one topic which was of the most interest to us both.

At length I broke the ice.

‘Tremaine,’ I said, ‘I have seen her.’

‘Indeed?’

If he was curious he did not show it. Having answered me, he went on sipping his brandy and water and waited for me to speak again. I did so, eagerly—somewhat excitedly, perhaps. Having wronged Alice in my thoughts, I determined to do her justice, and, if possible, force Tremaine to do her justice too. I described her as I had seen her standing by the stream, with her black garments clinging about her, her sweet face pale and sad. When I had done I looked at Tremaine. His face was cold and sceptical as ever.

‘Yes,’ he said; ‘I know she has donned her black to-day. She wears it at

this moment, and very pretty she looks in it.'

'You have seen her?' I asked, in amazement.

Tremaine nodded.

'When? Where?'

'I have just left her in the vicarage parlour.'

'What was she doing?'

He looked at me, hesitated for a moment, then said,—

'Do you really want to know what she was doing?'

'I do.'

'She was handing a cup of tea to Mr Philip Kingston!' . . .

. . . Three o'clock!

For the last three hours old Owen, coiled up like a boa constrictor, had been snoring lustily in his den. Tremaine had been

sleeping as soundly, but less noisily, and I, unable even to think of slumber, had been pacing restlessly from room to room.

A fair still night—the earth grown fresher, for the rain was shone upon by a starlit, moonlit sky; and in its calm beneficent beams Plas Ruthven looked less gloomy, though not less sad. How weary I felt, how my heart ached, how my head burned. Had I mistaken my own strength, was I about to falter and fail before my task began?

‘Alice, Alice, my darling, do they believe you, or is it true—have you forgotten me?’

Half leaning out of the window, looking at the moonbeams, listening to the sleeping world, I uttered my thoughts aloud. The words were wrung from me—they came from a heart which was beginning

to feel the pangs of utter desolation. I was already realising what life would really be to me if Alice was taken away.

'O, my love, my love! if only we could lie together peacefully asleep up in the little churchyard! or if my weary body could be at rest beneath the tomb which you have tenderly decked with flowers!'

Unable longer to bear the solitude of the hours, I noiselessly descended the stairs and wandered forth.

It was cooler outside—the silence seemed less ghostly; the fresh cool air came like balm to my heated forehead; the murmur of the sea sounded like music in my ears.

There was no one abroad, even the cattle in the fields were dozing peacefully, and gave me a sleepy look as I passed by. With no definite purpose in view,

I passed like a spirit through the silent shades of night.

When I paused, the vicarage was before me.

Silent as the night, its windows all curtained, its doors barred fast. There was her window—up yonder among the ivy leaves. I gazed at it until my strained vision grew dim; then sick at heart I wandered back to Plas Ruthven. . .

. . . Tremain is gone; once more I am alone.

A malignant fever has broken out in the village: Alice has left her home and taken refuge in Mostyn Towers. The villagers, terrified at the plague which consumes them, have abandoned gossip for a time, and think only of burying their dead, and thus Alice is left free to act, and I, poor fool, to watch.

Regularly every night old Owen, at my request, spends an hour or so at the inn, but he can bring me little news. Nobody knows or cares about anything but the fever.

No one notices me. Regularly every day I wander forth and watch my darling hour after hour. She has abandoned her outward badge of grief, yet her cheek is still pale. Sometimes she wanders by the sea, sometimes among the marshes, and once or twice she has come to the very verge of the Plas Ruthven woods.

What does she think of? What does she dream of? Has she quite forgotten me? Sometimes she sighs and looks at the sea; again she gazes up at the village, and her sweet eyes fill with tears. She is thinking of the poor sufferers from the fever—not of the man who lies dead in the pitiless ocean.

Dead man, you lie! She sometimes thinks of you, and when she does so she creeps into the church, and lays a fresh flower upon your tomb.

Yes, I have seen her do this; but then, following close upon this, I have seen things which should make the flowers wither, the dead man stir in his grave.

. . . The fever had abated, the villagers had collected their terrified wits, and life in the village fell again into its ordinary routine. Frightened folk, as soon as the cause of their fear was gone, returned to their homes. Fathers welcomed back their wives, mothers their daughters—but Alice did not return.

I was speculating as to her delay when the cause of it was shown me in a way that turned my heart to stone.

One afternoon I crossed the marshes,



with some mad idea of speaking to her and learning the truth from her lips.

A wild idea, one born of my frenzy. Procrastination was driving me mad. 'A little more of this,' I said to myself, 'and God will never spare me to see the end.'

It was early when I left home; the sun was still high in the heavens, but before I had covered the half of my road the sky became cloudy and the wind began to rise. 'She must have left the shore before this time,' I said, so I made straight for the gate of Mostyn Towers.

I had walked some distance, but was yet within a quarter of a mile of the gate, when a dog bounding wildly through the fields brushed past me. In a moment I recognised it, and, pausing, looked round for its mistress. There she was, a hundred

yards from me, walking slowly towards the lodge gate.

My heart stood still as I looked upon her. Her cheek was not pale that night, her eyes were not sad, but there was upon her face a look of quiet contentment—just such a look as I had seen upon it the day when I asked her to become my wife.

How well I remember that day! I took her little hand in mine, I looked into her eyes, and said,—

‘Alice, my darling, will you always love me as you do now?’

‘Always.’

‘And if I die?’

‘Then I should wear crape for you, and think and dream of you until we met again. If it please God to deny us happiness in this world, He would give it us in the world that is to come!’

Those words of hers gladdened my heart at the time, but that night as I stood on the marshes the recollection of them came to me like a death knell.

For she was not alone.

A man walked beside her, her little hand rested on his arm, as so often it had done on mine.

They walked in silence till they came to the gate, then they paused. He took both her hands and looked into her eyes. I crept nearer, keeping well within the shadow, and heard them speak. What he said I could not tell—it was *her* voice I heard.

‘Oh, how good you are!’ she cried. ‘Don’t think I don’t care for you, Philip—I do, I do!’

What he said to this God alone can tell. I strained my ears, but could hear

nothing—only a confused murmur. He bent his head and looked into her face, he put his arms around her and drew her to his breast, he kissed her fondly, then, still holding her hand in his, passed with her through the gate and disappeared.

God help me now ! . . .

. . . Last night at midnight Tremaine arrived. He was out most of to-day, and returned towards night-fall, looking sadly disturbed. I was over-much engrossed with my own feelings to notice him, therefore he attacked me roundly.

‘Glamorgan,’ he said, ‘how much longer is this mad folly to last ? . . . to the end of the chapter, eh ? Excuse me, my friend, but I begin to think you are as mad as the benighted folk of the village say you are. You talk about loving the girl, yet you are dragging her through all the tortures of hell !’

I looked at him in amazement. He quietly went on,—

‘She could be happy, she would be happy, but for a certain something well known to you and me, and dimly felt by her. That young man loves her, she loves him. She is serenely contented, except at times, when the face of her old lover appears before her, as it did two nights ago, and brings up the horrible past!’

‘Horrible? What horror does the past contain for her?’

‘A good deal apparently; at any rate the sight of her dead lover’s face (for which I suppose you are responsible) has brought on a nervous fever, and caused some unpleasant talk. The people pitied *you* a few months ago, now they pity *her*, and say—’

‘Well?’

‘That it would have been better for Alice Chepstow if Richard Glamorgan had never been born?’

‘Why don’t they add, it would have been better for Richard Glamorgan if he had never seen her face?’

The old man started and looked at me keenly from beneath his shaggy brows.

‘Would they speak truly?’ he asked.

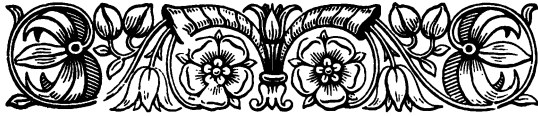
‘They would.’

‘Then you mean to give up this folly?’

‘You mistake. Now that the play has been begun, I mean to see it through.’

‘As you will,’ he replied, ‘but remember, I don’t countenance it. I wash my hands of the whole affair; whatever happens from this night forth has nothing to do with me.’





CHAPTER III.

‘RICHARD GLAMORGAN LIVES!’

THE news has come at last!—the news which for the last few weeks I have expected daily and hourly—which I have seen approaching as plainly as I have seen my hair turn grey. Yes, I have expected it, and yet it has come like a thunderclap upon me. Alice has promised to become Philip Kingston’s wife!

The news was brought to me at ten o’clock last night. It came from Tremaine.

‘It is private news as yet,’ he said; ‘but, since it will become public news in

less than twenty-four hours, you may as well hear it from my lips as from the lips of others. Glamorgan, I am sorry for you!’

He held forth his hand. I roughly tossed it aside.

‘Keep your pity for *her*; by heaven above, she’ll need it!’

He looked at me curiously, but made no reply, and I, not wishing to talk just then, shut myself up in a room alone, and sat down with my head bowed forward and pressed by my trembling hands. I sat thus for several hours. I neither recalled the past nor tried to penetrate the future. The blow which I had received that day had been the heaviest blow of all; it paralysed all my faculties and turned my tortured body to stone.

Sometime in the afternoon I was roused

by a knocking at the door. I rose and let in Tremaine. He staggered back at sight of me ; but he quickly recovered his self-possession, and asked me to go into the library as he had something to say.

I promised to follow him thither, and did so presently. When I appeared at the door he was strapping up his travelling bag. He stopped as I went. He closed the door, pointed to a chair for me and took one himself, then he regarded me for a few moments in silence. I saw that something unusual was agitating him. At last he spoke.

'Tell me, Glamorgan, are you satisfied at last?'

'Satisfied of what?'

'Of that young lady's shallow unworthiness—of your own mad folly in ever having cared for her?'

I rose and walked over to the window ; I made no remark myself, neither did I attempt to silence him. My meek forbearance amazed me as much as it did my companion. Was my heart broken ? Was every vestige of manliness leaving me now that I knew her love was gone ?

Tremaine came up and touched me on the shoulder.

‘Glamorgan,’ said he, ‘I want to tell you a story to-night—a curious story, which may alter the whole course of your future. Will you listen ?’

Sullen and indifferent, I threw myself into a chair.

‘If you wish it,’ I said. ‘Go on ; I’m all attention.’

Tremaine paced up and down the room, as if in agitation, then mastering himself turned sharply to me and continued,—

'When you went out to India twelve years ago, you unwittingly took with you the love of another young girl. She herself discovered it after you were gone, and she lived upon the hope of your return. When you left, she was happy in her home, but very soon troubles came; her mother and sister died, and she alone was left to be the hope and comfort of her father's declining years. The father was not altogether an estimable man, but he had one redeeming point—he loved his sole remaining child. Daily he watched her with jealous eyes, and he soon made a discovery which caused him considerable uneasiness of mind. He found that her thoughts, instead of being in the quiet home in London, were following the footsteps of the young fellow who was fighting for fortune in India. She watched his career with

sparkling eyes, for he prospered. Then came a change ; there were stories of his ruin and disgrace. The poor child listened to these with pale cheek and tearful eyes. She suffered—ah, yes, she suffered—but she was a steadfast, constant woman, and her love remained unchanged.’

He paused, and saw me listening eagerly, for I began to see his drift.

‘Her hero returned. I remember that day so well. Years had wrought some change in him. Much bitter sorrow had left its mark upon his face ; but when the girl who had dreamed of him all these years stood before him, her love for him increased tenfold. I wonder if he saw it and knew it ; I wonder if he looked in her eyes and read at last the story of her much enduring love ! He stood before her like a man of stone, and made no sign.’

He paused again as if he expected me to reply. What could I say or do? I could affect to misunderstand the purport of his story no longer. He was speaking of Dorcas, of his own child. I turned and faced him. I grasped his hand and looked into his face. He was strangely moved.

'Yes, Glamorgan,' he said, 'you have guessed rightly. I am speaking of my child. When she stood before you that day looking with calm, grave eyes into your face, I felt that her love was unchanged and changeless, and I trembled for the future of my girl. I knew that at that moment you were a free man, and that, had you been so willed, you could have made Dorcas happy. Impulse prompted me to speak, but reason kept me silent. I thought, "The time is not yet come. His troubles still oppress him. Let

him surround himself with associations of the past ; let him become himself again, and then he may think of marriage.”’

‘You told me of your wish to return home ; I approved of it ; and you left us. Once you were gone, all the sunshine seemed to fade from Dorcas’ life. I began to fear for her health, and remembering that she was the only thing in the world I cared for, I kept up her spirits with a lie. I hinted to her, mad fool that I was, that her love was returned !’

I rose to my feet, and begged Tremaine to be silent. I felt that already I had heard too much, and I wished to hear no more. What his motive might be in telling me this story at such a time I could not guess, but he evidently had a motive, for he seemed determined that I should hear him to the end.

'From the course thus begun I found it difficult to retreat, and from that time forth my life at home was one perpetual lie; but even then I could not reproach myself, for Dorcas looked happier than she had done for many years.

'Meantime I began to grow uneasy. Month after month slipped by, and, though I knew you could have few attractions in Tregelly, you still lingered in your desolate, ruined home. Dorcas too grew restless.

"If he loves me, why does he avoid me?" she said one day; then she added quickly, "I know why it is—it is because I am rich, and he is so very poor!"

"Would you wish to share his poverty with him?" I asked; and she replied,—

"I would wish to share my fortune with him—yes, papa, I would willingly give Richard all I have in the world."

‘My own conscience told me she might have hit upon the truth, and your subsequent conduct confirmed that idea. A few weeks after our conversation you appeared unexpectedly before me, and again informed me of your wish to retrieve the past. I approved of your resolution, I gave you my best advice, my best assistance, and soon managed to put you on the right road again. I was genuinely pleased with your resolution; I firmly believed that you had suffered too keenly in the past to rush into such a course for the future.

“‘He is a brave fellow,” I said to myself; “in a short time he will return with a full purse and an honoured name, and then he shall receive the precious treasure of my beloved child.”

‘I was selfish in the matter perhaps; I dreaded to part with Dorcas; your present

arrangements would leave her with me a few years more.

‘Nevertheless I went home with a sinking heart that night, but when I had eaten a good dinner, and emptied a bottle of my best port, I summoned up courage to tell Dorcas what had taken place that day.

‘The child said nothing. She was never demonstrative, Glamorgan, always quiet and subdued, but I saw her face grow pallid as with the hues of death ; her little hands trembled and fell useless upon her lap. I saw that she was suffering keenly. I held forth my arms to her, and for the first time in her life she shrank away. At that moment, Glamorgan, I hated you as I had never hated man : but soon my hatred was consumed in consternation for my child.

“Dorcas,” I cried, “if your old father’s

riches can keep him he shall never go away.”

‘The promise thus quickly made was as quickly repented of, and long after Dorcas was in her room that night I sat in my study thinking what would be the best thing for me to do. I was certainly a rich man, but my money was the result of many years of arduous toil; and the thought of handing it over to a man who had already overlooked my daughter’s love, and recklessly expended a large fortune upon another women, was by no means pleasant to me; still, the happiness of my child hung in the balance, and by that I was decided. You remember I made you the offer, not mentioning Dorcas’ name, and you refused it. Then I learned that during those few months you had been away from us you had engaged yourself

to another woman. This was the hardest blow of all, and I feared that now at least my poor child's heart would break. To deceive her still was impossible; so as soon as you sailed for the China seas I told Dorcas the truth.

'She bore it with patient forbearance, but from that day forth she changed. Her cheek grew pale—her expression more saddened and subdued—she let the trouble prey upon her life, but she never blamed you.

"Dorcas," I said one day, "tell me you have ceased to love him?"

'She shook her head sadly.

"Unless you wish me to speak falsely I can never do that, papa," she said. "When a woman once loves she never changes—dead or living, married or single, he will always be the same to me."

During the last ten minutes I had been walking restlessly about the room, for the story was not altogether pleasant for me to hear. As Tremaine paused in his narrative I paused in my walk, and once more begged him to say no more, but he was firm.

“Do you think,” said he, “it is merely for the sake of idle gossip that I am thus revealing the most sacred feelings of my dearest child; no, I love her too well to make sport of her. Hitherto I have kept the story a secret, because I had no purpose to serve by revealing it. Now, all is changed—it has become necessary that the story should be told; it is also necessary that you should hear it to the end.”


I sank down silently into my chair, and the lawyer continued his tale.

‘Dorcas spoke truly—she was unchanged; for though she knew now that you could be

nothing to her, she prayed for your welfare as zealously as she had ever done before. She hungered for news of you, and, knowing no other means of obtaining it, urged me to go down to Tregelly and extract it from your betrothed. This at first I refused to do; but at length I yielded for Dorcas' sake. Thus I was brought into frequent contact with the lady, and I found her exactly what the sight of her portrait had led me to expect—pretty, vain, and frivolous; delighted at the prospect of going out to China, and of becoming mistress of Plas Ruthven, but on the whole, rather afraid of the man who was to bring her to all this. As I looked at her I said to myself exactly the same as I once said to you, "If Glamorgan dies, in less than a year she will be somebody else's sweetheart." Then I went back to my

Dorcas and thought "how unjustly things had been ordained."

' "Well, the news of your death arrived. It came suddenly, and was a shock to all. Miss Chepstow fell beneath the blow, and for weeks lay raving in her father's house, and everybody, full of pity for her, said that she would die. There was no sickness in my house, therefore there was no pity wasted upon it. If I had said, "my child is breaking her heart because Glamorgan is dead," society would have held up its hands in horror. Public sympathy was turned in quite another channel—we were overlooked and therefore unmolested. I alone watched my child and wondered. What had happened to her I could not tell. She did not waste her time in weeping, her sorrows were too deep set for tears. She went about her work much the same



as usual, but there was a blank look in her eyes ; and when you spoke to her you found that her thoughts had been far away ; yes, far away in the China seas with the man whom she believed to be lying there pitilessly slain.

‘ Meantime I had lost sight of Miss Chestow, anxiety for my child having driven all thoughts of your betrothed wife from my mind, but I was destined to hear of her before long.

‘ Some important business at this time called me abroad. I was not altogether sorry, for I determined to take Dorcas with me, and I believed that a total change of scene might rouse her from the melancholy state into which she was rapidly falling. At first she seemed disinclined to move, but on being told that she could be of use to me she at once consented to go.

‘My business took me to Paris. That being finished, we travelled on to a little fishing village in Normandy to enjoy a few weeks’ rest. Dorcas was fast relapsing into gloom again, when an event happened which roused her for a time, and made her almost forget her sorrow.

‘We were walking one day in one of those little sequestered lanes in which the village abounds—far away, we thought, from the sight of human footprints or the sound of human voices, when suddenly we both started and looked at one another, for a peal of laughter sounded in our ears. The laughter had in it a ring which was as joyous as the sound of wedding bells. The voice belonged to a woman. It rang out clear and full, then died. It proceeded from the lane from somewhere behind us, but the lane contained so many curves and



twists that the lady, who I knew couldn't be many yards from us, was completely hidden. Now, on an ordinary occasion, an event so trivial would have been passed unnoticed by me, but this peal of laughter went through me like a knife. I seemed to recognise the voice. I listened; the laughter came again, this time it was nearer, the peal less prolonged. I looked back, but could see nothing. There was a sharp curve in the road behind us, and beyond the curve stretched an avenue of tall beech trees. As I looked the sound of heavy footsteps struck on my ear. The next moment a couple of horses emerged from the avenue into the full blaze of sunlight which fell upon the dusty road. After a hasty glance at the horses, I looked at the riders. They were a man and a woman—both young, both handsome, both in ex-

cellent spirits, and keenly enjoying each other's society. The lady, with rippling laughter on her lips and in her eyes, was bending forward in her saddle, dreamily stroking her horse's shining neck. The gentleman, who kept close to her side, was whispering those pretty things which made her look so radiant. Thus they came on, while we stood motionless. When the horses were within a yard of where we stood the young lady raised her head and encountered my earnest look. In a moment she changed; her flushed face grew pale as alabaster, her hands trembled; she bowed coldly to me, then, with an impatient tug at the reins, she urged her horse into a canter, and disappeared in a cloud of sunlight and dust. As she did so a hand was laid on my arm.

