THE VICAR'S GOVERNESS.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow."—Hamlet.

"One, that was a woman, sir."—Hamlet.

Across the autumn grass, that has browned beneath the scorching summer rays, and through the fitful sunshine, comes James Scrope.

Through the woods, under the dying beechtrees that lead to Gowran, he saunters slowly, thinking only of the girl beyond, who is not thinking of him at all, but of the man who, in his soul, Sir James believes utterly unworthy of her.

This thought so engrossed him, as he walks along, that he fails to hear Mrs. Branscombe, until she is close beside him, and until she says; gently,—

"How d'ye do, Sir James?" At this his start is so visible that she laughs, and says, with a faint blush,—

"What! is my coming so light that one fails to hear it?"

To which he, recovering himself, makes ready response:

"So light a foot
Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint."

Then, "You are coming from Gowran?"

"Yes; from Clarissa."

"She is well?"

"Yes, and I suppose, happy,"—with a shrug. "She expects Horace to-morrow." There is certain scorn in her manner, that attracts his notice.

"Is that sufficient to create happiness?" he says, somewhat bitterly, in spite of himself. "But of course it is. You know Horace?"

"Not well, but well enough," says Mrs. Branscombe, with a frown. "I know him well enough to hate him."

She pauses, rather ashamed of herself for her impulsive confidence, and not at all aware that by this hasty speech she has made a friend of Sir James for life.

"Hate him?" he says, feeling he could willingly embrace her on the spot were society differently constituted. "Why, what has he done to you?"

"Nothing; but he is not good enough for Clarissa," protests she, energetically." But then who is good enough? I really think," says Mrs. Branscombe, with earnest conviction, "she is far too sweet to be thrown away upon any man."

Even this awful speech fails to cool Sir James's admiration for the speeker. She has declared herself a non admirer of the all-powerful Horace, and this goes so far a way with him that he cannot bring himself to find fault with her on any score.

"I don't know why I express my likes and dislikes to you so openly," she says, gravely, a little later on; "and I don't know either, why I distrust Horace. I have only a woman's reason. It is Shakespeare slightly altered: 'I hate him so, because I hate him so.' And I hope with all my heart, Clarissa will never marry him."

Then she blushes again at her openness, and gives him her hand, and bids him good-by, and presently he goes on his way once more to Gowran.

On the balcony there stands Clarissa, the solemn Bill close beside her. She is leaning on the parapet, with her pretty white hands crossed and hanging loosely over it. As she sees him coming, with a little touch of coquetry, common to most women, she draws her broad-brimmed hat from her head, and letting it fall upon the balcony, lets the uncertain sunlight touch warmly her fair brown hair and tender exquisite face.

Bill, sniffing, lifts himself, and, seeing Sir James, shakes his shaggy sides, and, with his heavy head still drooping, and his most hangdog expression carefully put on, goes cautiously down the stone steps to greet him.

Having been patted, and made much of, and having shown a scornful disregard for all such friendly attentions, he trots behind Sir James at the slow funeral pace he usually affects, until Clarissa is reached.

"Better than my ordinary luck to find you here," says Sir James, who is in high good humor. "Generally you are miles away when I get to Gowran. And —forgive me—how exceedingly charming you are looking this morning!"

Miss Peyton is clearly not above praise. She laughs,—a delicious rippling little laugh,—and colors faintly.

"A compliment from you!"she says. "No wonder I blush. Am I really lovely, Jim, or only commonly pretty? I should hate to be commonly pretty." She lifts her brows disdainfully.

"You needn't hate yourself," says Scrope, calmly. "Lovely is the word for you."

"I'm rather glad," says Miss Peyton, with a sigh of relief. "If only for—Horace's sake!"

Sir James pitches his cigar over the balcony, and frowns. Always Horace! Can she not forget him for even one moment?

"What brought you?" asks she, presently.

"What a gracious speech!"—with a rather short laugh. "To see you, I fancy. By the bye, I met Mrs. Branscombe on my way here. She didn't look particularly happy."

