DARE HE?

OR, A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER XXVI.—Continued).

There is a silence, and when it is broken it is infringed by what is not much more than a whisper.

"What—what do you mean; what—what sort of a sorrow?"

"I tell you, I do not know."

Byng's tears have stopped flowing, and he now lifts his eyes, full of a madness of exaltation, to the ceiling.

"I will go to her," he cries; "if sorrow has the audacity to approach her again, it will have to reckon with me. There is no sorrow, none, in the whole long gamut of woe, for which love such as mine is not a balm. Reciprocal love!"—trailing the words in a sort of slow rapture—"no one that had seen her in the wood could have doubted that it was reciprocal."

"No doubt, no doubt."

"I will go to her!"—clasping his hands high in the air—"I will pour the oil and spikenard of my adoration into her gaping wounds! I will kiss the rifts together, though they yawn as wide as hell—yes, I will."

"For heaven's sake, do not talk such dreadful giberish," breaks in Jim, at length at the end of his patience, which had run quite to the extreme of its tether indeed at the last mention of that ever-recurring wood. "It is a knock-down blow for you, I own, and I would do what I could to help you; but if you will keep on spouting and talking such terrible bosh——"

"I suppose I am making an ass of myself," replies Byng, thus brought down with a run from his heroics. "I beg your pardon, I am sure, old man. I have no right to victimize you," his sweet nature asserting itself even at this bitter moment; "but you see it is so horribly sudden. If you had seen her when I parted from her last night at the door! She lingered a moment behind Mrs. Le Marchant—just a moment, just time enough to give me one look, one wordless look. She did not speak; she was so divinely dutiful and submissive that nothing would have persuaded her by the lightest word to imply any censure of her mother; but she gave me just a look, which said plainly, 'It is not my fault that you are turned away! I would have welcomed you in!' Upon that look I banqueted in heaven all night."

He stops, choked.

"Well?"

"And then this morning, when I got here—I think I ran all the way; I am sure I did, for I saw people staring at me as I passed—to be met by Annunziata with the news that they were gone! I did not believe her; I laughed in her face, and then she grew angry, and bid me come in and see for myself! And I rushed past her, in here, with my arms stretched out, confident that in one short moment more she would be filling them, and instead of her"—dropping upon his knees by the table with a groan—"I find this!"—dashing the note upon the floor—"all that she leaves me to fill my embrace instead of her is this poor little pillow, that still seems to keep a faint trace of the perfume of her delicate head!"

He buries his own in it again as he speaks, beginning afresh to sob loudly.

Jim stands beside him, his mind half full of compassion and half of a burning exasperation, and his body wholly rigid.

"When did they go? at what hour? last night or this morning?"

"This morning early, quite early."

"They have left all their things behind them"—looking round the room, strewn with the traces of recent and refined occupation.

"Yes"—lifting his wet face out of his cushion—"and at first, seeing everything just as usual, even to her very work-basket—she has left her very work-basket behind—I was quite reassured. I felt certain that they could have gone for only a few hours—for the day perhaps; but——"

He breaks off.

"Yes?"

"They left word that their things were to be packed and sent after them to an address they would give."

"And you do not know where they have gone?"

"I know nothing, nothing, only that they are gone.

"'Then tell, oh tell! how thou
didst murder me?
Oh! oh!! oh!!!'"

"You never heard them speak of their plans, mention any place they intended to move to on leaving Florence?"

"Never!"

"It is too late for Rome," says Jim, musingly; "England? I hardly think England," recalling Elizabeth's forlorn admission made to him at Monte Senario, "Why should we go home, we have nothing pleasant to go to?"

"I do not think they had any plans," says Byng, speaking in a voice which is thick with much weeping; "they never seemed to me to have any. She was so happy here, so gay, there never was anything more lovely than her gaiety, except—except—her tenderness."

"Yes, yes, no doubt. Then you are absolutely without a clue?"

"Absolutely."

"Do you mean to say that up to yesterday—all through yesterday, even—she never gave you a hint of any intention of leaving Florence?"