“Papa,” said Dorcas, “do you know that young lady?”

“ I do, my dear.”

“ Who is she ? ”

“ She is the young lady who promised a few months ago to be Richard Glamorgan's wife.”

‘ I was looking at Dorcas as I spoke, and was amazed at the sudden change in her face. It hardened terribly, and for the first time I saw anger and hatred there.

“ It is shameful ; it is wicked ! ” she cried ; “ it is enough to make him rise from the dead ! ”

‘ Two days later we left for home, and settled down to the dreary routine of our everyday life. From the specimens I had seen of female constancy, I am sorry to say I judged my own child. I believed that as Miss Chepstow, whose grief had gone nigh to killing her, had recovered so effectually, Dorcas' restoration could not

be far off. But I was wrong. Being once more established in her home, she did the work which was required of her, attended more tenderly than ever to my comforts, entertained my guests, and grew, if anything, more patient and forbearing to everybody about her, and yet the sorrow was eating at her heart, and dragging her on to the grave. It was pitiful; I confess my heart was breaking; for almost the first time in my life my soul went up in fervent prayer to God. . . . He was merciful. He heard me.

‘I went home one night more sad at heart than ever; I had spent a wretched day. I expected a still more wretched evening. I dismissed my carriage at the corner of the street, and walked quietly round the square. I looked over at my house—that night it looked to me like a

tomb. The blinds were all up, some of the rooms were lit, but there was no other sign of life. I dreaded knocking at the door; I dreaded to look once more into the pale, wasted face of my child. At length, summoning up courage, I went in. Dorcas did not meet me as usual. I walked into the drawing-room; she was not there. Then I searched the dining-room, her bedroom, her sitting-room. At last I went into my study, and there I found her. The room was in partial darkness, being lit only by a radiant moon, whose bright beams fell full upon Dorcas' face. She was sitting in a large arm-chair, which was drawn up close to the window. She was sleeping peacefully and quietly, and looked so happy in her sleep that I dreaded to see her eyes unclose. I walked up to her, and noiselessly took a seat by her

side. Being thus close to her, the moonbeams showed me what had escaped me heretofore. On her lap lay an open book, on a table beside her lay her drawing materials, and a picture upon which she had evidently been at work. I looked at the book ; it was the Bible. I read a passage, which from certain pencil marks beside it stood out clearly from the rest. It was this—‘ For I am the resurrection and the life ; whoso believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.’

‘ I looked at the picture ; it was a capitally executed portrait of yourself. In a remote corner of it Dorcas had lightly pencilled in her own initials, while beneath she had written in a firm hand—“ The dead shall rise.”

‘ I had just completed my survey of these things, and returned to my seat, when

Dorcas opened her eyes. Never to my dying day shall I forget the look on her face. It seemed paler than ever in the moonlight, her eyes large and lustrous, but over it there crept a look of divine happiness and peace. Though her eyes were open, I thought she must be sleeping still, for she neither spoke nor moved. I believed at that moment that her last hour had come. I thought my girl must be passing from me, and in an agony of terror I took her hand. She returned the pressure, but her eyes remained fixed upon the sky. Presently her lips opened, and she murmured, "In the midst of justice He has remembered mercy. . . . My God, I thank Thee!" Then with a bright smile she turned to me and said,—

“I feel so happy to-night, papa, for I know that Richard Glamorgan lives!”



CHAPTER IV.

DORCAS' DREAM.

I LOOKED at Dorcas, and for a moment could not speak. A horrible fear took possession of me, for I said to myself, "This silent grief, has turned her brain;" then the fear departed, and I tried to get some rational solution of the mystery. My eye now fell again upon the Bible and upon the passage carefully underlined—"For I am the resurrection and the life; whoso believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

' I turned again to Dorcas.

" You have been dreaming, my dear," I said, as lightly as I could; " I found you sleeping when I came in."

' Dorcas, who had been quietly looking at the picture, turned now with a bright smile to me.

" I have been dreaming, papa," she said; " that is how I know that Richard lives !"

' Again that sickening dread seized my heart, but I took my darling's hand and said,—

" Will you tell me your dream, Dorcas ?"

" If you like, papa."

" Well, then, my dear, what was it all about ?"

" It was terrible," she said, " but I am sure that it was true. I seemed to be standing upon a foreign shore watching

a ship, upon whose deck a band of men were fighting — fighting with the fury of wild beasts, and the savagery of desperate men. The struggles were shocking, the shrieks heartrending, and all the air seemed gradually to become blighted with the foetid smell of blood. How long the fight lasted I don't know. When it had nearly ended, I saw the deck of the ship ; it was covered with blood, and the mutilated bodies of the slain. Amidst the heap stood one man, covered with blood, but still fighting desperately for life. He was single-handed, and fought against fearful odds ; but he fought bravely, and one after another his enemies fell before him. At last, however, he seemed about to fall. There was only one avenue of rescue left. He rushed to the side of the ship, gave one look back at the men who stood with bloodstained

knives behind him, then fell like a lump of lead into the sea. I had seen the face and recognised it. The mutilated, half-murdered man who fell into the water was Richard Glamorgan. I sank upon my knees and prayed to God, and out of the drifting clouds a voice seemed to answer me, saying, "Whoso believeth in Me shall never die!" My dream changed. I still stood upon a shore, night had fallen, and I seemed to be quite alone. But suddenly when I turned to go, my eye fell upon a figure which was within a hundred yards of me. The figure of a man. He stood motionless, with his eyes fixed upon the sea. Suddenly he turned, and I saw his face, and in a moment I knew it. It was Richard, but terribly changed. His face was disfigured with terrible scars, and his beautiful black hair seemed to be turning

grey. There was the scar of a terrible gash in his right hand, which he raised to the moonlit sky. "I thank God for my life," he said, and with those words ringing in my ears, I awoke."

'I took Dorcas in my arms and kissed her, and that night I too thanked God for sending a little peace to my home.

'Now I am not a superstitious man, and I must confess that Dorcas' dream possessed little significance for me. I had heard of events having been foretold in a similar manner, but then I had also heard of witchcraft and miracles, and I classed them all together as things to be laughed at and denied. But because I disbelieved myself I saw no reason to shake the faith of my child, especially as it seemed to bring her peace. Your picture was placed in my study by this time, and every morning when

no one seemed about Dorcas went in to dust it with her own hand. How lovingly she lingered over the task; I have seen her gaze at it for an hour, as if trying to burn the likeness into her brain. I have seen her kiss the glass as tenderly as a mother kisses the face of her new-born babe; and I have heard her murmur, "Will he come to-day, I wonder; and if he is never to come, be merciful, O God, and let me go to him."

‘ Meanwhile, Dorcas, having become so engrossed in awaiting the solution of her dream, had entirely forgotten the existence of the third person who had taken a prominent part in this terrible tragedy. I, having business transactions with Miss Chepstow, was brought into constant communication with either the young lady herself or some members of her family, I, there-

fore, knew pretty well the state of affairs in Wales. I said to myself, "If God is merciful he will let Richard Glamorgan rest in peace."

'Such was the state of things when you presented yourself, that cold October morning, at my house in Bloomsbury Square. At first I was amazed, then I felt glad; but you soon made my gladness turn to sorrow. You spoke of Alice Chepstow, I thought of my Dorcas, and of all her suffering, her patient forbearance, and for the moment I wished that you lay at the bottom of the China seas. My one hope now was that Dorcas, seeing you so changed (for you are terribly disfigured, you know), would find her dream fade away. But that hope was soon abandoned. When you two met I watched my child's face keenly, and I saw that your pitiable plight endeared you to her a thousand-fold.

‘ After you had gone to bed that night I went in search of Dorcas. I found her sitting in my library, looking at your picture.

‘ “ Well, Dorcas,” I said, “ your dream has come true.”

‘ “ Yes, he has come back,” she answered quietly.

‘ “ Are you glad ?”

‘ She looked at me with strange reproachful eyes.

‘ “ Glad,” she echoed, “ glad that he is alive. Oh, papa, how can you ask me that ?”

‘ “ And yet, my dear,” I answered, “ what is it all to you ? Was it for you he travelled back to England, for you he fought like a madman for his life ? Depend upon it, my dear, he had forgotten your existence until I reminded him of it to-day. His only thought is of Miss Chepstow, who never once thinks of him.”

‘ I saw by the look on her face that she was suffering keenly, but I determined not to pause. Where was the use of all this suffering, all this woe? If I could not undo the past, I might perhaps be able to ward off a greater sorrow in the future.

“ Dorcas,” I said, “ where is all your spirit, my dear, that you can waste your life on a man who loves another woman as he loves Miss Chepstow ? ”

“ He does *not* love her,” she replied.

“ Not love Miss Chepstow—what do you mean, Dorcas ? ”

“ I mean what I say, papa. If he had loved her, he would never have doubted her ; if he loved her now, he would never dream of testing her love for him. He knows that she has suffered, yet he does not hasten to make amends. If he tests

her and finds her false, his last infatuation will fade away—and then, and then—”

“ And then, Dorcas, what ? ”

“ I think, papa, he might be brought to care for me.”

‘ She hid her face as if the confession shamed her, and I knew that I could say no more.

‘ Need I pursue the story further, Glamorgan ? You know the rest. Now that your work is done ; now that you are alone in the world, forgotten by the woman of your choice ; dead to almost every other living soul, I offer you the greatest treasure which the world contains for me. There is Dorcas, endowed with all my riches, and prepared at one look from you to cast them all at your feet. Speak, Glamorgan. I am going back to my home to-night ; what am I to say to my little girl ? ’



CHAPTER V.

FACE TO FACE.

HAVING finished his story, Tremaine was silent. I too was mute, for I knew not what to say. I walked again to the other end of the room, and gazed again through the window at the dreary prospect of the wood. In five minutes I had forgotten the lawyer's existence—I was thinking of some words which Dorcas had said. 'If he had loved her he would never have doubted her; if he loved her now he would never dream of testing her love for him; he knows that

she has suffered, yet he does not hasten to make amends.' Shrewd words, but radically false.

I knew now that my love was cruel and almost merciless, yet it had been strong enough to raise me as it were from the dead ; to make me cling even now to the woman who had been so fatally false to me.

I am a queer combination, a mystery even to myself ! A few months ago, when maddened by the hints and innuendoes of Tremaine, I came to Plas Ruthven, I made a vow here in the dead silence of the night ; I said,—

'God—if there be a God—give me strength and patience to endure. I expect no mercy (that has seldom come my way), and if I find her false, if my last hope in this world is destined to be shattered to the

winds, my miseries at least shall cease. I will pluck her image from my heart, I will cast her from me, and all my bitter sorrow shall be avenged.' Alas! up till this moment I never knew how tenderly I had loved my Alice. Pluck her from my heart, avenge myself, and cast upon her frail frame a burden such as I had borne? I could not, even though I felt that she had been so false to me.

How long I remained thus I don't know. I was brought to myself again by Tremain. He had walked quietly up to my side, and now laid his hand upon my shoulder.

'Glamorgan,' he said, 'to nearly everybody in this world you are dead. Ay, dead as last year's leaves which lie rotting in yonder wood. Remain so. I do not ask you to arise. My little girl's love is boundless. She is willing to become a dead man's bride.'

Even now I could not speak ; and feeling how useless it was to protract the interview, I quietly shook my head.

In a moment the man's face changed ;—all its softness faded. For the last hour or so he had been the tender-hearted father—that shake of my head did away with romance—he became at once the pitiless lawyer. His keen grey eyes had no tenderness in them now ; indeed, as they rested upon me they seemed full of cruel contempt.

‘What do you mean to do?’ he asked coldly.

‘I don't know.’

‘Well, I will tell you. You will remain here watching that girl till she drives you to do some desperate deed, and brings you to the gallows. Yes, my friend, as you sit here some night, with the spirits of

your ancestors about you, and the wind singing its dreary requiem without, the devil that is working within you will give you his counsel thus:—"Dead man, take your bride. She shared your joys, let her share your sorrows. In the ghost-haunted walls of Plas Ruthven let her last hours be spent. The world would not pity her, for she deserves none. Has she not for her companion the man whose heart she won, and whose heart she has broken!"

With a strange, wild look he turned to go. He had reached the door when I stopped him.

'Tremaine,' I said, 'you told me awhile ago that you were going home.'

'I am going home.'

'Will you tell Dorcas—' I began, when he stopped me.

'Excuse me, my friend, but I shall tell

Dorcas nothing. I shall never again mention your name to her unless it be to inspire in her breast a feeling of contempt. You have brought enough sorrow to my hearth; you shall bring no more. Go your own way, bear you own burden, and meet single-handed the end, whatever it may be. I have no more to say in the matter. Henceforth it will be to me as if the last of the Glamorgans had passed away, and as if Plas Ruthven with all its gloomy associations were plunged at the bottom of the sea.'

He opened the door, closed it gently after him, and left me alone.

I made no attempt to follow him. Where would have been the use? The words he wanted me to utter I could not speak, and any others would have been worse than dross. Nevertheless, I was profoundly impressed

by what he had told me, and from the bottom of my heart I pitied the poor old lawyer and his only child. . . .

. . . Twelve o'clock. Another night of restlessness for me ; another night of torture, which is beginning to season me for the everlasting tortures of hell. I suppose I must sleep, or my body, tough and sinewy as it has proved itself to be, will give way before my work is done. Well, since Nature refuses me even one short hour of peaceful repose, I must take by force what she denies. There is my sleeping draught ready to my hand ; but before taking it I must note down one or two of the strange events which have wound up this miserable day.

Some few hours ago Tremaine returned to London. Before leaving he sought me out to shake hands and say good-bye.

This strange concession on his part amazed me. I could only conclude that due reflection had brought him to the same conclusion as it has brought me—namely, that for all the sorrow that had been brought to his child he alone had been to blame. Never, by word, look, or deed had I encouraged her love. It was he who told her I loved her, it was he who encouraged her to wait and hope when he knew there was no hope. But of all this I said nothing. Now that he had hardened, as it were, it was useless to recriminate or offer sympathy. The only thing to be done was to treat the events of the day as if they had never been.

He had arranged to walk to the station. I volunteered to accompany him at least part of the way, and we set out together. We met no one, and said little. When

within some distance of the station we parted, and I again turned my steps towards home. Home! how the word echoed through my heart. Little more than a year ago it would have been sweet to dream of. With that word lingering on my lips my brain would conjure up the picture of a cheerful fireside, a crowd of happy faces, and, above all, *her* face, the prettiest and happiest there. Well, a few months had come and gone—reality had replaced visions. I stood at last face to face with the truth. I said to myself, ‘So this is what I fought and strove for; it was for this I conquered death, and surmounted all the tortures of hell, to stand alone, under a cheerless sky, to feel that I am forgotten, and to see my friends all fade away from me like the melting of last year’s snow.’

It was a cold, dreary - looking night. Most of the villagers were enjoying the comfort of their fire-sides ; some few obliged to be abroad met me on the road, and with a sidelong glance, and a surly 'good-night, neighbour,' passed quickly on. I did not hasten. The dreariness of the night, the solitary look of road and fields, were both welcome to me. At least they were better than my home—the dreary, ghost-haunted rooms of Plas Ruthven.

I had walked for some time, and was growing weary, when a strange thought came to me. It was this—to pay a visit to my own tomb ; to take up the duties which she had cast aside ; to lay there some little tribute to the memory of the poor devil whom all the world forgot.

I passed up the hill, entered the church-yard, walked half round the building, and

approached the principal door, when I suddenly paused. I was not alone—another figure, that of a woman, was moving through the graveyard towards the church door. One look, and instinctively I shrank back further beneath the shadow of the projecting wall. She was wrapped up warmly in the ample folds of a fur-lined cloak; her face was turned from me, and yet I knew her as surely as if she stood looking into my eyes with her little hand in mine. Was she going to visit the dead man's tomb—to perform in secret those sacred rites which should have come as love tokens from her hands; had she in her breast that night one little feeling of regret for the poor murdered man who had given his life to her? I resolved to wait and see.

She walked slowly, almost hesitatingly, quite unconscious of any one being near.

Sometimes she paused and looked about her, as if afraid of the silence of the place and the presence of the smouldering dead. She carried in her hand a wreath of immortelles, which I knew she meant for me. The sight of these white flowers chilled me; they seemed to make her sin blacker a thousand fold. They made her as false to the living as she had been to the dead.

My heart turned sick within me; my whole body grew cold. I was about to turn away, when her movements again kept me riveted to the spot. She had reached the church door, pushed it open, taken one step across the threshold, then one step back. She hesitated, leant as if faint against the porch, then recovering herself, she closed the door again, and, with the flowers still in her hand, turned quietly away.

She walked more quickly this time. She

had only gone a few steps when she paused again. A flat tombstone was near her; she sat down upon it, rested her head against the marble cross, and turned her face to the sky.

My God! could the stories I had heard be true? Had not my own senses lied to me when they told me she was false? There she sat, my Alice, as I had pictured her in my dreams waking and sleeping, as I had seen her in my delirium, when I had seen her gazing upon me behind the black shadow of death. There were the lips which had murmured so magically to me, the eyes which had gazed with such steadfast faith into mine. In a wild frenzy of passion I stretched out my arms to her, and cried,—

‘Alice, come to me, my love, my love!’

She started, she rose from her seat, she stood listening; she gave one wild, terrified

look about her, then, with a moan, she clasped her hands, staggered a few steps, and fell senseless upon the ground.

Terrified at what I had done, and reckless now at the thought of discovery, I rushed forward and lifted her from the ground. I clasped her in my arms; I placed her head upon my bosom; I kissed her lips, her eyes, her cheeks; I named my darling's name. Then my wild fit of passion passed away, reason returned. I laid her gently on the grass, with her head upon the tombstone, and tried to woo her back to life.

Life came; I saw the colour creep into the pale cheek and bloodless lips, and I knew that my work was done.

I drew back.

A few minutes more and she slowly opened her eyes. At first she seemed dazed, and stared blankly at the sky; then

she looked with wonder at her opened cloak and loosened hat. She felt the grass which was her bed, the tomb which made her pillow, and remembered all. With a wild, startled look upon her face she leapt to her feet, and stood face to face with me.





CHAPTER VI.

AMONG THE GRAVES OF THE DEAD.

ALL sign of the dead man had fled
—the figure she gazed on now
was the weary, worn-out figure of
the mad tenant of Plas Ruthven.

I had drawn my cloak about me—pulled my hat lower over my eyes, and leant, with all the trembling feebleness of age, upon the stout stick which was my constant support. My head inclined a little forward, my eyes, veiled by the broad brim of my hat, were fixed keenly upon her face.

The sight of a human being seemed to


startle her almost as much as the sound of that strange voice from the grave. At first she seemed inclined to turn and fly; then she commanded herself sufficiently to stand her ground. She cast one hurried glance around her; then she turned and looked again at me.

I neither moved nor spoke; the magic influence of the night kept me silent; the strange novelty of her presence rooted me to the spot.

At length this strange glamour was broken. . . .

‘Do—do you want me, sir?’ she asked quietly.

I pulled myself together, assumed my old man’s voice, and answered briefly. I said I had been passing through the churchyard and had found her lying fainting among the tombs.



She shivered, drew her cloak about her and gazed again, half fearfully on every side. There was no living soul to be seen ; the moon still shone serenely from the sky, lighting up the tombs which were so thickly scattered at our feet. A strange position for a young girl to stand in ; she seemed to feel it so, yet she was afraid to move—the presence of the stranger oppressed her even more than the presence of the dead.