"No." Clarissa's eyes grow sad. "After all, that marriage was a terrible mistake, and it seemed such a satisfactory one. Do you know," in a half-frightened tone, "I begin to think they hate each other?"

"They don't seem to hit it off very well, certainly," says Sir James, moodily. "But I believe there is something more on Branscombe's mind than his domestic worries: I am afraid he is getting into trouble over the farm, and that, and nothing hits a man like want of money. That Sawyer is a very slippery fellow, in my opinion: and of late Dorian has neglected everything and taken no interest in his land, and, in fact, lets everything go without question."

"I have no patience with Georgie," says Clarissa, indignantly. "She is positively breaking his heart."

"She is unhappy, poor little thing," says Scrope, who cannot find it in his heart to condemn the woman who has just condemned Horace Branscombe.

"It is her own fault if she is. I know few people so lovable as Dorian. And now to think he has another trouble makes me wretched. I do hope you are wrong about Sawyer."

"I don't think I am," says Scrope; and time justifies his doubt of Dorian's steward.

* * * *

Sartoris,
Tuesday, four o'clock.

"Dear Scrope,—

Come up to me at once, if possible. Everything here is in a deplorable state. You have heard, of course, that Sawyer bolted last night; but perhaps you have not heard that he has left things in a ruinous state. I must see you with as little delay as you can manage. Come straight to the library, where you will find me alone.

Yours ever,
D. B."

Sir James, who is sitting in his sister's room, starts to his feet on reading this letter.

"Patience, I must go at once to Sartoris," he says, looking pale and distressed.

"To see that mad boy?"

"To see Dorian Branscombe."

"That is quite the same thing. You don't call him sane, do you? To marry that chit of a girl without a grain of common sense in her silly head, just because her eyes were blue and her hair yellow, forsooth. And then to go and get mixed up with that Annersley affair——"

"My dear Patience."

"Well, why not? Why should I not talk? One must use one's tongue, if one isn't a dummy. And then there is that man Sawyer, he could get no one out of the whole country but a creature who——"

"Hush!" says Sir James, hastily and unwisely. "Better be silent on that subject." Involuntarily he lays his hand upon the letter just received.

"Ha!" says Miss Scrope, triumphantly, with astonishing sharpness. "So I was right, was I? So that pitiful being has been exposed to the light of day, has he? I always said how it would be: I knew it!—ever since last spring, when I sent to him for some cucumber-plants, and he sent me instead (with willful intent to insult me) two vile gourds. I always knew how it would end."

"Well, and how has it ended?" says Sir James, with a weak effort to retrieve his position, putting on a small air of defiance.

"Don't think to deceive me," says Miss Scrope, in a terrible tone; whereupon Sir James flies the apartment, feeling in his heart that in a war of words Miss Scrope's match is yet to be found.

Entering the library at Sartoris, he finds Dorian there, alone, indeed, and comfortless, and sore at heart.

It is a dark dull day. The first breath of winter is in the air. The clouds are thick and sullen, and are lying low, as if they would willingly come down to sit upon the earth and and there rest themselves,—so weary they seem, and so full of heavlness.

Above them a wintry sun is trying vainly to recover its ill temper. Every now and then a small brown bird, flying hurriedly past the windows, is almost blown against them by the strong and angry blast.

Within, a fire is burning, and the curtains are half drawn across the windows and the glass door, that leads, by steps, down into the garden. No lamps are lit, and the light is somber and severe.

"You have come," says Dorian, advancing eagerly to meet him. "I knew I could depend upon you, but it is more than good of you to be here so soon. I have been moping a good deal, I am afraid, and forgot all about the lamps. Shall I ring for some one now to light them?"

"No; this light is what I prefer," says Scrope, laying his hand upon his arm. "Stir up the fire, if you like."

"Even that I had not given one thought to," says Branscombe, drearily. Sitting here all alone, I gave myself up a prey to evil thoughts."

The word "alone" touched Sir James inexpressibly. Where was his wife all the time, that she never came to comfort and support him in his hour of need?