"Never, never. On the contrary, in the——" (he is going to say "the wood," but thinks better of it), "we were planning many more such expeditions as yesterday's. At least, I was planning them."

"And she assented?"

"She did not dissent. She met me with a look of divine acquiescence."

Jim turns away his head. He is involuntarily picturing to himself what that look was like, and with what sweet dumb-show it was accompanied.

"What powers of hell"—banging his head down upon the table again—"could have wrought such a hideous change in so few hours? Only ten! for it was eight in the evening before I left them, and they were off at six this morning. They could have seen no one; they had received no letters, no telegrams, for I inquired of Annunziata, and she assured me that they had not. Oh, no!"—lifting his face with a gleam of moist hope upon it—"there is only one tenable hypothesis about it—it is not her doing at all. She wrote this under pressure. It is her hand-writing, is it not?—though I would not swear even to that. I—I have played the mischief with my eyes"—pulling out his drenched pocket-handkerchief, and hastily wiping them—"so that I cannot see properly; but it is hers, is not it!"

"I do not know, I never saw her hand-writing; she never wrote to me."

"It was evidently dictated to her," cries Byng, his sanguine nature taking an upward spring again; "there are clear traces, even in the very way the letters are formed, of its being written to order reluctantly. She did it under protest. See how her poor little hand was shaking, and she was crying all the while, bless her! There, do not you see a blister on the paper—here, on this side?"

Burgoyne does not see any blister, but as he thinks it extremely probable that there was one, he does not think himself called upon to wound his friend by saying so.

"I declare I think we have got hold of the right clue at last," cries Byng, his dimmed eyes emitting such a flash as would have seemed impossible to them five minutes ago. "Read in this light, it is not nearly so incomprehensible: 'I shall never marry you; I have no right to marry any one.' Of course, I see now! What an ass I was not to see it at once! What she means is that she has no right to leave her mother! To any one who knew her lofty sense of duty as well as I ought to have done it is quite obvious that that is what she means. Is not it quite obvious? is not it as clear as the sun in heaven?"

Jim shakes his head.

"I am afraid that it is rather a forced interpretation."

"I do not agree with you," rejoins the other hotly; "I see nothing forced about it You do not know as well as I do—how should you?—her power of delicate, self-sacrificeing devotion. It is over-strained, I grant you: but there it is—she thinks she has no right to leave her mother now that she is all alone."

"She is not alone, she has her husband."

"I mean that all her other children are married and scattered. There are plenty more—are not there?—though I never could get her to talk about them."

"There are two sisters and two brothers."

"But they are no longer any good to their mother," persists Byng, clinging to his theory with all the greater tenacity as he sees that it meets with no very great acceptance in his friend's eyes; "as far as she is concerned they are non-existent."

"I do not know what right you have to say that."

"And so she, with her lofty idea of self sacrifice, immolates her own happiness on the altar of her filial affection. It is just like her!"—going off into a sort of rapture—"blind mole that I was not to divine the motive, which her ineffable delicacy forbade her to put into words. She thought she had a right to think that I should have comprehended her without words!"

He has talked himself into a condition of such exalted confidence before he reaches the end of this sentence that Jim is conscious of a certain brutality in applying to him the douche contained in his next words.

"I do not know why you should credit Mrs. Le Marchant with such colossal selfishness; she never used to be a selfish woman."

But Burgoyne's cold shower-bath does not appear even to damp the shoulders for which it is intended.

"'Since you left me, taking no
farewell,'"

murmurs Byng, beginning again to ramp up and down the little room, with head thrown back and clasped hands high lifted; and in his rapt poet voice:

"'Since you left me, taking no
farewell,'"

I must follow you, sweet! Despite your prohibition, I must follow you.

"We two that with so many
thousand sighs,
Did buy each other.'"