As for me, I could do nothing. The lovely face of my darling, so pale and sad, kept my eyes fixed ; the moonbeams tenderly kissed her cheek. I saw that her little hand was trembling ; she gazed on the cold, desolate prospect around her as if for help, and I longed to whisper ;— ‘Courage, my darling, for help is here.’ Yes, once again, my better angel gave me

counsel. It said, 'Pluck off your disguise, hold forth your arms and say, 'Alice, I am here; your dead man has arisen, and has come to claim you. Look at me—I am old and wearied out with pain and sorrow. I am hideously scarred by the cruel cutlasses which tried to kill me. I am lonely, penniless, outcast; but, my darling, love and trust will make amends for all!'

I looked at her—I hesitated; during that moment my last chance fled.

Alice gave a cry, ran a few steps forward, then bent caressingly above a dog which had galloped up the gravel path, and now stood joyfully licking her cheek. Two minutes later a young man, who had closely followed the dog, took her hand and placed it on his arm.

'Oscar knows your movements better



than I do,' he said, as he wrapped her cloak about her, and put back, as I once had done, some stray locks of her hair. I wanted to look for you in the village, but Oscar would come here, and he was right.'

Suddenly he seemed struck by the paleness of her face, the strange restlessness of her manner, and asked anxiously,—

'What is the matter, Alice?'

'Nothing, Philip,' she answered.

She turned, gazed uneasily about her as if to ascertain if I was still in my place. She found that I was gone.

Not wishing to be discovered, I had withdrawn again, and stood now beneath the friendly shadow of the church wall. I watched the lovers depart, then I came forward and sat down upon the tomb from which she had risen. Suddenly my eyes fell

upon something white which lay amid the graves. It was the wreath of immortelles.

I lifted it with tender hands, gazed upon it with tear-dimmed eyes, then putting it beneath my cloak, I carried it with me down to Plas Ruthven. . . .

A wreath of immortelles! . . . here it lies gleaming coldly in the dim light of my room—thrown carelessly aside, as I have been—forgotten, as I am—but remaining in the darkened ghost-haunted dwelling until the hour shall come when the sea gives up its dead.

Nothing has come of our strange adventure in the graveyard.

All day I have waited for a sign. The silence has told me a tale—it tells me that Alice is deceiving this man as she once deceived me.

She has consented to become his wife. His demands upon her are just—she believes them ungenerous. He says ‘you must become a part of me—your being must blend itself into mine : your thoughts must be mine, your life mine ;’ she says with her lips, ‘ I give you all these things,’ but in her heart she knows she lies.

Womanlike she loves to dream over her victories, to think sometimes of the poor devil who laid down his life for her ; but the other must not know of this—she must receive his caresses with sparkling eyes and smiling lips, and keep her secret hidden.

God, how maddening it is to be shut up like a criminal ; to see and know nothing. I burn for news ; so as I can’t move I’ve sent Glendower down to the village to gather the rank weeds of scandal for me.

What will he learn, I wonder? Patience, Glamorgan, a few hours longer and you will hear of more treachery, more heartlessness; well, it will only make the future pregnant with much more woe.

Glendower has come back. I've got my news. Here it is.

The old man came in with an ugly leer that made me long to strangle him. He sat down by the fire and rubbed his hands, chuckling with glee.

'Such news, Measter Richard,' he said; 'such news, dear, and such fine plans for the future days of my fine lady there. Look ye, now, he's fixed a heap o' money on her, and she's fixed her wedding day. She's to be married up in the little church where they put your tomb, Measter Richard, and it's to be done on the first o' May. 'Tain't

for old Owen to speak, but says I, 'Tis a queer day for her to fix on. Trouble will come of it, Mrs Lubin; trouble will come of it! What do you think they said, sir?'

'Well, what did they say?'

'That no trouble could come to *her*. . . . that the only trouble that ever did come was brought by the man what lay dead and cold out in foreign seas. . . . Look ye now, Measter Richard, they said, 'everybody knows 'twas a lucky day for her when he died. Her father and sister knowed it a long time ago, and now she knows it too.' I laughed to myself when I heard 'em talk. I thought of you up here, and I said to myself, 'Twould maybe be lucky for some if he *was* dead; he's a Glamorgan; 'taint for nothing he'll be easily forgot; 'taint for nothing he's marked and scarred, and afraid to show his face in the light o'

day. 'Tis her day now; she may try to bury the dead, but they won't be buried. She belongs to my master, and if he's a Glamorgan he'll take what's his,—yes, take it in spite of all.'

He looked into my face with a diabolical grin. I was thinking too much of what he said to reply. He edged his chair nearer to me, and whispered again,—

'She don't think much of Plas Ruthven now, measter. 'Tis like its measter and old Owen,—worn out and sick to death of it all; but there was a time when she liked it—when she thought there was plenty o' money hid away in the poor old place. She had fine visions once before, and she's got 'em now—but they ain't come to pass yet, sir. . . . If I had my way, Measter Richard, I wouldn't let ye be laughed at and sneered at; I'd bring sorrow and shame

to them as has brought sorrow and shame to you!’

Active preparations for the wedding are going forward ; it is to be a general festival—everybody is to share the joy. ‘Not one must be left in the cold,’ says the bridegroom; ‘we will even, for the time being, condescend to contemplate the weary sorrow-stricken face of the mad tenant of Plas Ruthven.’

Stay, is it his magnanimity, or is it the bride who remembers one moonlit night when she lay cold and senseless at the mercy of this old man? At all events, the note has come: it invites me to take tea at the vicarage.


The young couple will be there to-night—enjoying themselves to their heart’s content. I too could be there; yes, I could gaze upon her, speak to her, and perhaps

succeed in arousing in her breast some feeling of pity for the miserable murdered man.

A wild idea, worthy creation of a madman's brain. I must think of it—but first let me examine my face. Heavens, how changed I am! Would she know me? Never! My hair is almost grey; the livid scars have grown ghastly, and there is a wild look in my eyes which even I cannot understand. I am indeed the mad tenant of Plas Ruthven. On the day when this wild life began, Richard Glamorgan died.

Was Tremaine right when he said she might shudder to find me so changed? If she thinks of me at all it is as the man who left her, not as the hideously marked being who comes to claim her now.

If I stood before her to-night to claim my own, would she turn from me and cling to him? Merciful heaven, if she did



that, I think I should kill her. It would be the end of all!

Five o'clock. I have three hours more for reflection. I wonder what I shall decide upon to-night!

Eight o'clock. Glendower has just come in; he tells me it will be a fine night for the madman to take his walks abroad.

The night is dark, the sky cloudy; there is a cold wind blowing in from the sea, and a steady rain falling; inclement weather which drives the villagers home.


He asks for an answer to the rectory note. I have none. If I carry out my mad idea and go, well and good; if I do not go they will call my silence eccentricity, and think of it no more!

Ten o'clock. The rain is still falling;

the sky looking blacker than ever; the wind whistling eerily as it comes across the rising sea.

Before I am half through the Plas Ruthven woods my clothes are saturated, and hang heavily upon me; but the darkness affords friendly shelter. I hurry on; having reached the lodge gate I take the road which leads to the vicarage, and never pause until I reach its door.

I raise my hand to knock; my courage fails me; I draw back; I look at the house; it is brilliantly lit; the windows are curtained and no sound comes forth. Still the rain falls with a dreary patter upon the already sodden ground, and the wind continues its melancholy moan. I am safe from observation to-night; at least in such weather no one would willingly stir abroad.



I enter the vicarage garden, and creep close up to the window. I have discovered an opening through which I can look into the room.

It is empty . . . no, I am wrong . . . a second glance corrects the first and tells me that the room is occupied.

I see a man and a woman.

They sit before the fire; he holds both her hands and talks to her eagerly, while she looks thoughtfully into the flames. She is dressed in spotless white, and wears a little crimson flower upon her breast; he looks at the flower with a strange smile; she unfastens it, and places it in his coat. He lifts her face and kisses it, then her head falls upon his shoulder and remains there.

Do they want *me*? I am about to answer the question by turning away, when the door


of the room opens and other figures flock in ; who they are I know not, my eyes are fixed only upon one. I see her rise—walk restlessly up and down the room, then leave it.

Two minutes later and the blind is quickly drawn up from the bedroom window above ; the sash is lifted, and Alice looks out.

‘Oh, what a miserable night,’ she says, and she moves away.

She has not closed the window . . . I step forth, take a letter from my pocket, attach a stone to it, and cast it up. I have thrown with unerring precision ; it has fallen at her feet.

Standing in the road I can see her clearly, for the room is brightly lit. She starts, but utters no cry. She lifts the letter, opens it, and reads the words inside. What is she



going to do? Scream or faint? She does neither. For several minutes she stands like a figure of stone staring at the paper which she still holds firmly in her hand. Then vitality returns to her; she rushes to the open window, and, despite the rain which is now falling heavily, leans out.

‘Who’s there?’ she cries; ‘there must be some one, and whoever you are answer me.’

There comes no answer, but the cry of the wind and the sound of the falling rain.

She withdraws from the window and rushes from the room. What will happen next? . . .

The darkness of the night no longer affords sufficient shelter for me. I retreat among the trees; just as I have done so

I see something white, and I know it is Alice. She comes quickly down the vicarage path; she pauses within a hundred yards of the spot where I lie concealed.





CHAPTER VII.

‘ALICE, SAVE YOURSELF.’

WITH her thin white dress clinging about her, and the rain beating pitilessly upon her uncovered head, she stands and listens. She walks into the road, then pauses again.

At last she speaks,—

‘Who is it?’ she says. ‘Where are you? Is there no one here?’

Again she stands as if listening; she walks hurriedly up and down the road, looks keenly on every side, but sees no one. My black cloak and the friendly

laurel bushes conceal me ; her deadly white dress betrays her.

She stands again at the gate ; this time she speaks softly as if to herself.

‘It is cruel, shameful, wicked ! What have I done to any one that I should be tortured like this ?’

She crosses the lawn and sits down upon a dripping garden seat ; a few minutes later her lover finds her there.

‘Alice !’ he exclaims ; ‘you *here* in this dress ! Why, what’s the matter ?’

She answers him as she did in the churchyard a few nights ago . . . she tells him a lie.

‘Nothing !’ she says.

She rises from her seat and clings to him. He passes his hand gently over her head and shoulders.

‘My darling,’ he says, ‘you are wet

through—it is enough to give you your death. Alice,' he continues, holding her hands; 'you have a trouble which I do not share. You have given me your love—my darling, give me your faith—trust me for once and tell me all!'

Again that lie comes black and burning from her lips—again she answers,—

'It is nothing!'

Then suddenly she clings piteously to him, and sobs out in weary heart-broken tones,—

'Take me in, Philip! take me in!'


My eyes see, my ears hear, but even now my stubborn senses refuse to understand. Wretched and despairing, more sick at heart than ever, I creep back to Plas Ruthven to await the end.

Three weeks have passed; active pre-

parations for the wedding are still going on, though for several weeks the bride-elect has been ill, and has not left her room.

The report from the vicarage is that Alice is suffering from fever, brought on by severe cold. At first the villagers accepted this explanation, and pitied the invalid; then, having nothing better to occupy them, they began to doubt it—to scent mystery, a mystery which it would require all their heads to solve.

At length Alice, having grown tired of confinement, throws off her illness and comes forth; her appearance and manner confirm the idea of the mystery, and set the people wondering still more. She is thin, pale, and weary; her eyes wear a wild, restless look. She starts if any one addresses her suddenly, then grows angry



and confused if they apologise or look with any sympathy at her pale face. What does it mean? Does she still love me? If so, she will never go to the altar with that man, and I may try her to the end . . .

'Alice, my Alice! love for you, my darling, has made me what I am! I must be cruel, only to be kind!'

The days whirl past—nearer and nearer comes the fatal wedding day. Is she going to the altar? My God, if she does go, what will the end be then?

I met her last night. She was walking with her lover near the Plas Ruthven woods; my steps were noiseless; when her eye fell upon me I was close to her side. She started—clung to her lover's arm, and begged him to turn.

'The woods are ghostly at this time of

might!' she said. I knew that the sight of my face had terrified her; it called up recollections of the past.

More news; more mystery for the superstitious fools in Tregelly.

Some time ago the report was that the honeymoon would extend over one month; at the end of that time the young couple were to return, and to settle down to enjoy their married felicity in Mostyn Towers. Consequently dozens of workmen were employed to make alterations to suit the taste of the clergyman's petted child.

Suddenly the work was stopped. There will be no home coming: on the day of the wedding Mr Kingston is to take his wife across the channel, and at her urgent request will keep her there until

twelve months have passed away. I listened to it all with a smile,—pitying the fools who make their plans with so much certainty of success.

'Man proposes, but God disposes,' I said; 'that wedding day may have a different ending to what we all expect!'

Glendower peered curiously at me, and gave his diabolical laugh.

'So say I, Measter Richard, so say I,' he muttered; 'and that bride, pretty as she is, and proud as she is, my have a different bed. Look ye now, I know the carriage that's goin' to take 'em; the horses that's going to draw 'em; and the man as is going to drive 'em; old Owen don't prowl about the inn and put his money into Mrs Lubin's till for nothing! It's all in yer own hands, sir; it's all in yer own hands! . . . Measter Richard, the

night before that wedding day I shall see that carriage; I shall be alone with it, sir; I shall be alone with the horses, and if you give me twenty pound, sir, only twenty pound, I can lift a deal o' trouble off the mind o' that groom!

I looked up. I began to understand him, but I was in no mood to hear his plans that night.

The days fly past; every day Glendower's face grows brighter—the villagers are too much occupied to think of the mystery which troubled them so sorely a few weeks since: all goes well.

Will she pause? There is time yet, every night my battered heart cries out. 'Alice, save yourself, and pluck me for ever from this eternal hell!'



CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRIDAL OFFERING.

THE night before the wedding!
How has the day been passed
abroad?

God knows,—I only know that I have not moved from the friendly shelter of Plas Ruthven. I seem indeed like one newly arisen from the dead; my limbs feel cold and lifeless; my brain is dull as that of a senseless brute; my weary eyes gaze, as they have done for the last three hours, upon a wreath of immortelles,—the wreath which she in her terror cast aside, which

my hands tenderly uplifted, and which is now brought forth to add to the decorations for her wedding day.

My Alice's wedding day?

Yes; she rejoices because she says to herself, 'He can neither see nor hear; he lies in the pitiless ocean. Why should I cry when he cannot see me? Why should I break my heart when he can never know? Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we also die!'

With my wreath hidden by my cloak, I leave Plas Ruthven and take the road to the church. Some figures pass me; the men glare, but the women murmur, 'Poor old man!'

The church is empty; it bears the signs of busy hands. It is prettily decked with flowers. There is a new altar cloth of white and gold; the book lies open; just above

it, within a wreath of roses, I read these words,—

*‘Those whom God hath joined together,
let no man put asunder!’*

He joined us ; we were man and wife, though no priest’s words were spoken. Before this very altar she took my hand, gave me her pledge, and said, ‘Husband ! yes, I will call you husband, though it may be for the first, last time.’ She is *my* bride ; in taking her I take my own.

I walk gently down the aisle ; I pause before my tomb.

It is cold and neglected : on every side of it flowers are arranged, as if to hide it from the sight of the bride. I bring forth my offering ; I hang it upon the outstretched hand of the marble angel. I step up to the altar, stand upon the very spot where *she* stands. I look back at the tomb ; there

hangs the wreath, white, and cold, and spotless, and within the deathless circlet of flowers are the words which *I* have written, and which *she* must read—

‘THE DEAD SHALL RISE.’

I leave the church ; my task there is done, my last warning spoken ; a few short hours and then the issue will be known.

It is a calm still night, with every indication of a glorious morrow. The sky is cloudless, the wind hushed, the sea without a moan. I note all this as I walk back to Plas Ruthven. The door is opened for me by Glendower. He shuts it and bolts it ; he follows me up the creaky stairs, and closes the door of my room before he speaks.

‘ You didn’t trust to old Owen for nothing, Measter Richard. It’s all ready, sir, all ready ; and better than I could hope for.

Well, it'll be a queer day. I'll just step down to the inn, sir, and when I come back I'll tell ye all I know.'

He took his departure, and left me alone in Plas Ruthven.

HERE ENDS THE DIARY OF THE TENANT OF
PLAS RUTHVEN.





CHAPTER IX.

MAN AND WIFE.

WILT thou have this man to thy wedded husband ; and keep thee only unto him so long as ye both shall live ?'

It was Mr Chepstow who asked the question ; it was Alice who answered.

'I will !'

She spoke the words without hesitation, and as she spoke she raised her eyes and timidly extended her hand. The look and the gesture, noted by every person in the church, spoke for themselves. They seemed

to say, 'I take you because I love and trust you!' but suddenly the eyes, which for a moment had looked full into Philip Kingston's face, wandered restlessly round the church, and rested sadly upon a tomb. She started; her pale cheek flushed, her whole body trembled. Upon the tomb hung a wreath of immortelles, and on the wreath was written—

'THE DEAD SHALL RISE.'

On the morning of Alice Chepstow's marriage, everything seemed propitious: the success of the day had certainly been worked out, and so far the result of the labour more than satisfied everybody concerned. An event of similar importance had seldom previously occurred in Tregelly, and was certainly not likely soon to occur again. Now that he had stepped into his

brother's shoes, and now that poor Richard Glamorgan was dead, Mr Philip Kingston was the most important as well as the most popular man in the village; while his chosen bride was the prettiest and favourite daughter of the beloved pastor who had toiled amongst them for five-and-thirty years. To be sure when the news of the contemplated marriage first became known, it occurred to some that Miss Alice Chepstow was not all that she should be, else, after the terrible calamity that had befallen her, she would not so soon be able to reconcile herself to the idea of becoming a bride. But after all this was really no concern of theirs; if the young lady's conscience was clear no one else had a right to complain; so they soon dismissed this part of the affair from their minds, and set themselves to prepare for the wedding-day.

The date fixed for the marriage was the first of May, an unlucky day, most people said, but then Alice was noted by this time for doing unlucky things. She was known to laugh at what she termed the superstitions of the villagers; but hitherto her defiance of them had brought her sad rewards. Her first bridal dress had been finished on a Friday. What had been the result? There it hung in her wardrobe, spotted with blood, and side by side with the widow's dress, which had so quickly replaced it. Those were trophies of the dead man's bride; and were, like the past by this time, hidden and forgotten.

Yet in spite of all this, and it seemed to many in defiance of it, Alice had fixed upon another fatal day on which to become a bride.

‘Well, we’re all born but we ain’t buried,’

said Mrs Lubin, shaking her head behind her bar. 'For my part I wish the day was well over, and the poor maiden off with her husband for good!'

'Well, you won't have long to wait,' growled old Owen Glendower, who happened to hear the remark. 'Four days more, Mrs Lubin, only four days for the creature to live alone up there. But she don't look very happy, ma'am, at what's before her.'

'Happy!' returned the landlady contemptuously; 'do you expect her to be happy in Tregelly after what's past and gone? I suppose you'd like her to do what *you* do, mister,—shut herself up in Plas Ruthven, and never get sight o' a soul!'

The old man rubbed his hands and chuckled.

'No, I don't; I don't expect her to do

nought but rue the first o' May. She's a sly one, Mrs Lubin. I've looked in her face, and I know it. 'Tisn't for nothing that she's asked him that's to be her husband to take her right away to foreign parts and never bring her back for a whole year to get sight of the village where she was born.'

The good landlady turned away and said no more, for old Owen, either maliciously or intentionally, had touched upon one point which she could not discuss. It did seem strange, she confessed to herself when there was nobody by to hear, that Alice should have made such a condition, 'to be taken away from Tregelly on her wedding day, and not to be brought back to it until the anniversary of that day came round again.'

When Marion Chepstow heard of the

arrangement that had been made, she was startled into an exclamation of anger as well as surprise ; and she took the earliest opportunity of remonstrating with her sister on the subject.

‘ Who told you of it ? ’ asked Alice quietly.