"Is everything as bad as you say?" he saks, presently, in a subdued tone.

"Quite as bad; neither worse nor better. There are no gradations about utter ruin. You heard about Sawyer, of course? Harden has been with me all last night and to-day, and between us we have been able to make out that he has muddled away almost all the property,—which, you know, is small. As yet we hardly know how we stand. But there is one claim of fifteen thousand pounds that must be paid without delay, and I have not one penny to meet it, so am literally driven to the wall.

"You speak as if——"

"No, I am speaking quite rationally. I know what you would say; but if I was starving I would not accept one shilling from Lord Sartoris. That would be impossible. You can understand why, without my going into that infamous scandal. I suppose I can tell Sartoris, and pay my—that is, Sawyer's—debts; but that will leave me a beggar." Then, in a low tone, "I should hardly care, but for her. That is almost more than I can bear."

"You say this debt of fifteen thousand pounds is the one that presses hardest?"

"Yes. But for that, I might, by going in for strict economy, manage to retrieve my present position in a year or two."

"I wish you would explain more fully," says Sir James; whereupon Dorian enters into an elaborate explanation that leaves all things clear.

"It seems absurd," says Scrope, impatiently, "that you, the heir to an earldom and unlimited wealth, should be made so uncomfortable for the sake of a paltry fifteen thousand pounds."

"I hardly think my wealth unlimited," says Branscombe; "there is a good deal of property not entailed, and the ready money is at my uncle's own disposal. You know, perhaps, that he has altered his will in favor of Horace, —has, in fact, left him everything that it is possible to leave."

"This is all new to me," says Sir James, indignantly. "If it is true, it is the most iniquitous thing I ever heard in my life."

"It is true," says Branscombe, slowly. "Altogether, in many ways, I have been a good deal wronged; and the money part of it has not hurt me the most."

"If seven thousand pounds would be of any use to you," says Scrope, gently, delicately, "I have it lying idle. It will, indeed, be a great convenience if you will take it at a reasonable——"

"That is rather unkind of you," says Dorian, interrupting him hastily. "Don't say another word on the subject. I shall sink or swim without aid from my friends,—aid, I mean, of that sort. In other ways you can help me. Harden will, of course, see to the estate; but there are other, more private matters, that I would intrust to you alone. Am I asking too much?"

"Don't be unkind in your own turn," says Scrope, with tears in his eyes.

"Thank you," says Dorian, simply. His heart seems quite broken.

"What of your wife?" asks Sir James, with some hesitation. "Does she know?"

"I think not. Why should she be troubled before her time? It will come fast enough. She made a bad match, after all, poor child! But there is one thing I must tell you, and it is the small drop of comfort in my cup. About a month ago, Lord Sartoris settled upon her twenty thousand pounds, and that will keep her at least free from care. When I am gone, I want you to see her, and let me know, from time to time, that she is happy and well cared for."

"But will she consent to this separation from you, that may last for years?"

"Consent!" says Dorian, bitterly. "That is not the word. She will be glad, indeed, at this chance that has arisen to put space between us. I believe from my heart that——"

"What is it you believe?" says a plaintive voice, breaking in upon Dorian's speech with curious energy. The door leading into the garden is wide open; and now the curtain is thrust aside, and a fragile figure, gowned in some black filmy stuff, stands before them. Both men start as she advances in the uncertain light. Her face is deadly pale; her eyes are large, and almost black, as she turns them questioningly upon Sir James Scrope. It is impossible for either man to know what she may, or may not have heard.

"I was in the garden," she says, in an agitated tone, "and I heard voices; and something about money; and Dorian's going away; and——" (she puts her hand up to her throat) "and about ruin. I could not understand; but you will tell me. You must."

"Tell her, Dorian," says Sir James. But Dorian looks doggedly away from her, through the open window, into the darkening garden beyond.

"Tell me, Dorian," she says, nervously, going up to him, and laying a small white trembling hand upon his arm.