Then, coming abruptly down to prose—"Though they left no address it will of course be possible, easy, to trace them. I will go to the station to make inquiries. They will have been seen. It is out of the question that she can have passed unnoticed! No eye that has once been enriched by the sight of her can have forgotten that heavenly vision. I will telegraph to Bologna, to Milan, to Venice. Before night I shall have learnt her whereabouts. I shall be in the train, following her track. I shall be less than a day behind her. I shall fall at her feet, I shall——"

"You are talking nonsense," answers Burgoyne impatiently; and yet with a distinct shade of pity in his voice; "you cannot do anything of the kind. When the poor woman has given so very unequivocal a proof of her wish to avoid you, as is implied in leaving the place at a moment's notice, without giving herherself even time to pack her clothes, it is impossible that you can force your company again upon her—it would be persecution."

"And do you mean to tell me," asks Byng slowly, and breathing hard, while the fanatical light dies out of his face, and leaves it chalk white; "do you mean to say that I am to acquiesce, to sit down with my hands before me, and submit without a struggle, to the loss of—— O my God"—breaking out into an exceeding bitter cry—"why did you make me

"'So rich in having such a jewel,
As twenty seas, if all their sands
were pearl,
The water nectar, and the rocks
pure gold,'

if it were only to rob me of her?"

"I do not see what other course is open to you," replies Jim, answering only the first part of the young sufferer's appeal, and ignoring he rhetoric, terribly genuine as is the feeling of which it is the florid expression. "It is evident that she has some cogent reasons—or at least that appear cogent to her—for breaking off her relations with you."

"What cogent reasons can she have that she had not yesterday?" says Byng violently—"yesterday, when she lay in my arms, and her lips spoke their acquiescence in my worship—if not in words, yet, oh, far, far more——"

"Why do you reiterate these assertions?" cries Burgoyne sternly, since to him there seems a certain indecency in even in the insanity of loss—dragging to the eyes of day the record of such sacred endearments. "I neither express nor feel any doubt as to the terms you were on yesterday; what I maintain is that to-day—I do not pretend to explain the why—she has changed her mind, it is not"—with a sarcasm, which he himself at the very moment of uttering it feels to be cheap and unworthy—"it is not the first time in the world's history that such a thing has happened. She has changed her mind."

"I do not believe it," cries Byng, his voice rising almost to a shout in the energy of his negation; "till her own mouth tell me so I will never believe it. If I thought for a moment that it was true I should rush to death to deliver me from the intolerable agony of such a thought. You do not believe it yourself," —lifting his spoilt sunk eyes in an appeal that is full of pathos to his friend's harsh face. "Think what condemnation it implies of her—her whom you always affected to like who thought so greatly of you—her whose old friend you were—her whom you knew in her lovely childhood!"

"You are right" replies Jim, looking down, moved and ashamed; "I do not believe that she has changed her mind. What I do believe is that yesterday she let herself go; she gave way for one day, only for one day, after all, poor soul, to that famine for happiness which, I suppose"—with a sigh and a shrug—"gnaws us all now and then—gave way to it even to the pitch of forgetting that—that something in her past of whose nature I am as ignorant as you are, which seems to cast a blight over all her life."

He pauses; but as his listener only hangs silently on his utterance he goes on:

"After you left her, recollection came back to her; and because she could not trust herself again with you, probably for the very reason that she cared exceedingly about you"—steeling himself to make the admission—"she felt that there was nothing for it but to go."

Either the increased kindness of his friend's tone, or the conviction that there is, at least, something of truth in his explanation, lets loose again the fountain of Byng's tears, and once more he throws his head down upon his hands and cries extravagantly.

"It is an awful facer for you, I know," says Burgoyne, standing over him, and, though perfectly dry-eyed, yet probably not very much less miserable than the young mourner whose loud weeping fills him with an almost unbearable and yet compunctious exasperation.

"What is he made of? how can he do it?" are the questions that he keeps irefully putting to himself; and for fear lest in an access of uncontrollable irritation he shall ask them out loud, he moves to the door. At the slight noise he makes in opening it Byng lifts his head.

"Are you going?"

"Yes; if it is any consolation to you, you have not a monopoly of wretchedness to-day. Things are not looking very bright for me either. Amelia is ill."