‘ It is common talk in the village ! ’

‘ Then it is a pity the villagers haven’t something better to talk about. ’

‘ Alice, such an arrangement as that casts a reflection upon you. Remember the past ! ’

Alice rose hastily from her seat.

‘ No one has any right to remind me of the past, ’ she said.

She walked across the room, took a chair at the far end, and sat down to read.

For a moment Marion watched her. She saw the pale face bent low ; the trembling

fingers nervously toying with the leaves of the book ; the eyes looking so sad and tearful, wandering restlessly from page to page—then she went over and knelt by her sister's side.

‘ Alice, dear, forgive me,’ she said. ‘ I never meant to pain you so.’

And Alice gave her hand to her sister with a weary sigh.

‘ Don't let us talk of it any more, Marion,’ she said. ‘ I want to be alone.’

Marion left the room, heartily wishing for the hundredth time that the wedding day was over, or that it might be postponed for ever.

At length the day came, and, strangely enough, a gloomier day had seldom dawned in Tregelly. Still, when the wedding bells rang out in merry peals and the villagers came trooping in crowds towards the church,

the sunlight was faintly peeping through the still gathering clouds. Everything went well, until the bride, in casting her restless eyes around the church, saw the immortelles upon the tomb. Everybody saw the look: everybody saw, too, the sudden pallor and agitation which the sight of the flowers produced; but the only man who rejoiced over it was Owen Gledower—who had come like the rest to see the wedding, and who now sat as near as possible to his master's tomb.

After this incident, a strange feeling ran through the crowd of people present—and the whole air of the church became oppressive, as with thunder gathering before a storm; the bride, sadly unnerved, gave her answers in a low, tremulous voice—almost as if she feared to awaken the dead; while the bridegroom, holding her hand firmly in

his, tried to assure her of his comfort and support.

It was indeed a strange wedding.

Though the day had been looked forward to with unusual eagerness, it brought little satisfaction now that it had come—for while the bride and bridegroom stood at the altar, it seemed as if the dead man dominated the scene, interposing like a black shadow between them and the sunlight of heaven.

At last the benediction was spoken, the two were pronounced man and wife, and everybody in the church seemed glad that the ceremony was over.

And Alice? How did she feel, what was she thinking of as she stood there holding her husband's arm? How pale her cheek was, how sad the look of her tearless eyes! For a moment the quivering of her lip indicated that tears were

coming ; but they were quickly suppressed ; she took her husband's arm and walked down the aisle of the church with a firm steady step ; smiling sadly upon those who thronged around with merry greetings ; and gazing as she passed with strange wistfulness upon the tomb.

The ceremony over, the temporary gloom dispelled, the wedding party returned to the vicarage, while the villagers, after screaming themselves hoarse, and waving their banners in the air, betook themselves to the village green, where a tent had been erected, and refreshments were served to one and all. After the eating and drinking was over, there was a country dance upon the green, a dozen fiddles played, and the church bells rang out again with joyous peals.

Meanwhile those within the vicarage were enjoying themselves as much, though not as boisterously, as their friends outside. The ceremonies of the wedding breakfast had passed off well; healths had been drunk, and speeches made; the old clergyman, in a few touching words, had thanked all present for their kindness to his child. The bride had taken off her bridal robe and donned instead a pretty travelling dress of velvet and fur, and now the whole company adjourned to the drawing-room.

The young couple seemed in no hurry to depart; there was no reason why they should be; they had but to travel twelve miles that night, to sleep in the neighbouring town and continue their journey on the morrow. Their luggage had preceded them two days before, and the carriage which was to take them away

was now awaiting them at the inn. Yes, there was plenty of time for them to sit and chat over the future, and as so long a time must elapse before Alice could return home again, no one seemed anxious for her to go.

At last the carriage was sent for, and after much affectionate leave-taking, Alice went down to take her seat. The guests had gathered in a little knot at the door; in their midst stood Philip waiting for his wife. At length she came. She was very pale by this time, but her eyes were tearless; she put her hand into her husband's, and looked up into his face with a strange, sad smile. She stepped across the threshold, and suddenly drew back; the rain, which was now falling steadily, was beaten fiercely into her face. She turned cold from head to foot with superstitious dread.

‘Oh, Philip, do not let us go!’ she
said.

‘Alice!’

‘It—it is such a dreadful afternoon,’ she
continued nervously. ‘See how the rain
is pouring, and I am sure I saw lightning
just now; it is so unlucky on our wedding-
day!’

But Philip only laughed.

‘You are nervous, darling,’ he said. ‘But
remember you are safe enough with me.’

So Alice, growing somewhat ashamed of
her fear, suffered herself to be led
away.

Despite the rain, which now fell in a
steady downpour, despite the lightning,
which shot in rapid flashes across the ever-
darkening sky, a small crowd had gathered
around the house; cheer after cheer rent
the air; old slippers were thrown; hand-

fuls of rice were scattered on the wind. Amidst a wild whirl of confusion the carriage moved on and was lost to view among the gathering shadows of that ominous afternoon.





CHAPTER X.

THE ABDUCTION.

THAT afternoon was remembered by every one in Tregelly as one of wild unrest. Soon after the carriage left the vicarage the rain fell in torrents, vivid flashes of lightning rent the air; the wind blew a hurricane; it shrieked down the chimneys, and rattled at the doors as if to tell the inhabitants that trouble was afoot. But most of them having eaten and drunk plentifully, were now more inclined to sleep than to speculate about the weather.

‘What can be the matter with me?’ said Marion Chepstow, who was restlessly pacing

her room. 'Am I growing superstitious, or is it the natural reaction of over-excitement and over-work? I am sorry we did not let Alice have her way. I wish she was safe in the vicarage—it was a terrible day to let her go from home!'

She walked over to the window; lifted the curtain and looked out. She could see nothing—but she could hear the wind which now whistled dismally, the rain which fell in a steady pour, and, what was that? Marion listened intently; it seemed to her that above the noise of wind and rain she could hear a human cry. For a time she stood listening intently; then she staggered back, half blinded by a flash of light which shot across the heavens; a heavy peal of thunder followed,—then all was still.

Meantime, what was happening abroad?

The carriage having left the vicarage rolled briskly on its way; the horses had been fed with the best oats in the village, and proudly threw up their heads and put on their best pace, as if conscious of the precious burden behind them, while the coachman, feeling the influence of the wedding wine, joyfully cracked his whip, and tried to enliven the tedium of the road by singing merry scraps of song.

It was growing late, and thick mists of evening were driving rapidly in from the sea; the rain still fell; lightning played from time to time in the heavens, and heavy peals of thunder were heard. A wild afternoon, giving every indication of a stormy night. But now that they were well started, the young couple were by no means depressed. They had twelve long miles before them certainly, and their way lay along a dreary

and little frequented road ; but if the horses kept up anything like their present pace they would be stabled before long, and the young couple would be comfortably housed.

They were proceeding briskly on their journey, and had left the village well behind, when there was a sudden stoppage ; the carriage was jerked violently to one side, pushed backward, then swayed like a tossing ship from side to side, and stopped short with a crash !

Alice gave a cry, and clung nervously to her husband's arm ; but Philip, after quieting her, stepped out to ascertain what was the matter. Some damage was done, but where and in what way it took a little time to ascertain. It appeared in the first place that one of the horses had shied at the lightning—had plunged, backed and kicked,

and had finally broken the straps which bound him to the pole.

What was to be done? There stood the horse, still panting and quivering from fright, and with the broken harness dangling about his legs. Philip took down one of the carriage lamps, and by its aid ascertained the full extent of the damage.

The harness was badly broken ; a piece of strong rope would have been useful in patching it, but as there was no rope to be had, the only thing to be done was to continue the journey with the one horse. After a little more delay the carriage moved on again with one horse to draw it, the other following fastened behind.

Things were by no means so pleasant as they had been before. The carriage being too heavy for one horse, moved slowly over the rain-drenched road. Philip was wet,

and every moment the storm seemed on the increase.

‘If there was a house on the road, I should say shelter there and send for fresh harness,’ said Philip; ‘but there is no house within seven or eight miles.’

Now, had Philip’s mind not been fully occupied by the troubles of the road, he might have been astonished at the strange conduct of his wife. On stepping into the carriage she had wrapped her travelling cloak about her, taken her seat in a corner, laid her head wearily upon the cushions, and closed her eyes. Thus she remained. He had taken her hand; it lay cold and passive in his; now and then when the lightning flashed more vividly than usual, she crept as if for protection a little nearer to her husband’s side.

Suddenly the tedium of the journey was

broken again. Another crash, a heavy scraping along the ground, then a sudden stoppage, while the whole carriage seemed to sink and collapse. The horse still tugged at the pole, but the carriage refused to move.

Thoroughly awakened from her torpor now, Alice leapt up with a cry. It seemed to her as if the body of the vehicle was dividing. Philip jumped out, Alice followed ; the coachman descended from his seat, and the three stood helpless in the road.

Philip took a lamp to examine the carriage ; in turning to do so he saw his wife.

‘Alice, keep your seat, dear, or you’ll be wet through.’

‘I can’t, Philip ; the carriage is in two !’

Aided by his lamp he looked, and found that she was right. It seemed that the axle had quite broken down. Still, though it was impossible for the carriage to go on,

it was strong enough to afford a comfortable kind of shelter. He put Alice in again, and when she was settled, turned to the driver.

‘What’s to be done now?’

The man dolefully shook his head: as far as he could see, there was nothing to be done.


‘But we can’t remain here all night, man! How far have we come, do you think?’

‘About three miles I should say, sir.’

‘Humph, that leaves nine still before us. If the afternoon was fine we could put the lady on horseback and leave the carriage here. That’s out of the question in a storm like this. The next best thing is to get another carriage to take the lady on!’

The man stared in stupid astonishment.

‘How am I to do that, sir?’ he said.



‘Why, by riding back to Tregelly, of course. Quick ; jump on to the horse’s back, and see that you have a closed carriage here in less than an hour !’

In two minutes more the man was on the horse’s back ; and the horse was scattering the mud on every side of him.

Philip put his head in at the carriage window to see how his wife was getting on. She was seated in her corner again with her feet up on the opposite seat. Her face was very pale, but she seemed quite calm. He told her what he had done.

‘I’m afraid the fellow’s wits are a little muddled with drink, but the rain will cool him.’

‘Why didn’t you go with him, Philip ? Suppose they should not send ?’

Philip started ; considering all the circum-


stances it seemed to him that the question was a strange one.

‘Why, because there was no necessity, my dear!’ he replied; ‘and even if there had been, I should have hesitated to leave you here alone!’

He looked around him as he spoke, and shuddered. Every mile of the road was dreary; but they were now in the very dreariest part of all. On either side of the road arose tall trees, whose branches intermingled and formed a dreary canopy above; while beyond again stretched the most desolate parts of the Plas Ruthven woods.

Alice leaned back once more in the corner of the carriage, while Philip walked uneasily up and down the road.

A strange bridal day! A strange ending to that fatal first of May! As Alice sat in her corner of the carriage, listening to



the dreary downpour of rain, to the heavy peals of thunder, and watching the fierce flashes of lightning which rudely rent the sky, she grew uneasy. Having no one to talk to, she began to think. Her thoughts were not pleasant, for they carried her back to the past.

She rose; she was trembling violently, and feeling very cold. She put her head out of the window and called to her husband. In a moment Philip was beside her, holding her trembling hands. Her excitement amazed him.

‘There is nothing to be frightened of Alice!’ he said.

‘I am not afraid,’ she answered quickly. ‘Go along the road and listen; try if you can hear the man returning.’

‘Returning! Why, Alice, he can’t have got to the village yet!’

‘Take the other horse and ride after him! You will be quicker than he will!’

‘And leave you here alone? I shouldn’t dream of it, dear. There, sit still and try to rest. It will be all right soon.’

Again she returned to her seat, and Philip, after looking at his watch and finding he had still an hour to wait, continued his restless walk up and down the road. The storm was increasing; the rain fell more gently, but the lightning played almost incessantly in the sky, and with ceaseless crashes the thunder roared directly overhead. The, terrified half-blinded horse pranced and reared, kicked at the carriage and tugged at the rein which held him; and Philip, looking round, believed he read in the storm the cause of his wife’s strange restlessness and fear.

An hour passed. The storm had some-

what abated. Alice had grown almost hysterical—the man had not returned.

Philip, utterly at his wits' end, was wondering what to do, when his wife's voice recalled him.

'Philip, *do* take my advice and ride back ; something has happened, I am sure—'

'But I can't ride off and leave you here !'

'Oh, don't think of that ! Be reasonable, Philip ; what can happen to me *here*, three miles from anything or anybody ? There, hurry away ; I promise not even to move till you come back again !'

At last he yielded, suspecting no evil, *un*xious only for the comfort of her whom *he* held so dear ; he kissed her cold lips, *Prang* on to the horse's back and rode *way*.

The horse was a spirited creature, pretty *es*h from the stable, and being, moreover,

frightened at the storm: it went at a good pace. Occasionally Philip drew rein to listen; he could hear nothing; it was so dark by this time he could scarcely see an inch before him.

Suddenly he pulled rein and listened. A horse neighed; he went on at a slow walk and soon came upon the animal standing by the roadside.

Philip looked at it, scarcely able to believe the evidence of his eyes. He dismounted from his own horse, threw the reins across his arm, and walked up to look more closely at the beast. No, there was no mistaking it,—it was the very one on which the man had galloped along the road more than two hours before. It stood now, drenched with the rain, firmly tied by its bridle to a tree.

Utterly amazed, Philip looked around

for the rider. After some little search he found him,—a black heap lying on the roadside, drenched with the rain and apparently fast asleep.

He shook him, and pulled him on to his feet. The man glared stupidly around, passed the back of his hand across his face to wipe away the rain, then fixed his dull eyes upon his master.

‘The matter, sir?’ he muttered, ‘well; I don’t rightly know. I felt a knock on my head and I fell on the road, and I don’t know no more.’

‘Have you been to Tregelly?’

‘No, sir, the villains set on me here!’

‘Villains! what villains? When I rode up you were lying in a drunken sleep.’

‘I was stunned, sir, that’s what it was; they stunned me, and then they tied up the horse. There be bad men out to-

night, Mr Kingston, all along this road. Maybe they took me for a gentleman, sir, and wanted to rob me, and didn't find out till I was on the ground. They can't be far off, sir. I'll ride on and get the police. I'll put the villains in the dock—'

Philip heard no more; seized now with wild unaccountable fear, he leapt on to his horse's back and galloped furiously back to the spot where he had left Alice.

There stood the carriage just where he had left it, but empty. The door was open; and Alice was nowhere to be seen.





CHAPTER XI.

MYSTERIOUS WARNINGS.

THE first shock of the discovery over, Philip saw nothing in this occurrence to greatly alarm him.

Though the carriage was empty, it was not necessary that anything serious had happened to his wife. She had doubtless grown nervous at his absence, and had stepped out of the carriage, in spite of the rain.

He called her name ; there was no answer. He leapt on to his horse's back and galloped up and down the road ; all was desolate as the grave. What did it mean ?

‘Alice!’ he cried again. The cry was brought faintly back to him, and answered by a thunderous roar.

Wild and terror-stricken, Philip now went back to the spot where the broken carriage lay. All was just as it had been before; there was no doubt whatever that his wife was gone.

. . . . Darkness fell, and found Philip Kingston still upon the road, looking into the carriage where he had last left his wife. In his hand he held her hat, which he had found crushed, torn, and liberally bespattered with mud, while his eyes rested upon a dark crimson stain which disfigured the padding of the carriage-door—an ugly spot of blood. He shivered, and as he looked again his heart went cold as a stone.

There were two policemen near him; they had been fetched by the coachman from

the neighbouring town, and they had begun to take notes of the situation. The scene was one of wild disorder, but there was little or no clue to the missing lady. The ground, soddened with the heavy storm of rain, had been so torn up by the galloping horses that to trace footsteps was utterly impossible, but the police were inclined to believe that great violence had been used. The hat must have been torn off in a struggle; one of the lady's gloves, rent asunder, had been found close to the carriage, trampled deep in the mud; and the blood-stain confirmed them in the belief that some serious crime had been committed.

The first thing to be done was to get rid of the husband. After much persuading, they induced him to gallop back to the village, and take the news to the rectory, while they continued their search, firmly

believing that it would end in the discovery of the body of the murdered bride.

Meantime, the terrible news was rapidly spreading abroad ; by ten o'clock it was all over the village, carrying consternation far and wide.

The exact truth of the story no one knew, but every one had his or her version ; and each version, though it differed materially from the others in most things, tallied with them in one—the strong condemnation of the unfortunate bride.

No one had much pity for Alicè ; they conscientiously believed that she deserved none. She had always been a flirt, they said ; flirts were always heartless, and never came to any good ; she had broken the hearts of two brave men, and not content with that, she had ended by bringing eternal trouble upon two happy homes.

‘It’s what I always expected of her,’ said old Owen Glendower, who had emerged from the gloomy shadows of Plas Ruthven to gloat over the news; ‘didn’t I say that no good ending would come to her. I knowed it when I looked in her face. She cared no more for Measter Kingston than she did for my poor master. It was money, money, money. She’s broke the hearts of both of ’em, Mrs Lubin, and God ’ll bring her sins back to her.’

He stopped suddenly; in raising his eyes to look at Mrs Lubin, he encountered those of Philip Kingston. Philip had entered the inn quietly, he now stood right before the old man. His face was pale as death—twenty-four hours before he had been a young happy contented-looking man, he now seemed old and weary.

‘Were you speaking of my wife?’ he

asked, looking sternly into the old man's face.

Glendower moved uneasily: even he, malicious as he was, could not help feeling pity for the man before him.

'I wouldn't say a thing that could hurt *you*, Mr Kingston,' he said.

'Then don't you dare to speak of my wife. Whatever has happened, *she* is not to blame. If I hear another man speak of her as *you* have spoken, I'll beat him like a dog!'

He turned, left the inn, and walked straight up to the vicarage.

Here all was still as death, it was as if some dear one had passed away, as if all mourned her, yet being ashamed of their grief, dreaded to mention her name. He walked through the garden; his footsteps attracted the attention of Alice's dog; i

crept from the shrubbery where it had been hiding, and came forward to lick his hand. He reached the door; he tapped gently with his knuckles, and the servant let him in. The girl had been crying, she hung her head, and noiselessly led the way to the parlour, where he found Marion. She came forward to meet him.

‘Have you any news?’ she asked eagerly.

He shook his head.

‘I have been back to the place, examined every inch of the ground, but can discover nothing. If footprints have been there, the heavy rain has washed them all away.’

Marion’s face grow very sorrowful as she walked back to her seat; for again, despite herself, the dreadful suspicion which she had been fighting against, took possession of her heart. She began to think that Alice must be dead.

‘ How is Mr Chepstow ? ’ asked Philip.

‘ Just the same as when you left him this morning. The blow has fallen heavily upon him, Philip. Alice was his pet, and though he does not give up all hope, I know he will never be the same again. I tried to rouse him ; but he bade me draw the blinds and close the doors, and leave him in peace ! ’

The day passed, evening set in, and still there was no trace and no news of Alice. Most of the houses in the village had been searched ; information had been sent to the papers, and on every public place in the village placards were posted offering a large reward to any person who could give information concerning her.

The sum was a large one ; the inhabitants of Tregelly were poor ; Philip honestly be-

lieved that through this medium he would gain information about his wife.

Hours passed on; the tempest in the village was becoming unbearable; every one was suspected, and every house was searched.

Philip, unable to bear the agony longer, had gone to the Towers, and there alone wildly awaited the information, which he hoped might be brought to him, and while he was waiting he began to think; to try if he could in any way unravel the terrible mystery, and gain any clue as to the whereabouts of his wife.

But the more he thought, the more perplexed he grew. That Alice had been a consenting party to the flight he did not for a moment believe. If she had meant to leave him, why did she marry him? She had done it of her own free will;

indeed, she had even come to him herself and asked him, with tearful eyes to let the wedding be quickly solemnised.