"There is no reason why you should be distressed," says Branscombe, very coldly, lifting her hand from his arm, as though her very touch is displeasing to him. "You are quite safe. Sawyer's mismanagement of the estate has brought me to the verge of ruin; but Lord Sartoris has taken care that you will not suffer."

She is trembling violently.

"And you?" she says.

"I shall go abroad until things look brighter." Then he turns to her for the first time, and, taking her hands, presses them passionately. "I can hardly expect forgiveness from you," he says: "you had, at least, a right to expect position when you made your unhappy marriage, and now you have nothing."

I think she hardly hears his cruel speech. Her thoughts still cling to the word that has gone before.

"Abroad?" she says, with quivering lips.

"Only for a time,'" says Sir James, taking pity upon her evident distress. "Does he owe a great deal?" asks she, feverishly. "Is it a very large sum? Tell me how much it is."

Scrope, who is feeling very sorry for her, explains matters, while Dorian maintains a determined silence.

"Fifteen thousand pounds, if procured at once, would tide him over his difficulties," says Sir James, who does her justice to divine her thoughts correctly. "Time is all he requires."

"I have twenty thousand pounds," says Georgie, eagerly. "Lord Sartoris says I may do what I like with it. Dorian,"—going up to him again,—"take it—do, do. You will make me happier than I have been for a long time if you will accept it."

A curious expression lights Dorian's face. It is half surprise, half contempt; yet, after all, pernaps there is some genuine gladness in it.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently," he says, in a low tone. "Your offer is more than kind: it is generous. But I cannot accept it. It is impossible I should receive anything at your hands."

"Why?" she says, her lips white, her eyes large and earnest.

"Does that question require an answer?" asks Dorian, slowly. "There was a time, even in our short married life, when I believed in your friendship for me, and when I would have taken anything from you,—from my wife; but now I tell you again, it is impossible. You yourself have put it out of my power."

He turns from her coldly, and concentrates his gaze once more upon the twilit garden.

"Don t speak to me like that,—at least now," says Georgie, her breath coming in short quick gasps. "It hurts me so! Take this wretched money, if—if you still have any love for me."

He turns deliberately away from the small pleading face.

"And leave you penniless," he says.

"No, not that. Some day you can pay me back, if you wish it. All these months you have given me every thing I could possibly desire, let me now make you some small return."

Unfortunately this speech angers him deeply.

"We are wasting time," he says, quickly. "Understand, once for all, I will receive nothing from you."

"James," says Mrs. Branscombe, impulsively, going up to Scrope and taking his hand. She is white and nervous, and, in her agitation, is hardly aware that, for the first time, she has called him by his Christian name. "Persuade him. Tell him he should accept this money. Dear James, speak for me: I am nothing to him."

For the second time Branscombe turns and looks at her long and earnestly.

"I must say I think your wife quite right," says Scrope, energetically. "She wants you to take this money, your not taking it distresses her very much, and you have no right in the world to marry a woman and then make her unhappy." This is faintly quixotic, considering all the circumstances, but nobody says anything. "You ought to save Sartoris from the hammer no matter at what price,—pride or anything else. It isn't a fair thing, you know, Branscombe, to lift the roof from off her head for a silly prejudice."

When he has finished this speech, Sir James feels that he has been unpardonably pertinent.

(To Be Continued.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

Cuba has a coast line of 2,200 miles, and 200 ports.

Four miles of a spider's thread would weigh only one grain.

An ostrich can simultaneously see objects before and behind him.

The shelves in the British Museum contain thirty-nine miles of books.

One of the wine vaults of the London Docks has an area of seventeen acres.

Artificial musk, a close imitation of the genuine article, is made from coal tar.

Henry Seebohm, the naturalist, has bequeathed 17,000 stuffed birds to the British Museum.

Only twenty-four white elephants have been captured since the beginning of the Christian era.

Piano-players in Munich, are compelled to have their windows closed while playing on that instrument.

In the Bay of Fundy the tide rises a foot every five minutes. The water sometimes attains a height of seventy feet.

Some gullible people in Maryville,Mo., believe that the grease from a yellow dog, if rubbed on the chest, is a cure for consumption.