"Amelia," repeats the other, with a hazy look, as if not at first able to call to mind who Amelia is; then, with a return of consciousness, "Is Amelia ill? Oh, poor Amelia. Amelia was very good to her. Amelia tried to draw her out. She liked Amelia!"

"Well,"—with an impatient sigh—"unfortunately that did not hinder Amelia from falling ill."

"She is not ill really?"—his inborn kind-heartedness struggling for a moment to make head against the selfishness of his absorption!

"I do not know"—uneasily—"I am going back to the hotel to hear the doctor's verdict. Will you walk as far as to the Anglo-Americain with me? There is no use in your staying here."

But at this proposition the lover's sobs break out more infuriating than ever.

"I will stay here till I die—till I am carried over the threshold that her cruel feet have crossed.

"'Then tell, oh tell! how thou
didst murder me.'"

Against a resolution at once so fixed and so rational, Jim sees that it is useless to contend.

(To be continued).

DEATH SENTENCE FOR POISONER.

Woman's Mother-in-law and Sister-in-law the Victims.

Frau Ernestine Feige, of Grunau, near Hirschberg, in the Silesian Mountains, Germany, has been condemned to death for poisoning a man named Janitschek, and a woman named Brueckner, who lived with her as lodgers in the years 1903 and 1906. She was also charged with poisoning in four other cases, two of her alleged victims being her mother-in-law and sister-in-law, but as these four cases went back seven years, there was some uncertainty as to whether the exhumed bodies showed traces of poison.

Frau Feige has been called the Silesian Lucretia Borgia, and the trial revealed that she had many points in common with the famous Roman poisoner. In all the cases it was the desire to become possessed of her victim's money which drove her to her terrible crimes. As lodgers she always sought out incurable people possessed of means. While they were in her hands she sought to influence them to make their wills in her favor. As soon as they did so she began her poisoning operations.

Feige used arsenic in all cases, in this displaying great cunning. The entire countryside in which she lived is arsenic producing, and the graveyard in which her victims were buried was in special degree impregnated with arsenical ores. The medical experts at the trial, therefore, had to decide whether the poison found in the exhumed remains had penetrated the bodies from the earth outside the coffins or whether it had been administered during life.

STANDS BY GUILLOTINE.

A French Poet's Queer Excuse for the Block.

In a newspaper symposium of the best known French authors on the question of whether or not the death penalty, recently practically abolished in France, ought or ought not to be restored, some interesting and original replies have been evoked.

Almost all the literary men who attempt to answer the question declare against the guillotine. They cite as a principal reason the frequency of miscarriages of justice, and take the view that it is better that many miscreants go unscathed than that one innocent person should suffer death.

Taking the contrary view of the subject, Mistral, the Provencal poet, whose mediaeval dialect revival has won him an enviable reputation and esteem, makes an astonishing reply in verse. He holds in his stanzas that a strong people always will require strong-handed justice. The presumable consequence in the mind of the poet, is that if the French people yield to delicate scruples on the subject of beheading, and become so squeamish and molly coddled that they cannot bear the thought of putting to death any human being, no matter what his lack of deserts may be, France will have taken a long step on the downward path which leads to the level upon which the feebler-minded nations stand.

General Gallifet replies humorously:—"Whether it comes to me from God or from man, death will be no penalty to me."

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

If a man has one enemy he has enough.

Poverty has taken many a hard fall out of ambition.

An easy mark by any other name would be just as foolish.

Women learn more as they grow older; it's different with men.

Many a man's first mistake was in the selection of his parents.

Lazy men are always talking about some other men who are fools for luck.

Flattery catches silly people, but disagreeable candor never catches anybody.

An appreciative audience is always highly intelligent—from the speaker's viewpoint.

It makes a girl feel awfully sad at times not to have anything to make her feel sad.

Some people think that it's never too late to mend a matrimonial mistake by applying for a divorce.

Oh, no, Alphonse, a man isn't necessarily one sided because he has never crossed the ocean.

The marriage of a tailor and a dressmaker surely ought to be in accord with the eternal fitness of things.

Money a man has spent seldom worries him—unless it was spent for something that interferes with his digestive apparatus.