He remembered that day so well. She had come alone to Mostyn Towers—had found him alone in his room, and had put her arms around his neck and burst into tears. The sight of her pale cheek and tear-dimmed eyes both pained and alarmed him. He tried to soothe her, then asked her what was the matter. She shook her head.

‘I cannot tell you, dear,’ she said, ‘but first tell me truly—would you like me to set you free?’

‘Alice!’

‘Don’t think I wish it, Philip, I do not—but I am not what I once was, and I have been thinking it might be better far for you?’

‘Then, my love, think of it no more. What would life be worth to me without my darling’s love?’

‘You are so good—you are all too good to me. Philip, if I brought shame and sorrow to you, it would break my heart.’

The scene which had seemed strange to him then, seemed stranger now in the light of what had come to pass. What was the secret which she would not tell him, but which had preyed so much upon her mind? Was it in any way connected with the strange and startling events which, during the last few weeks, had happened to him, and which he had kept a secret because he had dreaded to disturb Alice’s already troubled mind.

‘Perhaps,’ he said to himself, ‘I hold in my hand the clue to the whole mystery. The secrets which I kept for her sake must

be secrets no longer. Since all other means have failed, it is time for me to speak.'

Half-an-hour later, the police inspector arrived, and was shown at once into Kingston's room.

'I am sorry to say my news is unsatisfactory,' he said. 'We have come to our last resources; we can do no more. I have posted my men in different parts of the village to watch and wait.'

He was about to depart when Philip stopped him.

'One moment. I have two or three things to show you which may give you the clue you want. First, read this.'

He took out his pocket book; drew from it a letter, and handed it to the sergeant, who read,—

'If you wish to marry Miss Chepstow, do

so at once, or the ceremony will never be performed.

A FRIEND.'

'When did you receive this, Mr Kingston?'

'A month ago.'

'How?'

'With my other letters. It came through the post, and was placed upon my breakfast table in the usual way.'

'Did you show it to any one?'

'No. I was amazed at receiving such a letter, and resolved to show it to Miss Chepstow. Certain complications prevented our meeting for several days, and by that time I had forgotten all about the letter. At last, three days after its receipt, I started to go to the rectory. When I was half way I met Miss Chepstow, who was coming to me. She was very much agitated. Her

first words were an echo of the letter I had received. She asked me to hasten on the wedding-day. Immediately I remembered the letter. By a few questions I discovered she knew nothing of it, and I resolved to say nothing lest I might cause her pain.'

'And you kept your resolve?'

'Yes. We fixed our wedding-day, and set ourselves to work to prepare for it; we had both a good deal to do. Alice—Miss Chepstow—was continually with her dressmaker. I was occupied superintending the alterations to be made at the Towers. I spent every evening at the vicarage; my horse was stabled at the inn, and about twelve o'clock I usually rode home. One night I lingered longer than usual. My horse was brought up and held for me about an hour at the gate. When I mounted him, it was nearly two o'clock, raining

slightly, and so dark I was compelled to let the animal find its own way. We proceeded at a slow trot. I imagined that every one must be in bed, for there wasn't a light to be seen anywhere ; but when I was about half way home, and trotting along the road which cuts through the marshes, a figure leapt lightly from the hedge, and seized my bridle rein. The horse brought thus suddenly to a standstill, reared frightfully, and with a swift turn of the hand I brought my whip down upon the ruffian's face. In a moment the horse was free, and, quivering with fright, started at a full gallop for home, while I still grasped a piece of paper which had been thrust into my palm. As soon as I got home I looked at the paper. I have since kept it with the letter. Here it is !'


He held forth a crumpled dirty piece of

paper, on which the sergeant read these words,—

‘ If you love Alice Chepstow, avoid her. She can never be your wife !’

‘ What did you do now, sir ?’

‘ I still said nothing to Miss Chepstow ; but I knew that there was some one in the village who was determined to keep us apart, and I determined to find out if possible who that some one might be. I believed I had marked my man, and should know him ; I looked for a livid mark across the face. I saw none. I made strict inquiries, but learned nothing—the mystery seemed utterly impenetrable. Well, nothing further occurred, and it seemed to me that the villain, finding I was not to be intimidated, had abandoned his design. The letter and paper still lay in my pocket-book, but were now almost forgotten.



Meantime the state of Miss Chepstow's health alarmed me. She was nervous' harassed, and evidently troubled by a secret which she would not divulge. It occurred to me that the same means which had been used to intimidate me was now being tried upon her. I endeavoured to gain her confidence, but could not; so I let things have their way, comforting myself with the reflection that all would come right after the wedding-day.'

'Yes, sir.'

'The night before the wedding,' continued Philip, 'was spent by me at the vicarage. All the arrangements had been so well executed that everybody seemed pleased, and even Alice herself was less nervous than she had been for many days before. When the evening was half over she asked me if I would like to see her

wedding dress. I expressed my willingness, and followed her upstairs. She took me to a room, opened a press, and showed me a mass of white silk and net hanging inside. I looked at it for a moment, then asked her if she would like to do something to please me. She answered quickly that she would do anything. 'Then, my dear,' I said, 'put on your wedding dress that we may criticise it. I daresay we shall see very little of it to-morrow.'

The sergeant bent eagerly forward. Philip continued,—

'She did not answer. Her face went white as that of a corpse, and her hand trembled so violently she almost dropped the lamp. Amazed at the effect of my words, I asked her what was the matter, but before she could speak I knew the cause

of her fear. Once before she had tried on a wedding dress ; once before she had tripped downstairs to be criticised in it ; but instead of listening to compliments, she had learned the news that her betrothed husband lay murdered in the Chinese seas. My thoughtless request had reminded her of that terrible time. Inwardly cursing my own stupidity, I begged of her to think of my request no more, but to come with me back to the parlour. She had recovered herself by this time, and was evidently resolved to fight against her fear.

“ I will put it on,” she said. “ But not in this room. Jane shall carry it down for me. Do you go back to papa and Marion, but don’t say anything until I come.”

‘ We went downstairs, I carrying the lamp this time ; the maid and Alice bearing the various articles belonging to the wedding

dress. They went into a room on the ground floor, while I returned to the one which I had lately left. Mr Chepstow and Marion were still there; we sat and chatted for what seemed to me an interminable time. I was just thinking of going in search of Alice, when we were all startled by a terrible cry; a cry, it seemed to me, half of fear, half of joy. It rang through the house and finally subsided into a low sobbing moan. In a moment I was on my feet, and seizing the lamp from the table, I hurried to the room where I knew Alice must be. There I found her. She wore her bridal dress but she looked like a corpse, and she was clutching at the window-sill as if for support. The moment I entered the room she rushed towards me, and then fell sobbing bitterly upon my breast.

‘What had happened? There stood the maid who could have told; but she seemed almost as frightened as her mistress, and besides, just then we were none of us able to inquire. By this time Alice was sobbing convulsively upon my shoulder; and it seemed that the best thing to do was to put her quietly to bed. After a while she went away with her sister, and I questioned the maid.’

‘Well, sir, what then?’

‘At first the girl seemed disinclined to speak; but after much pressing she said that just as Alice was about to leave the room, she had asked her just to take one last look to see that everything was right. She turned, started, then with a wild cry pointed to the window. She saw, she said, the face of Mr Richard Glamorgan gazing at her through the panes. “Of course, sir,” the

girl added, "she was wrong, for Mr Glamorgan we all know has been dead and buried these two years. I daresay she did see a face, for the blind wasn't drawn, and the room was lit up splendidly; it was some boys from the village that frightened her, I'm sure, and when she screamed they'd run away."

'I accepted the girl's explanation, and believed it to be a true one, nevertheless I was sadly disturbed in my mind.

'I left the vicarage somewhat earlier than usual that night, and ordering my horse to be taken back by the groom, walked home across the marshes. My mind was full of the strange event of the evening. I was growing seriously alarmed at the state of Alice's health, and wondering what I could do to rouse her from the morbid condition into which she was sinking. She

was changing terribly ; her face bore all the marks of shocking mental pain. I knew that some villainous scheme to torture her was being successfully carried on ; and I wondered how I could discover the workers of the scheme, and above all, how I could bring it to an end. I felt glad that my wedding-day was so near ; glad that for twelve long months I should have her to myself—far away from these dreary heart-breaking scenes.

‘ Musing thus, I reached my home ; let myself in with my latch-key, went softly to my study, and sat down to think and plan again. There was a little fire burning in the grate, and a shaded lamp, which was burned very low, stood upon the table. I picked up the lamp, knocked the fire to the hearth, and sat down in my easy-chair, with my back to the window. How long I sat

thus I don't know. I was deep in plans for the future, and took no notice of the passing on of time. Suddenly I started; the sash of my window was hurriedly lifted and dropped. I leapt to my feet; sprang to the window. It was closed; no one was in the room. I turned to lift the window and leap out, when my eye was attracted by a piece of white paper which lay on the carpet at my feet. I lifted it, opened it out. Here it is.'

He handed another piece of paper to the sergeant, who read these words,—

'Beware of marrying Alice Chepstow. She is a dead man's bride!'

'Another threat, sir!'

'Yes, and written in precisely the same hand as the last, and the villain who was

doing it all had a moment before been within half-a-dozen yards of me. Hurriedly thrusting the paper into my pocket, I leapt out of the window and began to search carefully all round the house. But I could find nothing. The villain, whoever he was, had safely made off after leaving the paper behind him.'

Philip paused; the sergeant looked up inquiringly.

'Is that all, sir?'

'That is all. You know what has happened since, so I need not recapitulate. My idea is that the villain who threatened me has made good his threats by carrying off my wife.'

'I think so too, Mr Kingston. I also think that the next house to be searched is—'

'Well?'

‘That old house in the woods—Plas Ruthven!’

Plas Ruthven! Philip stared amazed. Plas Ruthven—a dreary, ghost-haunted dwelling, peopled with spirits from the other world, and tenanted only by a madman, whom nobody knew!’

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ returned the sergeant respectfully, ‘it is inhabited by another man—one Owen Glendower!’

‘Well?’

‘It seems to me he’s the only man in the village that would have an object in frightening the lady, and in robbing you. Having got her into his possession he could take her nowhere but to Plas Ruthven.’

‘But why should *he* do this?’

‘Ah, why indeed, sir. Why are half the crimes in the world committed? I daresay

he's got good enough reasons for what he's done. He loved his master; when he died, he resolved to spend the rest of his life mourning him. He thought Miss Chestow should do the same. When he found she didn't she roused his anger, and for his dead master's sake he resolved to be revenged. As his threats were unheeded he grew desperate and plunged into crime. Yes, Mr Kingston, I shall go up with my men in the morning and search that house.'

To-morrow morning! Philip was on his feet in an instant.

'Either you or I will do it to-night!' he said. 'Think of my wife in Plas Ruthven! Alone in that ghost-haunted place, with a madman, and a wretch who could be pitiless enough to bring her to such a pass! Good God, the thought is terrible! Yes, you shall go, and I will go with you. I'll make

you a rich man, if you give me my wife to-night !’

‘ Mr Kingston !’

‘ Well ?’

‘ If I promise to go now, sir, will you promise to stay *here* ?’

‘ No. Why should I ?’

‘ Because it is just possible we might find the lady dead !’





CHAPTER XII.

UP AT PLAS RUTHVEN.

MEANWHILE, where was Alice? Only two men in the village could tell ; those two were Owen Glendower and the tenant of Plas Ruthven.

Early that morning, when Philip Kingston, weary with his fruitless search, was galloping up to the rectory to tell his terrible news, Alice was lying upon a couch in a strange room, gazing into the face of a man.

She seemed in the full possession of her senses, yet she did not attempt to move.

She wore her travelling dress, splashed with mud and soaked with rain; her hat had disappeared, and her hair had fallen down. Her gloves had been stripped from her hands, which the man was now chafing between his own. How cold and lifeless they felt! He stroked her cheek, kissed her cold lips, and passed his hand across her bewildered eyes.

When he lifted it they remained closed. She had sunk again into unconsciousness. For a moment Glamorgan looked at her. Then he gently placed her hands upon her breast, rose from his seat, and walked quietly up and down the room.

His work was done—his victory achieved; and now he paused, and asked himself, 'Have I done well?'

He was thinking, not of the present, but of the past—of that terrible journey through

the woods, when, with the rain beating into his face, and the lightning playing in the storm-racked heaven above, he had carried the unconscious form of Alice in his arms, and had hidden her in Plas Ruthven.

He had been like a madman then, and, with this wild madness still upon him, he had torn off his disguise, and revealed himself to her the moment her swoon passed away. Yes, the two had at last stood face to face!

Alice had looked upon him at last; for one moment she realised the terrible truth—the dead had risen. And in that moment her inmost soul had been revealed to the man who had tortured her so cruelly. He told her that he lived, and with a cry of joy which rang from end to end of the dreary dwelling, she sprang into his arms.

‘Richard!’ she cried, ‘oh, my love, my love! They told me you were dead, and I thought I should never see you, but God is good. He sends you back because He knows I am going away. Kiss me, dear; kiss me, before I die!’

Her arms were round his neck, her sweet face held up to his. Dazed and speechless he held her to him; he kissed her lips; as he did so her weary eyes closed, and she sank again, lifeless in his arms.

Dead? No, God was not merciful enough for that; the terrible scene had overpowered her, that was all, and she had swooned away.

For a time he held her to him fondly, passionately, then he carried her across the room, and laid her gently down; he put back the hair from her face, stroked her hands and moistened her lips. He bent

above her whispering her name, but she gave him no answer now.

He stooped down and looked at her, and he knew at last how much she had changed since he went away.

Was this the blooming Alice of two years ago—the laughing, confiding girl who had put her hands into his and said, ‘I love you’? Sorrow and suffering had set their marks upon her—he saw them now. Her face was still beautiful, but oh, so sad and pale and thin! He kissed her cold lips again, and as he did so his eyes swam with tears.

She moved, sighed wearily, passed her hand across her brow and opened her eyes; they wandered round the room, they sought his face; she gazed steadfastly into his eyes; this time she did not know him.

‘Alice,’ he murmured as he gently stroked

her cold white hands. 'Alice, my darling; I was mad, but I never meant to do you harm, for I love you—I love you; speak to me just one word!'

She neither moved nor spoke.

He had achieved his purpose. His wrong was avenged; there lay his victim, a pale, sad girl, whose greatest crime had been to love him, and whom he had brought to shame and despair.

The clock struck five. He started, and a new idea entered his brain. It was not too late to atone—even now he might save her. He had but to take her in his arms to carry her to her husband's home and say, 'Take her from me, she is good, and pure and true. Through me she has passed through hell; but now she shall taste of heaven. I will hide myself in the shadow of the grave and never molest her again!'

He walked to the window, opened the shutters and looked out; the storm had ceased, dawn was breaking cold and clear; yes, there might be time yet; in a few hours the story would be known, and it would be too late. He closed the shutters, and walked back to the sofa on which she lay. Her eyes were open, and in wild fascination she gazed upon him; when he approached her she put up her hands in horror, as if to keep him away.

Seven o'clock. While Alice's name was being branded with a suspicion which she could never clear away, she herself was wildly looking at the man who had brought her so much woe.

She had listened to a wild mad story which her troubled mind could only partly understand.

‘Do you mean,’ she said presently, ‘that you let me believe you dead, in order that you might watch me; you let me pass through all this trouble in order that you might ultimately bring me to shame?’

‘Alice, you don’t understand.’

‘Oh yes, I do understand. I know all now; you are the tenant of Plas Ruthven, the old man who has many times met me face to face. You saw what I suffered; you knew that I suffered needlessly, and that one word from you would bring my torments to an end! May God forgive you, Richard!’

‘Alice, will you listen to me?’

‘Yes, if you will,’ she answered wearily, ‘I will listen.’

She leant forward, held her trembling hands over the fire, turned her face away, and listened to his tale. What a story for

him to tell, for her to hear. It came from burning lips and aching heart; it laid bare to her the soul of the man,—it told her the whole truth; but it came too late.

He ceased; she rose, staggered towards him with outstretched arms, then shrank away.

‘God help us!’ she cried. ‘God help us both!’





CHAPTER XIII.

THE WEDDING RING.

A FEW terrible moments of silence and shame; then Glamorgan raised his head and looked at her. She had gone over to the window, opened the shutters, lifted the sash, and turned her pale face to catch the morning breeze.

She could see nothing but the leafless trees which surrounded Plas Ruthven; she could hear nothing but the distant murmur of the sea.

But she was not thinking of either ; her tortured soul was praying for peace.

‘ If I could only die,’ she murmured ; ‘ if I could only close my eyes and sleep : or open them and know that this is an evil dream ! O God, have mercy upon me, my load has been too much to bear, and now my heart is broken ! ’

She put up her hand to hold her aching head and as she did so her eyes rested upon a little circlet of gold. Her wedding ring ! In a moment all the past—the dreadful troubled past—flashed back upon her mind. She recalled the months of torture—through which she had been made to pass ; her marriage day ; the terrible scene upon the road ; and lastly she tried to realise the shame and sorrow which she had brought to the man who had loved her only too well.


She left the window and hurried towards the door ; her way was blocked by Glamorgan.

‘Where are you going?’ he asked coldly.

‘Back to my father, and—and—my husband,’ she answered. ‘They shall not suffer as I have done. I cannot take away the shame ; but I may set their fear at rest.’

He looked at her strangely—he took her hand, and held it tenderly in his.

‘Alice,’ he said, ‘is that the first prompting of your heart? You know that I have risen from the dead—you know that I have the clammy taint of the grave upon me, and have passed through all the tortures of death, and now at the eleventh hour I have risen up out of the shadow of eternity to ask for recompense. I come to you, to the only being in the world to whom I have a right to come, and you say, “You come too late ; my love is dead. I have



other ties, other claims; and as for you, since you are not lying in your grave, remain as you are, a living corpse, entombed in the ghost-haunted dwelling of your ancestors.”’

He paused, but she said nothing. He clasped more closely the hand which he held, and spoke again.

‘Alice,’ he said; ‘Alice, my darling, this is harder to bear than all the tortures of the grave. Not one look, not one word of love. Years ago when I came back to Plas Ruthven—a hardened heartless block, believing all women to be heartless and cruel as the grave—it was your sweet face which gave the lie to my bitter heart-broken thoughts. I looked in your eyes, and I said to myself there is yet in the world one woman who is capable of truth and fidelity; one woman in whose hands I would fearlessly trust my life and happi-

ness. Yes, Alice, through good and evil I never doubted you—it only rent my heart to think that others could not believe!’

‘Who dared to doubt me?’

‘Many. I heard that you were like your sex, shallow and inconstant, and I said to myself they sully her reputation and my honour. If I could only *prove* that she was true. The opportunity came, my evil genius whispered to me, “The time has come; put her to the test, and then the great joy of meeting will make amends for all.”

‘And so you came to spend your days in torturing me and bringing me to shame?’

He looked at her silently for a moment then roughly threw aside her hands.

‘You speak of your torture; what of mine? Remember I came back to England a homeless, friendless man, with but one hope to cling to in all the world! I

said to myself, "What have I left to live for? Home friends are all gone, and yet for the sake of one little girl I cling to life. If I had never met her, I should have stood heedless on the ship and let the Chinese murderers do their work—" Well, I came, to find my place already filled; to find that the woman I had trusted most of all, had been the first to forget me!'

She looked up quickly; she held out her hands towards him; then quietly drew back. It was not her place to comfort him now.

'Tell me,' he said, 'that my eyes and ears have both deceived me; tell me that I heard the true ring of your voice an hour ago, when you threw yourself into my arms and said, "I love you!"'

He paused again. She did not answer

him; he held out his hand; she quietly turned away.

‘Let me go,’ she sobbed. ‘If you have any pity for me, let me go home!’