Most of the shoes worn in Japan are made of straw or wood. In the entire country there is but one factory where leather shoes are made.

On the railroads in Australia a third-class passenger travels for one-third of a cent a mile; a first-class passenger pays about a cent a mile.

Cats are scarce in the little town of Valley, Washington. The coyotes come boldly into town at night, and carry off all the cats they see prowling around.

Joel Luman, of Burtonville, Ky., is a big man. His height is 6 feet 4 inches, and his weight is 354 pounds. He has a son and a daughter, each of whom is as tall as himself.

The streets of Calcutta are sprinkled by water-carriers, each of whom carries strapped to his back a leather receptacle, capable of containing about eight gallons. His pay amounts to six cents a day.

For forty years Dawson Oldham has been a member of the Methodist Church at White Hall, Ky., and during all that time has never missed a sermon. His age is 78, and he has never tasted intoxicants or used tobacco.

A citizen of Gorham, Me., has had a serious disagreement with his wife. It was caused by an absent-minded blunder. He entered his house with a can of milk in one hand and a roll of greenbacks in the other, and he poured the milk in the bureau drawer.

While sawing the trunk of a chestnut tree which they had just felled, Henry Cooper and James L. Ackerman, of Saddle River, N. J., found in the centre of the trunk about a pint of sweet and juicy chestnuts. They must have been in the tree at least fifty years.

Two toughs were extremely rude to a widow in Niobrara, Neb., and as they would not leave her house, she lanced one of them with a pitchfork and scalded the other. They then left in a hurry wishing they had taken Mr. Weller's advice to "beware of the vidders."

A San Francisco lady wrote to Paderewski, asking how much he would charge to play the piano for five minutes at an afternoon tea. He asked $2,500—at the rate of $500 a minute. She offered him $1,000; but he disdained to accept such a trifling sum; didn't even answer her second note.

GREAT MEN WEAR ARMOR.

Several Prominent European Statesmen Employ Such Safeguards.

From 1885 to the time of his death, the late czar of Russia, Alexander III. never appeared outside his bedroom and study without a fine steel suit of mail, which would protect his body, back and front, between his collar-bone and his loins, from the dagger of the assassin. Excepting his valet and his wife, nobody had seen his suit of mail, as it was worn between the underclothes and uniform, but the czar's unwillingness to go even to a cabinet council without it was an open secret in all the courts of Europe.

Bismarck at one time wore such a coat, as did also Stambouloff and Crispi. The Italian premier, indeed, as we have before noted, still wears, for protection from the assassin's bullet or knife, a light shirt of mail of double thickness over the heart. None of these men, however, resorted to such precaution until repeated attempts at assassination had been made. True it is that "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

Nicholas II. of Russia has waited for no such attempt on his life. Ever since the last arrests of Nihilist students at Odessa he has worn a shirt of nickel and steel, onerous as the garment must be to a man of his inferior physique and lethargic habits. Still stranger stories of his fear and caution have penetrated the walls of the imperial palace and gained credence among the people of his capital. Although no daggers has been laid on his pillow to unnerve him, and no warning of death has been put under his dinner plate to plague him, the czar never visits his dinner table or bed without the company of a trusted attendant. At every door of the dining-room and bed-chamber stands a Cossack guard day and night, and from every dish that is served at the imperial table a special watcher in the court kitchen must eat a mouthful before it is served, to prevent any chance of poisoning.

REVIVAL IN SHIPBUILDING.

The Clyde trade shows a wonderful expansion. Orders for 40,000 tons of new shipping were placed there in April. Steel vessels are especially in demand. The greatest of the Japanese shipping companies, the Nippon Yusen Kaisha, intends to start a line of steamers to Europe. It has ordered six vessels that are to be built at Belfast and on the Clyde. The contracts call for their completion by the end of the year.

HEALTH.

PLASTERS.

Plasters, according to text-books on medicine, are solid compounds intended for external application, adhesive at the temperature of the body, and of such consistency as to render the aid of heat necessary in spreading them.