It keeps the Lord busy snatching us from dangers we are too blind to see.

Many a woman's disposition seems to have been made for cross purposes.

ON THE FARM.

HOGS FOR THE JUNE MARKET.

We always aim to have our pigs come about September 15, and we let them run with the sows until November 15, or about eight or nine weeks. During the time they have been running with the sows we have been slopping them on skim milk and wheat middlings, if we have the milk, and if not we mix the middlings with water. By the time the pigs are eight or nine weeks old they are getting most of their living by hustling for themselves, and after they are weaned there is no check in their growth. We let the pigs have a good pasture to run in. We let them run in a woods where there is plenty of good running water, and where they are able to get all the roots and herbs that they care for. These keep their digestive organs in good condition and give them an appetite when they come home to get their feed.

We find that ground corn and oats mixed together is about the best food that we can give them, as this will keep them growing and also keep them in good condition.

Stove coal, or better yet, if one can get it, charcoal, is a good thing to give the pigs, as it will sharpen their appetites and keep their digestive organs in good shape.

If a person is going to keep winter pigs he need not expect to make a success of it unless he has comfortable houses for them to sleep in. These houses should always have plenty of good bedding and should not be allowed to become damp, for if they do the pigs will contract colds and coughs and will become stunted, and it will require many days of careful attention to get them back to the condition they were in before they caught the cold. Too many pigs should not be allowed to go in one house, for if they do they will pile on top of one another and will not do well.

One of the essential things to do with the pigs is to keep the lice off them. Nothing is better for this than coal oil. A good way to put it on is with a sprinkler while the pigs are eating. Mix the oil with water, about one-fourth oil and three-fourths water. Wherever the oil strikes a louse it will kill it, but it will not kill the eggs, so the pigs should be oiled every two weeks until they are free from lice. If the pigs are attended to in this way they will come out in the spring in a good, thrifty, growing condition. We then put them in good clover or some good pasture and begin to get them ready for market. We do not begin to fatten at once, but we keep them growing and getting larger frames, so that when we do begin to fatten there is something to build upon. When we commence fattening we do not allow the hogs to run over as large a range as they had been in the habit of doing, but we put them in a field of clover with plenty of clean, fresh water and then we begin feeding them all the corn that they will eat. We do not stop slopping them, but use a slop made of wheat middlings mixed with water. The hogs should be given salt and ashes about every other day, as it will keep them in better condition. It is a good plan to have a box filled with salt and ashes so they can go to it at their pleasure.

Keep the feed lots and sheds in a clean condition, for the hog is not a dirty animal because of choice, but only when he cannot help himself.

If hogs are cared for in this way by June they can be turned into a round sum of money and the farmer can rejoice in seeing a fine lot of hogs leave his place.

MILK FROM SICK COWS.

It would seem unnecessary to say anything on this subject but we know that some do not realize the seriousness of using milk from sick cows while some do not care. They reason that as they take the milk to the creamery no one will know the difference and they will be that much money ahead.

That sort of a thing must stop. Some states have said that he who sells or offers for sale or he who buys such milk shall be fined or imprisoned. Things have got to get mighty serious before states can enact laws to prevent any practice.

In the first and last place, milk from sick cows is unwholesome and in some cases positively dangerous. The dread disease of tuberculosis is being spread broadcast because farmers sell milk from tuberculous cows. True, some farmers do not realize that their cows are diseased, others don't want to know, while a criminal few do not care.

When a cow has garget, or an inflammation of the udder, has any sickness that is noticeable, her milk should be drawn into a pail not used in milking and the milk fed to the pigs if you dare to use it, or thrown away. Paint a fence with it and it will serve a good purpose.

No cow's milk should be used for human food as soon after she drops her calf. Until the feverish condition has left the cow and udder her milk is not considered fit for human food. The law should forbid the sale of milk taken within fifteen days previous and five days after calving.

DAIRY NOTES.

Fewer cows are injured not by high feeding than by unbalanced feeding.

A clean cow and a clean stable go with clean milk, good butter and clean cash.

The man who falls in love with cattle will soon find that they pay him profit.