‘You wish to go?’


‘I do—I do!’

‘Then go—my madness is over, it will be better for us both that we should never meet again!’

Without another look towards her he passed out of the room and left her there alone.

Alice stood speechless and horror-stricken—then she quietly walked over to the hearth and sat down, shivering before the fire.

For her dress, soaked with the rain, clung clammy about her; and her heart felt faint and weak with weariness and



pain. She was free now: yet she made no attempt to go, but sat like one sick unto death, with her sad eyes fixed upon the flames.

Hour after hour went by: the flame of the lamp upon the table grew fainter, then died; the burning logs turned to cold white ashes upon the hearth; the room grew dreary and bitterly cold.

Thus the day wore on, and when the crimson sunset illuminated the west, she rose from her seat still stiff and cold, stretched herself upon the couch, closed her eyes, and prayed to God that she might die. Still death did not come. The hours crept on, daylight faded, and over the earth there crept again the dreary darkness of night.

Alice opened her eyes, to find the room in darkness; she went over to the window again to drink in a breath of air.

It was a calm, still night ; the trees were scarcely stirring, and the sea was solemnly still. She stood thus leaning with folded arms upon the sill, when the door of the room opened, and Glamorgan came in.

He carried in his hand a lighted lamp, which he set on the table, then turning, saw her still there. He started, walked over and touched her, as if disbelieving the evidence of his eyes.

‘Why are you here?’ he said in a cold, hard voice ; ‘this is no place for you !’

She shivered at the tone ; her lip began to quiver, but she bit it until the blood came.

‘If it is no place for me,’ she answered quietly, ‘why did you bring me here ?’

‘Because I was mad enough to think I wouldn’t be worth living without you. You have cured me of my madness. You are free to go.’

Again her teeth pressed cruelly upon her lip ; her tears rose ; she resolutely forced them back. She left the window, walked over to him, and looked up into his care-worn face.

‘ Richard,’ she said, ‘ suppose I go ; what then ? ’

‘ You want me to make amends for the wrong I’ve done. Well, you shall have your way. I’ll take you to your husband. I’ll clear you to your friends, and then, like Diogenes with the lantern, I’ll continue my search for a faithful woman, and, with God’s help, perhaps some day I’ll find one. . . . Dry your eyes, Alice, it’s not your fault, but His who made you, that you have faltered and failed ! ’

She turned quietly away from him without another word.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEARCH IN PLAS RUTHVEN.

SHE walked over to the window, pushed it open, and again leaned out.

Her cheek was burning feverishly, but all within her breast felt cold and dead. What could she say? What could she do? Again her breaking heart cried, 'God be merciful and let me die!'

Suddenly she was startled; the sound of voices broke the stillness of the night; lights

ashed through the darkness.

She looked and listened, the sounds grew

louder, the lights, which were evidently carried in the hand, came nearer and nearer to Plas Ruthven!

What did it mean? Was it possible that the place of her concealment had become known, and that deliverance was close by?

She turned from the window; as she did so the door of the room was violently thrown open, and Owen Glendower, pale and trembling, burst into the room.

‘Measter, Measter Richard!’ he cried, ‘they be coming to search Plas Ruthven.’

For a moment there was dead silence; then Glamorgan, who was looking steadily at Alice, said quietly,—

‘Oh, they have struck the scent at last, have they? Well, you have only to bring them here. Mr Kingston can take back his wife.’

Glendower stared in stupefied amazement ; Alice, white as death, and trembling violently, laid her hand upon Glamorgan's arm.

'Richard,' she cried, 'hide me away ; do not let them find me *here!*'

He turned and looked at her ; he took her outstretched hands, and held them in both of his.

'Alice,' he said quietly, 'it is better they should find you here than elsewhere. Fear nothing. I am the culprit, and will bear the blame!'

She looked up wildly into his face, and gave a cry of pain.

'Oh, God!' she sobbed. 'Richard, will you never understand me? I tell you I am not afraid, but I will not meet my husband! If you have any pity for me do what I ask ; hide me, and when they come say I am not in the house! Richard, do

you hear? Do as I tell you, or God alone knows what I may be tempted to do!’

As she spoke there was a violent knocking at the hall door. Alice, rising to her feet, gazed wildly around the room. Glamorgan did not stir; but old Glendower, with a curious smile, crept up to the wall and opened a panel door which the original architect of the dwelling had most skilfully concealed.

‘Mistress, mistress,’ he cried, ‘creep in; no soul will find thee *there*.’

Glamorgan moved as if to prevent her; but Alice, seizing up her hat and gloves, disappeared into the dark recess and closed the panel behind her.





CHAPTER XV.

ALICE SPEAKS.

THE search is over ; utter desolation reigns again in and around Plas Ruthven ; down in the dreary kitchen sits Owen Glendower, rocking himself in glee ; while in the room above his head sits the weary, heart-broken woman.

Yes, her heart has told the truth at last ; she heard her husband's voice, and made no answer, because she dreaded being torn from the man who sits in gloomy silence by her side.

Now they are gone ; their fruitless search

is ended, and Alice, unable longer to control herself, comes forth from her hiding - place and bursts into tears. Utterly amazed, Glamorgan tries to soothe her pain ; he kisses her sunken cheek, strokes her hair, and clasps her unresisting body in his powerful arms.

‘ Alice,’ he cries, ‘ Alice, my darling, forgive me. I never meant to pain you so.’

But she cries on until her heart is eased, while his passionate kisses fall upon her face, and his tender words ring in her ears, bringing with them sorry comfort and peace.

The storm is over ; Alice’s sobs have ceased. She has sipped the wine which he gave her, and has grown more composed. She has gently withdrawn herself from his arms, and sits at his feet looking up at him with weary, wistful eyes. Thus

seated, she tells, not without many pauses and interruptions, the story of her long vigil.

‘You always doubted me, Richard,’ she said, ‘even in the old days when we ought to have been so happy together. It used to come between us like a black shadow, so when you told me you were going away a terrible fear came over me—that that black shadow would increase and keep us apart. Do you remember how I clung to you, and asked you not to leave me? I do, for I saw your face go blacker and blacker and the terrible doubts increase. So I determined that you should go. I knew my love was strong enough to bear a parting, and I resolved, if possible, to root out your mistrust for ever. So you went away to China and left me here alone.

‘That is three years ago, and yet I re-

member it as well as if it were yesterday, for as soon as you were gone it seemed to me as if the world had turned into a charnel house—all was so changed. For days I could do nothing but sit at home and look down upon the turrets of Plas Ruthven—dear to me because it was your home. At last I discovered a means of passing the time away. I resolved to make my wedding-clothes. I grew more contented then. The days passed happily, when suddenly one night I read the account of your death! The blow came so suddenly and unexpectedly upon me that it brought me to death's door. I lay for some time hovering between life and death. But death was conquered. I rose from my bed—the mere shadow of what I once had been—to begin a life which henceforth was to be one of silent sorrow.

‘To carry out the urgent wishes of my father and sister I went abroad to Troufleurs, taking with me your letters, your picture, and the sad yet dear memory of the past. I had said to myself that all places would from henceforth be alike to me; but when I got to Troufleurs my miseries increased tenfold.

‘I walked by the sea, and seemed to hear your voice coming over the waves in agonised pain. When at night I fell into a fitful slumber, you came to my bedside. I saw the blood stains on your face and hands, and heard you crying to me to help you. It was terrible to think that you had died so far away, without one word, one parting look. I used to lie awake at night and wonder if your poor body would ever be recovered from the sea—if it would ever lie quietly in the little graveyard, where I


hoped soon to go, to my own eternal rest.'

She paused for a moment to wipe away her tears; he bent above her, took her emaciated hand in both of his, and there she let it remain.

'Ah yes,' she continued quietly, 'my sufferings were keen enough then, God knows, but I had my consolation. I thought, "He loved me; for *my* sake he went away; for my sake he lost his life, and now that he has gone to a better and a happier world, he can look into my heart and read there the truth of my love."

'By degrees this knowledge soothed me, and brought me to a better frame of mind. During the day I was soon able to appear as others did, and to reserve my grief for the solitude of my room and the silence of the night.

‘At this time I met my old friend Mr Kingston. We met quite by accident ; but he, seeing that I was very lonely and very ill, resolved to stay in the village to keep me company. I was glad of it. Philip and I had always been on friendly terms—and, moreover, I was anxious to atone for the part I had taken in exiling him from his home. So he remained in the village for several weeks, and we were much together. Still I was not happy, but I was growing more contented, when one day I recalled the scene which took place between you and me one Sunday on the sands. I remembered that unreasoning jealousy had made you hate the mention of Philip’s name. I was about, once and for ever, to avoid the company of my old friend. I spent days and nights of misery and self-reproach. when reason stepped in



and brought me again to my proper senses. I said, "If the world misjudges me, he will not; he has gone to a place where jealousy and mistrust are not known. If he can see and judge me now—as God grant he can—he must know that my aching heart is true. Since it pleases God that I shall live, I will try to bow my head and say, 'Thy will be done.' I will try to be a comfort to those who are still left to me, and when my task is done and my weary eyes may close, then my reward will be, to meet my love in heaven."'

'You made that resolve; why did you not keep it?'

She raised her head and looked at him for a moment in silence. She was thinking of the story which the lawyer had told her; of that miserable night which followed when

sitting alone in her room she had held forth a packet of old letters—placed them in the fire, and watched them turn to blackened ashes in the grate. Everything faded before that vision. Glamorgan's voice recalled her to herself.

‘Alice, have you more to tell?’

She started, passed her hand across her eyes, and looked at him again.

‘Yes,’ she said quietly, ‘I have much more to tell—and before I go from here to-night I should like you to hear my story to the end.’

‘My visit to Troufleurs came to a conclusion. I returned home. By this time Tregeilly had grown very dear to me; the happiest months of my life had been spent there, and everything about it reminded me of you. By day I wandered out alone

visiting the places where we had been together, and at night I lay awake listening to the dreary murmur of the sea. I was sad—so sad, but I resolutely kept back my tears, and hid my sorrow deep down in my heart for my dear father's sake. So I laughed and chatted and sang to him when my heart was almost breaking—and while he was quietly sleeping in his bed, I would creep up to the church to put a flower on your tomb, and kiss the cold stone which bore your name.

'The fever broke out in the village, and my father, growing fearful about my state of health, begged me to leave home. I went to Mostyn Towers. While I was there Philip asked me, for the second time in his life, to become his wife.

'I answered "No; my love lies murdered in foreign seas, and when he died my


heart died too—I can never marry!” I was sorry he had asked me—sorry to have caused him pain. When he offered me his friendship I took it—he was the most generous friend I had in all the world.

‘Three weeks after I returned home I heard news which brought me more sorrow than the news of your death. Mr Tremaine came down from London; he asked for a private interview, and I, quite unsuspecting, granted his request. We met, and from his lips I learned the cruel truth!’

‘The truth?’ interrupted Glamorgan.

‘Yes, every word. Cold and pitiless it fell from his lips, and cut my heart in two!’

‘Alice what did he tell you? Let me hear it, syllable for syllable.’



‘He told me that I was wasting all my love and tears on a man who was another woman’s husband. He said that if the world knew my story it would bring me and mine to sorrow. He said that you, knowing yourself to be a married man, had wantonly won my love and contemplated bringing me to shame; that my affection had tamed you and made you repent; that you had left me, intending to rejoin your wife, and never see me more, but that as some slight recompense for the wrong so done, you had left me some hundred pounds a-year!’

‘Good God! he said that, and you believed him?’

‘No, Richard, I did not believe him. I could not judge you as harshly as you have judged me. I loved you far too well. I could not, would not believe it. I prayed to God on my bended knee to prove it

false; but my prayers were unheeded and my love was dumb. Sick and despairing, I met the man again, and pleaded like a beggar. I said, "Deny what you have told me. I will yield up everything I have in the world if I may still believe in his truth and honour; if you prove him false, think what it means to me, for I loved him—the knowledge of his love is the only thing which makes my life worth living; take that away and I have not one hope left in all the world." But what was all that to him? He said the truth must be told, and he told it; he brought me undeniable proofs that Mrs Glamorgan had herself come to England to claim her rights! I willingly gave up the money which I now considered did not rightly belong to me; then, having done my duty, I wearily turned my face

‘ How I felt God alone can tell ; it seemed to me as if all feeling had gone out of me, as if my body had been turned to senseless stone. I entered the house quietly—crept up to my room and lay down on the bed, for I was wearied out. I had not shed a tear—my grief was too deep for that ; my heart was breaking. I did not go down again that night, but when all the household were in bed, I rose and sat beside my bedroom fire. I thought over the whole story, scrutinised my own conduct, and concluded that I had done well. Yes, there had been but one honourable course open to me—and I thanked God that I had possessed sufficient strength of mind to take it. It was clear that so long as your lawful wife was living I had no longer any right to the money which had so long been mine. I was glad I had given it up. I

had also handed to the lawyer one or two presents which you had made me, requesting him to give them to your wife. He remonstrated at first, but finally I forced him to take them, and so my work with him was done.

‘But now I had a heavier task before me, and I cried on God to give me strength to carry it through. I knew that if I acted wisely and well, I must from henceforth try to forget, to put the past behind me as an evil dream, and live only in the hope of a bright and happy future. I said to myself, “Why should I grieve? Why should I break my father’s heart, and plunge my home into bitterest sorrow for a man whose only task had been to torture me and finally bring me to shame? I have suffered enough. With God’s help from this night forth I’ll think of him no more.”

‘ For a time I sat silent—pained and sorrowful, yet with a great bitterness in my heart ; but the bitterness wore away, and I thought of it all with sad and sickening despair. I said, “ I cannot choose but love him still, but I will say farewell to my love to-night, and in time perhaps God will help me to forget.”

‘ I put on a cloak, crept down to my father’s study, took the keys of the church and noiselessly left the house. It was a calm, still night, but bitterly cold ; the ground was hard with frost, but the sky was clear and brilliantly studded with stars. It was midnight ; not a soul was abroad, and I seemed like a spirit passing silently up the hill. I reached the church : unlocked the door and entered. It was dark inside ; but I knew every inch of my way. I passed swiftly down the aisle and paused

near your tomb. I knelt before it—passed my hands over it, then pressed my lips to the cold, hard stone. For a time I remained there, then stiff, cold, and weary, I rose to my feet and passed again out into the night. I locked the church door, then feeling faint and weary, I stood for a moment on the threshold. As I stood so, looking at the stars, listening to the deep murmur of the sea, there came a sound which vibrated through every nerve in my body and turned my heart deathly cold. It was a sound which I had heard just once before; a cry—human, yet unearthly; it was *your* voice, and it seemed to me to come from the grave. It cried,—

“Alice—my love, my love!”

‘I started, trembling from head to foot. I was alone, and again all around me was

intensely still. I crept round the church and among the graves, but could see nothing; at last, more dead than alive, I stole back to my home.

‘My candle still burnt on the table, my fire still smouldered in the grate. I threw off my cloak, for there was one thing more I had to do. In my drawer lay a small bundle of letters, which I had tied up with a thin crape band. I took them out: they were now the only things left to me of the past. For a moment I looked at them in hesitation—should I read them? My heart said “Yes,” but reason said “No.” Reason conquered. After a while I lifted the letters and dropped them into the flames. I watched them burn. When dawn broke I still sat there, looking upon their blackened ashes.’



CHAPTER XVI.

‘MAY YOU BE HAPPY!’

HAD made my resolve, and for a time at least I kept it. I did my best to help my father and sister. I took no more flowers to the church, and when I went abroad I never once allowed my eyes to wander towards Plas Ruthven. The strange turn which events had taken was perplexing to those at home; the lawyer, for some reason of his own, asked me to keep the whole matter a secret; and I, not wishing to speak ill of the man whom I loved so fondly, eagerly

granted his request. " My love is dead, and cannot justify himself," I said ; " let the blame fall upon me." So I told them nothing, except that the money, which I willingly relinquished, had gone to some one who had a greater title to it than I. Thus the days passed on wearily and sadly,—at length their tedium was broken up. One evening about the middle of last January we were all at Mostyn Towers. During the evening Philip asked me once more to become his wife !

' My first impulse was to say no. Then I thought of the story which Mr Tremaine had told me. I thought of the miseries of the past, the utter hopelessness of the future. I checked my impulse, and told him if he would come to the vicarage I would give him a final answer on the following day.

' As soon as I reached home that night

I went straight to my room, and tried to make up my mind what my answer to Philip must be. At the end of half-an-hour I had come to no satisfactory conclusion ; so I went into my sister's room.

“Marion,” I said, kneeling beside her and taking both her hands, “I have been very cold and silent to you lately, but I mean to tell you a secret to-night. Philip has asked me again if I will marry him.”

‘She looked up quickly, her face full of bright hope and joy. She stroked my hair and kissed my cheek as if I had been a child.

“And you, Alice,” she asked, “what did you say to him ?”

“Nothing. I am to say yes or no when he comes here to-morrow !”

‘She dropped my hands, but said nothing. Her silence was more eloquent than words.

It seemed to say,—“Tell me of no more disappointments, for they make me sick and weary. Here am I striving day after day to lighten the cares of our home and to help my poor father, while you will do nothing but spend your days in self pity and in increasing the load which is already too heavy for us to bear.”

“Marion,” I said quickly, “what shall I do?”

‘ She shook her head.

“ Do not ask me, Alice—ask your own heart ; but before you give Philip his answer to-morrow, think a little of the miseries of others as well as of your own. Think of our father growing old and grey and very weary ; think of our sad, poverty-stricken home ; and remember the only thing he asks of you is to accept the love of a strong man's heart, and all the comfort of a wealthy home !”

‘Then without a kiss or a pressure of the hand she wished me good-night, and I went wearily back to my room.

‘All that night I did not sleep ; and in the morning I looked in my glass, and started back with a sharp shock of surprise. How changed I was ! My cheeks were pale and thin ; and my hair—which every one used to admire—was actually turning grey ! You can see my cheeks, can you not ? Well, I will show you the grey hairs !’

She took a mass of hair in her hand and held it up to him. He bent down and kissed it, but did not utter a word. Alice did not look up ; she felt the arm which was round her waist tighten convulsively, and she did not attempt to resist.

‘If you had told me two years ago,’ she said, ‘that I should be grey before I was

twenty, I think it would have broken my heart, yet I looked at my hair that morning without a sigh.

'At three o'clock in the afternoon Philip came and I went down to see him. I found him in the dining-room alone. I suppose the look on my face was not very hopeful, for he took my hand in his, and spoke before I could open my lips to utter a word.

"Alice," he said, "if you want more time to consider, take it, my dear, don't be in a hurry to say 'no' again. I don't want to tempt you, but if you could but make up your mind to marry me, I think I might make your life much easier for you. Darling, say yes—give me the right to bring you help and comfort."

'His kind words, the warm pressure of his hand, brought the tears to my eyes.

“Philip,” I answered wearily, “it is *you*, not I, who would make a sacrifice. Remember you are both young and rich ; you could take to your home a young and happy bride—while I—what am I? young in years, perhaps, but for all that a very weary, heart-broken woman.”

“You are my first, my last, my only love,” he said. “With you beside me, my life would be a happy one. Without you, a blank !”

‘Then I did what Marion told me. I thought of our home, of my father, of all the trouble I had brought to him, of my power now to make amends. I turned again to Philip. I opened my lips to speak, but my soul rose in revolt ; try as I would I could not utter the words which would make me false to you. If I had been left to myself that day, all the future would

have been changed ; yes, despite all I had heard and seen I should have remained true to myself, true to you, true to Philip. But as I stood thus, waiting to speak the word which would have parted us for ever, the door opened ; I was told a gentleman was waiting in the library to see me, and glad of the reprieve I rushed away at once. I found that the gentleman was Mr Tremaine ; the one man in the world who had the power to urge me on to desperation. He glanced at me keenly from head to foot ; he took a small packet from his pocket and handed it to me.