Most plasters have as their basis a compound of olive-oil and lead, while others owe their consistency and adhesiveness to resins or a mixture of these with wax and fats.

Plasters are mainly employed on sound skin as counter-irritants to draw inflammation to the surface, or open cuts, etc., to draw the edges of the wound together.

Rarely, if ever, are plasters used at present upon ulcerated surfaces, since they have been found to interfere with the process of healing.

All medicated plasters which are to exert a local effect should be made porous, to prevent excessive irritation by checking the natural prespiration of the skin.

Although about seventeen kinds of plaster are listed in medicine, only a few of them are in extensive use, and these are usually kept prepared by the druggist.

Probably the kind which is most often resorted to is the belladonna plaster In many cases of muscular pain and weakness, especially in that form of rheumatism or neuralgia which attacks the lions, a plaster made of belladonna, either with or without the addition of cayenne pepper, is of decided benefit.

Plasters of gum ammoniac were at one time much in use as a remedy for swollen glands and enlarged joints. The action of the drug is slightly stimulating.

Capsicum, or cayenne pepper, plasters are of great value as counter-irritants, as the action of the drug is prolonged, and yet sufficiently mild to ensure only a healthy result.

Of the other plasters in common use, we may mention those made of opium and tar. For blistering, soap plaster, as it is called, will be found safe.

The surgeon's plaster, used to draw together the edges of wounds, is made up with lead which has slightly antiseptic properties.

It is needless to add that a correct recognition of the nature of the trouble must be arrived at before the proper form of plaster can be applied.

KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT.

Dr. Footsoft says that this is the secret of avoiding colds. The man or woman who comes out of an over-heated room, especially late at night, and breathes through the mouth, will either catch a bad cold or irritate the lungs sufficiently to cause annoyance and unpleasantness. If people would just keep their mouths shut and breathe through their noses, this difficulty and danger would be avoided. Chills are often the result of people talking freely while out of doors just after leaving a room full of hot air, and theatre-goers who discuss and laugh over the play on their way home are inviting illness. It is, in fact, during youth that the greater number of mankind contract habits or inflammation which make their whole life a tissue of disorders.

DANGERS IN FUNERALS.

Burials in the winter are a prolific source of disease. To ride several miles in a cold carriage during inclement weather; to stand, perhaps bareheaded, beside an open grave under the influence of depressing emotions, is certainly not conducive to health. It is a loving sentiment which leads us to follow the mortal remains of a dead friend to its last resting place. But invalids and delicate people should take a more practical view of the subject, especially when their own health may be in serious danger.

CURE FOR FATIGUE.

The best cure for fatigue, says Prof. Slipso, is a hot bath taken as hot as it can be borne. If one comes in tired, disrobe quickly, jump into a hot bath for a very few minutes, rub down, and get into bed for twenty minutes. By this simple means one will be so rested that a whole evening's dissipation will scarcely be noticed. In many cases of dyspepsia great relief is found by a very hot bath quickly taken.

CIDER AS A REMEDY.

Two French physicians, Drs. Carrion and Cantru claim that in certain forms of dyspepsia, where the process of digestion is too hurried, that cider is a valuable remedy. For the gouty it is especially recommended as a corrective of the uric acid diathesis. Gout is held responsible for so large a number of ailments nowadays that cider should be shown much favor.

A NEW HEADACHE REMEDY.

A prominent London physician advises hair-cutting on the theory that the tube which is contained in each single hair is severed in the process, and the brain "bleeds," as the barbers say, thereby opening a safety valve for the congested cranium.

AN INSURMOUNTABLE OBJECTION.

Can't I rent you this house next to the church?

No; my wife likes to come in late.

HIS NEVER-FAILING TEST.

Old chap, I've been duck shooting don't you know.

Duck shooting? Why, you don't know a tame duck from a wild one.

Oh, yes, I do—the wild ones got away

TWO WISHES.

Mister—Oh, dear, I wish I could get hold of some good biscuits like mother used to make for me?

Missus—And I wish I could get some good clothes like father used to buy for me.