“ They are the trifles which you asked me to give to Mrs Glamorgan,” he said ; “ she has begged me to return them to you. She thanks you for the honourable manner in which you have behaved towards her. She has tried to reciprocate by remaining

silent; and now she leaves England again without a moment's delay. She thinks that these trifles may be valued by you, and begged me to return them with my own hand."

'He held the packet towards me; I angrily thrust it aside.

"Keep them, destroy them, do with them what you will," I said; "they are of no value to me now. Besides, I have no right to possess them; in a few months I shall be Mr Kingston's wife."

'He started, and I thought he looked pleased. He took my hand and shook it warmly.

"My dear young lady," he said, "allow me to congratulate you. You have been generous to others and just to yourself. May you be happy."

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CHAPTER XVII.

A CRY FROM THE GRAVE.

SHE paused again, for her companion had risen from his seat, and was now pacing excitedly up and down the room. When she paused he came towards her, and stood gazing wildly into her face.

‘Alice,’ he said hoarsely, ‘why did you never tell me this before?’

The question was a strange one; she opened her eyes in wonder.

‘Because,’ she answered quietly, ‘until a

few hours ago I thought you were lying in your grave.'

He shuddered.

'Ay, I forgot. I am a dead man, am I not? and I have risen from the grave for this!'

Again he sat down beside her; again he took her in his arms, kissed her pale cheek, and smoothed her silken hair.

'O Alice, my love, my love,' he murmured, 'neither God nor man can make amends now. Fool that I was! I saw and heard, yet I would not understand. Go on, my darling; tell me all.'

She sighed wearily; pressed her cold lips to his burning fingers, and said sadly,—

'I have not much more to tell. You know what happened to me that night. As soon as Mr Tremaine left the house

I went back to the dining-room. Philip was still there. I gave him my hand at once, and told him I would be his wife.

‘During that evening Philip remained at the vicarage, and very bright and happy everybody seemed. My dear father, who was always gentle and good to me, was doubly so that night. Marion looked as if she had been relieved of a perfect load of care, and Philip seemed transformed into the bright, generous-hearted boy who had asked me to marry him many years before. Amidst so much gladness how could I help feeling glad? I was glad; I tried to be true, and yet, in spite of myself, my thoughts would wander to you. I felt no bitterness now, only love and pity. I said to myself, “He never meant to injure me; he never meant to bring me pain and sorrow. I forgive him, and to-night, just

for the last time, I will place a little flower upon his tomb." I chose a moment when I was unobserved, and left the room. I went up to my bedroom, opened a drawer, took out a wreath of immortelles, and, wrapping a warm cloak around me, stealthily left the house. It was growing late; daylight had faded, but the moon was bright. I walked quickly up the hill, through the churchyard, to the church door. There I paused. I said to myself, "I have no right to go there now; my wild unreasonable passion is making me false to the living as well as the dead. I will go no further. Philip has generously placed his faith in me. I cannot love him as I ought, but I will try to be true." I turned from the church door, retraced some of my steps; then, feeling weary, sat down to rest upon a tomb. The struggle was over, the victory

won, and now my soul felt peaceful—peaceful as the sky above me, the air all round. But it was not ordained that either peace or happiness was ever to remain with me. Suddenly the silence of the night was broken by a sound which I had heard once or twice before ; a sound which rent my heart in two, and made my body turn cold as a stone. I heard your voice, clear and distinct, yet coming, I imagined, out of the spirit land. It cried,—

“ Alice, come to me, my love, my love ! ”


‘ Wild and terrified I started up and stared about me. I seemed to be alone. I staggered a few steps forward, and fainted away.

‘ When I recovered my senses I found I was not alone—a man stood near me ; a strange, wild-looking man, whom I had seen several times before, and whom I,

in common with the villagers, knew only as the eccentric "Tenant of Plas Ruthven."

'I still felt nervous, weak, and ill; the presence of this strange old man did not serve to alleviate my fear; I looked at him, but could not speak, for whenever our eyes met a strange feeling came over me and kept me silent. "What is it?" I asked myself again that night, but still I could not understand; a wild fascination was creeping over me, which drew my eyes to the old man's face and rooted me to the spot. Ah, little did I know that at that moment I stood alone with my love; that I was looking into his eyes, listening to his voice; that he was not dead, but living; and that his very love for me had at last transformed him into my bitterest foe!

'At length, you remember, Philip came



and found us standing there, and guessing my secret sorrow, led me home without a word.

‘ I took Philip’s arm, for I felt too weak to walk alone, and went slowly back to the vicarage. He was evidently determined to take no notice of my strange behaviour that night. He chatted pleasantly as we went along, but I said nothing. I was still thinking of the strange encounter in the churchyard, of the pitiful cry I had heard, of the peculiar feeling which thrilled through me, as I had looked into the eyes of the strange old man. It was all a mystery which I could not understand.

‘ We reached the vicarage gate. Philip was about to enter, but I stopped him. An explanation of some kind was necessary, and I felt I must give it.

“ Philip,” I said, “ do you know how it

was you found me in the churchyard to-night ?”

‘ He shook his head.

“ Since you have not told me, I can’t know for certain, Alice !” he said.

“ Do you wish to know ?”

“ Not unless *you* wish it, little one.”

‘ As he spoke I felt thankful that I had turned back from the church door that night ; such implicit faith and confidence deserved some slight return ; so while the impulse was on me, I hastened to tell him all. I said,—

“ I went up to-night to place a fresh wreath on Richard’s tomb ; but when I reached the church door my conscience told me that such an act would make me untrue to you, and I turned away. I am doing my best to forget, but sometimes the old feeling will come over me. I loved him too well to forget him quite so soon.”



‘He took my face in both his hands, held it up and looked into my eyes.

“‘Alice, Alice,” he said, “try as you may, you will never forget, my dear!”

‘His voice was so sorrowful, his face so sad, my heart bled for him. I had thought to bring him gladness, yet already the cloud which had darkened my life was overshadowing his.

“‘Do you mind, Philip?” I asked. And he answered sadly,—


“‘I will try not to mind, my dear. If I didn’t mind at all I should know I did not love you. But listen, Alice, I would sooner see you faithful than fickle, steadfast than untrue. You would not be what you are if it were possible for you to forget so soon.”

‘During the next few days the news of my engagement got whispered abroad, and while

the villagers were busily discussing it, I had leisure to think over the scene which I had helped to enact in the churchyard.

‘At first I tried to forget it, but could not. Wherever I went, whatever I did, the voice was always ringing in my ears, and the eyes of the strange old man seemed to be looking into mine. What did it mean? I could not tell, but whenever I thought of the man, and recalled the tones of his voice, a shudder went through me. I grew strangely nervous and ill at ease, until the strain became too great for me to bear, and my health gave way.

‘I was attacked by low fever, and for several weeks confined to the house. As soon as I got better again Philip constituted himself my medical attendant, and made me keep as much as possible in the open air. He was with me every day, and while



I was in his company my nervousness decreased. But the moment I was alone the memory of the past came back to me again.

‘ By this time I knew that the mad tenant of Plas Ruthven was strangely interested in me. I had watched his movements at first from idle curiosity, afterwards from amazement—and they were beginning to awaken in me a vague kind of alarm. I had seen him stand looking up at my bedroom window. I had seen him follow me while I was with Philip—and once I watched him pay a visit to Richard’s grave. His reported madness accounted to me for his eccentricities; his residence in Plas Ruthven seemed to account for his strange interest in me. I said to myself, “ He has heard my story; he goes to Richard’s grave because he pities him, and he thinks, alas, that I have forgotten! Yes, they all think that. I have

looked in their faces, and I know their thoughts as well as if they had uttered them aloud. No one pities me,—they think I am honoured, beloved, and happy; and yet, if God was merciful, He would let me quietly close my eyes and have eternal rest!” For I was beginning to feel so weary—and the presence in the village of that strange old man was awakening in me a fear which I could not overcome.

‘The day for my wedding had been fixed, though it was not known; I had named the end of July. I was sorry now that I had delayed it so long, for I began to think that until I got away from Tregelly I should never know any peace. Besides, I began to fear that if this strain upon my nerves continued, my health, which was fast getting undermined, would utterly give way. So I did, what at another time I should have shrunk

from doing,—I went to Philip and asked him if the marriage could not be hastened on. He was astonished at first; then he looked pleased, and eagerly granted my request. We fixed upon the first of May. I felt relieved, glad, almost happy—but suddenly the memory of the past flashed across my brain, and I turned again to Philip. He was regarding me with a strange wistful look. I held out my hands, he took them—he folded me in his arms—he kissed me as a father might kiss his poor, weak suffering child. I felt I could be silent no longer. I offered him his liberty; I held forth my hand to him, and said,—


“ Philip, if you wish it, take that ring from my finger—and all shall be as it was months ago !”

‘ He took my hand and held it lovingly between both his own; he placed me in a

chair by the fire ; raised my fingers to his lips, but he let the ring remain. I tried to speak again, but he bade me be silent.

“ You are not yourself to-day, Alice,” he said ; “ you are weak and ill and hysterical. We will talk about this in a few days, when you will have grown stronger.”

‘ He took me home ; but left me at the vicarage door. I did not ask him to come in, for I felt I was not fit company for any one that night. I found my father and sister in the dining-room, sitting down to tea. I took my place at the table, but I could neither eat nor drink. I saw them both watching me, and I grew nervous and irritable ; later on, when my father was preparing for evening prayers, I walked out of the room. My father seemed pained, Marion angry—I took no notice of either. I went up to my room, feeling my sorrow turn to bitterness, and




threw myself on my bed and tried to sleep. Presently a knock came to my door,—Marion had come to ask me to join as usual in our evening prayer. I refused. Why should I pray? To thank God for His past mercies? I had received none. To ask Him for happiness? I knew it would never come. I had been created but to suffer and endure. I could neither bring happiness to others, nor taste of it myself; and I could not even die! Then my bitterness passed away—for I thought of the man whom I had loved so fondly, and who I believed had left me a legacy of sorrow and shame. But I could not blame him; ah, no my heart would not do that! I said, “May God forgive him, as I do; and may he never know the sorrow which I have had to bear.”

‘At the end of three days I went again to Philip and offered him his liberty.

‘ “ Alice, do *you* wish it ? ” he said.

‘ I answered no, and I answered truly. To be freed from him meant to be alone in the world, wretched, deserted, unloved, with but few pleasant memories in the past, and no bright hopes for the future, a prey to morbid fancies—to have no real happiness while living and a sickening horror of death. No, I did not wish to be free, but I had suffered too keenly myself to wish to bring such sorrow and shame to the man who cared for me. But he would not accept his liberty ; our wedding-day remained fixed, and we both set to work to prepare for it. Continual occupation had a beneficial effect upon me. I was beginning to look brighter, to feel more peaceful, when the horrible shadow of the past again came upon me and struck me down.’





CHAPTER XVIII.

‘REMEMBER RICHARD GLAMORGAN!’

‘**W**E were all busy during the day, for there was a good deal to be done, but in the evening Philip came; all the work was put away and we gave ourselves up to enjoyment. One evening we anticipated more pleasure than usual. It was my father’s birth-day, and Marion had invited some friends to spend the evening with us. Philip came much earlier than usual, and he and I sat alone before the parlour fire talking over our future plans.

‘ Presently he turned, looked at me and smiled; he asked me to get up and stand before him that he might see me better. I did so; he smiled again, and said,—

“ I never saw you look prettier than you do to-night, Alice; that white dress becomes you, your cheeks are flushed, and you seem quite happy. Is all this for me, or is it to honour our new acquaintance to-night ?”

“ Our new acquaintance ?” I asked.
“ Who is that ?”

“ Don’t you know ?”

“ No.”

“ Why, your father has invited Mr Ravenscourt, the tenant of Plas Ruthven !”

‘ The tenant of Plas Ruthven ! In a moment all my happiness fled, my hands trembled, and I felt my face turn white as death. The very mention of the man’s name seemed to recall the past, and deprive

me of all peace in the present. As soon as I conveniently could, I ran up to my room to try and soothe my sadly irritated nerves. It was, I remember, a miserable night. The rain was falling, the wind was moaning, the sea was sighing, and the whole air seemed full of the voices of the dead. I pulled up the blind, opened the window and looked out. I let the wind and rain play upon my face, and I listened for a moment to the weary washing of the sea. I noticed that the roads were all deserted. I looked up and down again and again, but could see no one: the company were gathering below; in a few minutes more my absence must be noted, and I should be sought. I turned from the window with a sigh,—for I felt I would much rather be alone that night,—walked over to my dressing-table and looked at

my reflection in the glass. How pale my cheeks had grown, and what a strange, wild light had come into my eyes; startled at the change, terrified at myself, I was about to run down to the happy company below—when an event happened which deprived me of all power of action. Something flew in at the window and fell at my feet. It was a piece of paper attached to a stone. I lifted it, pulled open the paper, and with wild palpitating heart read these words:—

“REMEMBER RICHARD GLAMORGAN.”

What I did, how I felt, I don't know; I must have rushed out of the house, for the next thing I remember is walking up and down the rain-drenched road—with my thin white dress soaked and clinging to me—my eyes staring into the darkness, looking for I knew not what. Still the night was

cold and dark and dreary ; still it seemed to me that no one was abroad ; and yet some human hand must have cast the paper into the room. I called aloud ; no one answered me. I walked up and down the road ; all was still ; then, trembling and sick at heart, I sat down, shivering and drenched with rain. Presently Philip found me. He had seen too much of late to be greatly astonished, but I felt that he was pained and grieved. He asked me what was the matter ; I could not tell him ; he begged me to trust him, but I felt I could not speak to him of the terrible things which were making my life a hell. And although everything about me seemed so mysteriously dark, his love and faith in me remained unchanged. Cold, trembling, and wretched as I was, he took me back to the house, whispering words of comfort, and telling me my miseries

should cease when I had become his wife.

‘ For several weeks I was confined to the house, almost to my bed. My sister gave out that I had taken cold, and was suffering from fever. I knew it was low nervous debility, caused by the torture I was daily made to endure, but to no living soul did I whisper the truth. All day I lay upon the bed watching the turrets of Plas Ruthven, and listening to the murmur of the sea. Now more than ever my thoughts went back to the past ; now more than ever my miseries weighed upon me ; for although I had tried to steel my heart, I knew that I had failed. I had engaged myself to another man, because I wished to bring some happiness to my home ; and yet, despite myself, my heart still went out to the one who lay murdered in the cruel ocean. Ah



God, what I suffered! Night and day I tossed upon my bed crying to God for help, but no help came.

'I thought of that night, of the piece of paper which seemed to bring me a message from the grave. What did it mean? It was evident some one had undertaken the task of torturing me into my grave: who could it be? I could think of no one but old Owen Glendower who lived in Plas Ruthven. Yes, it must be he. The explanation satisfied me, and I resolved to think of the circumstance no more.

'Meanwhile, time wore on; my wedding-day crept nearer and nearer, but my miseries increased tenfold—whenever I closed my eyes I seemed to see Richard's face, sad and strange, with the eyes gazing reproachfully into mine; every sigh of the wind seemed to bring his voice to me from far

across the sea. . . . Oh, Richard, if you had but trusted me, and come to me! You must have known what I suffered, you must have felt how I loved you! But I was left alone with my sorrow, and I thought you had never cared for me.'

She bowed her head for a moment to wipe away the scalding tears, while he stroked her hair and kissed her hands, but never spoke a word. For a moment there was deep silence in the room; then Alice raised her head and continued her tale.

'At the end of a week or so I was able to come out again into the village. I was very much changed, and at first my appearance startled those who saw me, but their faces were very hard,—they had no pity for me.

'I had made up my mind what I must do. I knew that so long as I remained

in Tregelly I should get no peace. I resolved to ask another favour of the only man who had ever brought any happiness to me.

'I went to Mostyn Towers.

'I found Philip alone; and once more in shame and agony I threw myself at his feet. I said, "Philip, I have tried to forget, but I cannot; and this agony is killing me. Will you take me away from Tregelly on the day of our marriage, and never let me see the place again?"

'Pained and sorry as he must have felt, he never uttered a reproachful word. . . .

'Richard, what more have I to tell? You have heard everything, and now you know why my heart is broken.'





CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAST RECORD OF RICHARD GLAMORGAN.

‘**N**CE more in the silence of the night, with darkness and despair all round me, and in my heart a blacker despair than all, I try to compose my thoughts to finish the record of my life.

‘Is it real, or only a dream? Has the God, against whom I have so often blasphemed, been merciful to me, and shown me the thing I would make of myself,—the misery which I would bring upon the head of her whom I love so well? Shall I open my eyes one calm, summer morning, look

into the sweet, beautiful face of my love, and say, "Alice, my darling, fear not for the future,—the dark devil of distrust has been plucked from my soul; henceforth you shall be at peace!"

'Am I dead or living? Mad or sane? I feel my hands, and doubt my sense of touch; I walk over to the mirror and gaze abstractedly at the vision of my face. Yes, it is true, the miracle has come to pass,—the sea has given up its dead. . . .

. . . As Alice finished her story she drooped her gentle head, and laid it upon my breast. I folded my arms around her, but could not utter a word; presently I looked down, and saw that she had quietly fainted away.

'I lifted her gently in my arms, carried her across the room, and laid her on the


sofa. She was breathing gently, but her face was pale, her hands were as cold as clay.

‘I noticed now for the first time that her dress was damp, and that the air of the room was bitterly cold ; I took off my coat and wrapped it about her, turned up the lamp which was growing dim for want of oil, and tried to kindle up the fast-dying fire ; then I returned to Alice.

‘She was still cold and senseless, but breathing easily. I put some wine to her lips, I chafed her hands, I kissed her pale thin cheek ; then I sat down beside her, and began to wonder what I must do.

‘Up to this I had not been able to think ; now my excitement was passing away, my brain growing clear, I could begin to look with some calmness on the future.

‘What should I do ? Save her ? There




was yet time. I still might restore her to the home from which I snatched her. . . . I still might say to her husband, "Take her; she is good, pure, and true; your love has been more merciful far than mine, therefore you deserve the greater happiness. I cannot undo the past, but, with God's help, I will redeem the future. Henceforth I will be to her as one who lies rotting in the sea!"

'That was clearly the course to take, but had I the strength, the power, the will? . . .

'I turned to Alice. She still lay motionless where I had placed her. The fire had burnt up a bit, and the air of the room seemed warmer, but my darling was cold as death. I knelt beside her, wet her lips with more wine, and took her thin white hand in mine. Then my thoughts went back to the hour when, for the first time, she

had opened her eyes in this room, and looked into my face and knew me. I remembered how, with flushed cheek and outstretched arms, she had leapt from her couch—how she had clasped her arms about my neck and kissed me, murmuring my name—and for a moment my resolution failed. But, thank God, it was only for a moment. I bent above her; then I turned away, and left Plas Ruthven.

‘It was a dark, dreary night, with a thin rain falling, and a cold wind blowing in from the sea. The sky was black overhead, there was neither moon nor stars. I could see nothing; instinct alone guided my footsteps across the marshes to Mostyn Towers. I staggered along like a drunken man. . . . Presently a light, glimmering like a star in the distance, told me I was nearing Philip Kingston’s house.



‘I paused ; I had overtaxed my strength ; again my resolution was failing me. I thought, “When I lose my darling, what will life be to me ?—a dreary blank, with no pleasant memories to dwell upon, no hope for the future ; I must return, as it were, into the very shadow of the grave, and become like the restless ghosts of Plas Ruthven, living, yet dead, to all men, and beloved by one soul in all the world !” . . . Once more my good angel conquered ; it whispered, “Hitherto you have sinned through love ; let that love, which has tortured her so cruelly be her salvation and yours.” I raised my tortured face to the blackened sky, and answered clearly, “I will !”

‘The rain was still falling, the wind still blowing bitterly, but regardless of either I resolutely rose and journeyed onward. . . .

‘I passed through the gates, up the avenue, and reached the house.

‘Here all was still as death; the inmates must have retired to rest; but the light which had guided my footsteps across the marshes still shone brightly. I walked up to the window; it was uncurtained; I looked in. The room was brilliantly lit; beside a glowing fire sat a man whom I recognised as Philip Kingston. I paused, wondering what I must do. To knock at the door and boldly ask admission would cause a commotion which must wake the whole household.

‘I wanted to attract the attention of this man alone. I moved quietly from the window and looked around. I stood upon a broad gravel walk which ran round the house. Once more I approached the window; I lifted the sash. He started,

seized a revolver which lay on the chimney-piece, and pointed it at me.

“Who’s there?” he cried.

“Don’t fire, don’t alarm the house; if you come quietly with me I will give you YOUR WIFE.”

‘He sprang through the window, he stood within a yard of me, staring through the darkness, but his eyes were blinded by the brilliant light of the room, and he could see nothing.

“Who are you, what do you mean? For God’s sake, where is Alice?”

‘I walked quietly up to him, laid my hand upon his shoulder, and said, “Mr Kingston, I am Richard Glamorgan.”

‘He recoiled as if a serpent had stung him. Before he could speak again, I continued,—

“You think I am a ghost or a raving

madman. I am neither. It was a whim of mine to let people think me dead, but I rose from the grave several months ago. I came to Tregelly to claim my bride, and I thought I found her false. She gave herself to you, but I believed she belonged to me. I stole her from you on your wedding-day; but I will give her back to-night."

'I paused; he had deprived me of the power of speech; his hand was on my throat, the muzzle of his pistol at my head. In a hoarse voice he whispered,—

"Villain! tell me where she is, or I fire."

'I pulled his hand from my throat and knocked aside the pistol so roughly that its contents were discharged in the air. There was a flash, a loud report, then dead silence. I was the first to speak.

"Mr Kingston," I said, "hear me first,

shoot me after if you will; you will but do me a service. But let me speak. Before I give you your wife answer me;—are you willing to believe me when I tell you she is as good and as pure as she was the day you married her?”

“Yes, yes!” he murmured fervently, then he added quickly, “Where is she? For pity’s sake tell me,—take me to her.”

‘I took him by the arm and I led him back to Plas Ruthven.

‘We passed together through the woods, and entered the house. I unlocked the door of my study and showed him his wife.

‘Yes, there she lay, pale and senseless still. Even when he bent above her, kissed her, and named her name, she did not stir. He lifted her from the couch, he folded her in his arms, and with a weary sigh she murmured—*my* name. . . .

Heart sick, soul sick, I turned away, as my darling was borne from the room !

‘ How slowly the hours pass on ! I sit in my room and await the morrow, wondering in a strange bewildered way what the morrow may bring forth ?

‘ The day has come and gone : still I sit alone and unmolested in Plas Ruthven. The story of my resurrection has spread abroad, and the excitement in the village has been considerable. The people seemed horrified,—then disgusted. They had little pity for Richard Glamorgan when dead : now that he has arisen they have none : they stare with wild, frightened eyes at the gloomy turrets of Plas Ruthven,—but their eyes fill with tears as they look towards Mostyn Towers ; for there, stricken as

with the hand of death, lies the dead man's bride.

‘ All day I have not crossed the threshold, but Glendower, creeping sinuously through the village, has gleaned the news. He came home with his face cut and bleeding ; they guessed what work he had been doing, and set upon him like wild dogs, and drove him home. Yet here I sit unmolested. They know the Glamorgan temper better than to meddle with *me* !

‘ Three days have passed ; there is little for me to tell. Alice still lies at Mostyn Towers, sick almost unto death ; her father and sister are with her, and the vicarage is closed. No one has troubled me ; but the villagers, having overcome their superstitious terror, have passed quietly through the woods and gazed in wonder at Plas Ruthven.

Even now they can hardly believe that the dead have risen.

‘ They say my Alice is dying! Yes, murdered by this hand of mine! Oh, my love, my love! to be so near and yet so far, that I may not even look upon your face.

‘ Little work has been done in the village to-day, for the villagers have gathered in groups, talked in whispers, and gazed with tear-dimmed eyes at the house where the poor girl lies.

‘ When the news of Alice’s state first reached me, love overcame reason,—I left the house, determined to see her. It was the first time I had walked abroad without my disguise, and people stared at me and shrank from me as if I were a spirit newly arisen from the grave. But I took no heed,

—my thoughts were only of my darling. Should I see her? God alone could tell,—they had every reason to turn me from their door. I had an ordeal before me, but I meant to brave it for Alice's sake.

‘ I walked straight to Mostyn Towers.’





CHAPTER XX.

IN TREMAINE'S OFFICE.

HAVING reached the house I paused, trembling and cold, for it seemed to me that the chilly shade of death had already crossed the threshold. Most of the blinds were drawn, and there was no sign of any living soul. I approached quietly, and with trembling hands rang the bell. The door was opened immediately by a pale-looking girl, who regarded me with evident fear and repugnance, and shrank back at my approach. I asked for Mr Kingston, and was shown at once into a

room where he sat. He rose at my entrance, and a look, first of amazement, then of anger, filled his eyes,

““ Mr Glamorgan,” he said, “ why are you here ?”

““ I have come to see Alice before she dies.”

‘ He turned away with a shudder.

““ You have a right,” I continued, “ to turn me ignominiously from your door ; everybody would say you had done well, and in my heart I could not blame you. But think of my sacrifice. After the battle was won I laid my treasure at your feet ; and all I ask in return is to look upon her once more. . . . Mr Kingston, as you hope for mercy hereafter, grant me this one request.”

““ I suppose,” he answered sternly, “ you know that you have killed her ? That ought to content you, without wishing to look upon your work.”

‘ “ You refuse to let me see her ? ”

‘ “ I do. Her father and sister are by her bedside ; therefore in that room there is no place for you ! ”

‘ I turned away, and without another word would have left the room. I suppose something in my face struck him. When I reached the door I felt his hand upon my shoulder.

‘ “ Stop,” he whispered ; “ I will speak to her father. He shall judge you ; I will not.”

‘ He passed out of the room, and I was left alone. In a few minutes he returned and told me it was Mr Chepstow’s wish that I should see his child.

‘ I followed him out of the room, along the passage, up a flight of stairs. I paused before an open door. Mr Chepstow and Marion had left the room, but a servant

girl lingered there, and on the bed I saw my darling. Pale as death, with her hair scattered like golden rain upon her pillow, her breath coming in short, quick pants, and her eyes wandering restlessly about the room. I approached the bedside; I bent above her and whispered her name, and it seemed to me that my darling knew me. For she stretched forth her trembling hands, held her sweet face up to mine, and murmured,—

“There is his voice again; I knew I should hear it, though I have waited so long. I dreamed last night that I saw him. . . . He told me he had always loved me.” Then with a cry which rent my heart, she fell back upon her pillow murmuring, “He never loved me. He went away because he never loved me! but God must forgive him now, as I do!”

‘How long I stood beside her I don’t know. A hand was laid upon my shoulder ; I was led from the room, shown out of the house, and when I fully recovered my senses I stood alone on the marshes, with my face turned towards Plas Ruthven.

‘I have heard good news to-day ; the ecstasy has run through my veins like fiery wine. This morning I paid another visit to Mostyn Towers, and learned that my darling was better. Last night the fever turned ; she lies in an exhausted sleep, but the doctor gives hope of her recovery. They refused to let me see her, and asked me never to come to the house again. All last night, all to-day, the words which, in her delirium, Alice uttered, have been ringing in my ears. Now that she is better I will leave Tregelly for a while and go to

London to have my last interview with Tremaine.

‘It is over. I have seen Tremaine ; I have seen Dorcas. At an early hour this morning I presented myself at Bloomsbury Square.

‘The house looked dirtier and more gloomy than ever, or I was in a mood to think it so. Again I was ushered through gloomy grandeur, along gloomy passages, into a gloomy room. I had been seated there five minutes, when Dorcas came in. She looked much paler than usual, much older, very haggard and worn. I was struck by the change in her, and thought she must have discovered her father’s diabolical plot ; but a few words undeceived me. Dorcas was ignorant, therefore was she innocent, and though I knew that she had been the main cause of all

the trouble, I could not blame her. She had heard of my wild work in Tregelly, but she did not seem eager to discuss it, and I was in no mood. Hearing that Tremaine was to be found at his office, I rose to take my leave. She offered her hand; I took it. She said her "good-bye" in a cold, clear voice, then calmly turned away.

' My mind was too full of other things to think much about Dorcas. As soon as I was clear of the house I hailed a hansom, and drove to Chancery Lane. After some little difficulty I got admittance to the lawyer's room. He was seated at his table with his feet, as usual, well wrapped up in rugs. His keen eyes searched me from head to foot; he stretched forth his long thin hand, but he made no attempt to move. I overlooked his hand, drew up a chair and sat down before him.

“ Well,” he said, “ what are you here for to-day ? ”

“ I want your help.”

“ Of course you do ; it is only when you need help I have the pleasure of seeing you, but let me tell you, my friend, you come this time in vain. If you have proved yourself a greater madman than you pretended to be, and are sent to gaol for your pains, it's no affair of mine.”

“ You know what I've done ? ”

“ Of course I do ; who doesn't know it ? Isn't the story of the poor girl's shame on the tip of everybody's tongue ? ”

‘ I rose from my seat and griped him roughly by the collar.’

“ Never mind the story of her shame,” I said ; “ you are mostly concerned with the story which led to it.”

‘ His little, cruel eyes glistened fiercely as

they fixed themselves upon me; he half shrank away.

‘“What do you mean?” he said.

‘“This: you have made my jealousy a cloak for your devilry; you have struck through my hand at the life of a helpless girl, and so compassed her destruction. Yes, you have done your work well. Now I mean to hear from your own lips whether or not you had any foundation for the story you told Miss Chepstow.”

‘With a mighty effort he shook himself free of my grasp and pulled violently at the bell.

‘“Leave my office,” he shrieked, “or I’ll have you turned out and summoned for assault.”

‘I smiled and shrugged my shoulders; I knew I had might as well as right on my side.

‘“Do your worst,” I said, “and I’ll do mine. Do what I ask and I’ll never expose

you ; refuse me, and as sure as there is a God above us I strangle you where you stand. . . . Summon assistance ; give me up ! I tell you I am ready to die for you !”

‘ I paused, for a clerk, in answer to the violent summons, entered the room. Tremaine, white with passion, stared at me, stared at him, hesitated, and finally dismissed him. When he was gone I resumed my seat, and Tremaine returned to the table.

“ So,” he said with a sneer, “ you will strangle me, will you ? You will tell the world the part I have played. Now I wonder who would believe the word of a man who, for the last six months or more, has given himself out as a madman, and who has really been mad enough to do what you have done ?”

“ If they doubted my word, they would

believe Miss Alice Chepstow. Your daughter would believe *me!*”

‘I saw I had struck the right chord at last; his hand trembled, his face went white as death.

“What do you want me to do?”

“First tell me, whether you had the slightest foundation for the story you told?”

‘Tremaine hesitated; then he seemed to remember that we were alone, and that an admission made without witnesses was the same as no admission at all. So he said,—

“I had no foundation. I did it to hurry on her marriage, which I thought would cure you of your infatuation, and make a sane man of you again. And now that you are satisfied, go.”

‘He pointed to the door, but I made no attempt to move. I had been satisfied before

fore ; what I wanted was a proof to satisfy my darling. So I spoke.

“ Put what you have said to me on paper ; hand the paper to me, and I promise to leave you in peace.”

‘ He stared, gasped as if for breath, and clenched his hand.

“ Leave my office !” he cried, but I made no attempt to move.

“ When you have given me that paper I will ; not before.”

‘ He rose, paced excitedly up and down the room. He reached forth his hand towards the bell ; but this time he did not pull it, he opened a cupboard and helped himself to some brandy. Then he turned again to me.


“ What do you want the paper for ?” he asked.

“ To show to Miss Chepstow.”

“ Damn her !”

“Tremaine,” I said, “when Alice first told me of the part you had played, I cursed you from the bottom of my heart. Since then I have learned to be more merciful. You have destroyed me, because you have destroyed the one woman who is all the world to me; but I suppose you did it for Dorcas’ sake. . . . Alice is dying; let me clear myself to her before she goes, and I’ll try to forget and forgive. . . . I saw Dorcas this morning. I soon found that she knew nothing of this story, for her faith in you and her love for you was what it had always been. I said to myself, while I looked in her eyes, ‘If he shows mercy, mercy shall be shown to him, for she shall never know.’”

‘I paused, but he said nothing. He had returned to his seat by the table, and had dropped his head upon his hands. Presently



he moved, drew a paper towards him, wrote hastily on it, and handed it to me. It was the recantation which I sought.

'I looked at him ; he pointed to the door. Without another word I left him.'





CHAPTER XXI.

PASSING AWAY.

LEAVING Tremaine I came straight back to Plas Ruthven. I had determined, come what might, to see Alice once again. I found that she had left Mostyn Towers and lay at the vicarage; the cause of this change was a mystery to me, which no one seemed able to interpret.

‘This morning I left Plas Ruthven and walked up to the vicarage.

‘I had the paper in my pocket, and as I went I made a vow to myself that when

once her eyes had rested on that document, when once she was convinced of the real truth, I would leave England and never again seek to behold my darling's face.

'I reached the vicarage, rang the bell, and was admitted by the girl who, in the old days, used to welcome me with such a bright smile. But now her face was grave and pale; she shrank a little from me, as everybody seems to do now, and when I asked for Alice, answered in strange hesitation. She did not know if I could see her; she would ask Miss Chepstow. So she tripped away and left me in the hall.

'Presently she returned with the message, "Miss Alice was better, but could not be disturbed!"

'They seem determined to keep me from

my love. I have called four times at the vicarage, always with the same result.

‘The girl does not go for her message now : she has it ready, “Miss Alice can see no one.”

‘What shall I do, what must I do?—I have written Marion an appealing letter, which lies open before me. Shall I send it?—and if I do, will it bring to me a first, last sight, of my darling?

‘I have seen her ; yes, once again I have seen her. I thank thee, my God !

‘This morning, as I sat with the letter which I had written to Marion still lying before me, Glendower came to me, bringing a note which had been sent down from the vicarage. I opened it, and read as follows :—

‘“MR GLAMORGAN,—My sister has asked

for you three times, therefore, since it is her own ardent wish, and since a refusal might have sad results, I have determined to let her see you, if you will come here.

“MARION CHEPSTOW.”

‘I crushed the letter in my hand, and two minutes later was walking with long strides towards the vicarage.

‘Scarcely had my hand touched the bell when the door was opened. Without a word the girl admitted me, led me along the well-known passage, and after a gentle tap opened the dining-room door. I paused with beating heart and stifled breath, and fixed my eyes upon—Alice.

‘She was wrapped in shawls and furs, and she lay upon a sofa which was drawn up to the windows. Her eyes were not wild and wandering as they had been before,

but full of recognition ; and yet, ah God ! I knew that death was extending towards her his cruel, pitiless arms.

‘When the door opened she turned her head, uttered a cry of joy, and held out both her hands. What I did, God knows ; when I recovered my senses, as it were, I found that I was kneeling by the sofa holding my darling in my arms. Her hair fell in a golden shower upon my shoulder, her hand clasped my neck, and her sweet face, now bathed in tears, was held up to mine.

“So you have really come ; it is no vision, it is all true !” she said. “I began to think I had been dreaming, for I lay here day after day, looking at the hills and the sea, listening for your footstep and you never came.”

‘I kissed her sweet face, and laid her



back upon her pillows, but I still held her hands in mine.

“Alice,” I said, “I have no right to come to you now, my darling—for on that night when I gave you back to your husband, I knew that if I followed the right course I should never see you again. I intended to leave Plas Ruthven—you fell ill, and I could not leave. I called at Mostyn Towers, they let me see you; and some words of yours, uttered in your delirium, told me my work was not yet done My love, my little love,” I murmured, stroking her golden hair, “I have been pitiless, cruel, unjust, but as God is my judge, I was always true to you!”

‘I took from my pocket the paper which Tremaine had given me and handed it to her; she read it quietly, and as she did so

her cheek grew paler and paler. Then she refolded it and handed it back to me, murmuring, as she did so,—

“May God forgive him! may God forgive you both.”

‘She put her hands in mine, and laid her fair head on my shoulder.

“After all,” she murmured, “God has been just. If I have suffered, He gives me my reward. They are all so good and kind to me . . . and you have come back . . .”

‘She lay for a time peacefully in my arms, then the door opened and Marion entered. She took a seat beside Alice, and intimated to me that our interview had better close.

“But you must come again to-morrow,” said Alice, and with those words ringing in my ear I departed.

‘Every day I go to the vicarage; every

day I sit for hours holding my darling in my arms, for it is only while lying so that she seems at rest.

‘ But every day I notice her cheek looks paler and thinner, her eyes less lustrous. My love is passing away.

‘ I noticed one day that she wore no wedding ring, and asked her about it.

‘ She smiled.

“ Philip took it off,” she said, “ the day I told him I still loved *you*. Ah, he has been very good to me. I used sometimes to wish that I could love him, but God willed it otherwise, you see. . . .”

‘ Alice is dying,—yes while the summer is coming on, while all things are brightening and quickening into life, my love is fading away. I have watched her day by day, hour after hour. I have seen death creep

nearer and nearer, till at last his blighting breath has touched her cheek.

‘Yet but now, with her dear eyes growing dim, and her senses fading, she grasped my hand and murmured,—

“Dear Richard, it is better so. I am happy, quite happy, for I know you will always love me, and you will come to me some day . . . and you will never doubt again! . . .”’





CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST WORDS OF RICHARD GLAMORGAN.

IT is a warm midsummer night, the heavens are brightly illuminated with both moon and stars.

‘While the clock in the church steeple chimed twelve, I stood in the graveyard over yonder, gazing upon a small white marble cross, and repeating the words which I knew to be written thereon :

A L I C E,

WHO FELL QUIETLY TO SLEEP

ON THE 31ST OF JUNE 188—,

IN THE 20TH YEAR OF HER AGE.

VOL. III.

T

‘I kissed the cold white stone, for none could see. I murmured the name of my love, for none could hear. Then weary and heart-broken I descended the hill, and crept again into the dreary shadow of Plas Ruthven.’

THE END.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

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THE PRIEST'S BLESSING,

OR,

'POOR PATRICK'S PILGRIMAGE FROM
THIS WORLD TO A BETTER.'

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'Miss Jay's *nouvelle*, which has some strong and stirring qualities, seems to show that in some parts at least of Ireland the people are now just as much their own enemies in the face of all attempts at improving their condition as they were in the days when Miss Edgeworth wrote her fascinating story *Ennui*. Miss Jay's story is, however, of a far darker cast than the one just referred to. As to the prevalence of the state of mind, or no mind, and its terrible results, which she depicts with an incisive pen, there can, unhappily, be no doubt, and the author writes with an air of knowledge and experience which makes it difficult to cast doubt upon her explanation of things which are suggestive enough in cut-and-dried newspaper reports, but of which her treatment may impress some people whose attention would otherwise be unmoved. It is not to be thought that Miss Jay would have us believe that all Roman Catholic priests resemble the infamous, yet genial and popular, Father Malloy of her story; but there is too much reason to suppose that he is not inaccurately drawn from a type which is not exceptional. The grim and tragic tone of the little book is artfully relieved wherever it is possible; and we can say for ourselves that we have read its three hundred pages with unfailing interest.'—*Saturday Review*.

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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

the gallows by their villainous machination. The incidents are evolved with great dramatic skill and vigour ; and, as a revelation of the actual condition of Ireland, it is worth a cartload of the political pamphlets and speeches on that subject which we have been so liberally supplied of late.'—*North British Mail*.

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