CHAPTER XVII. - BREAKING A HEART.

When Warren Relf returned to Lowestoft, burning with news and eager at his luck, his first act was to call his rister Edie hurriedly out of Eisie's room, and proceed to a consultation with her upon the strange evidence he had picked up so unexpectedly at Almundham Station. Should they show it to Elsie, or should they keep it from her? That was the question. Fortune had indeed favoured the brave; but how now to utilise her curious information? Should they let that wronged and suffering girl see the utter abysses of human baseness yawning in the man she once loved and trusted, or should they sedulously and carefully hide it all from her, lest they break the bruised reed with ungentle handling? Warren Relf himself, after thinking it over in his own soul-all the way back to Lowestoft in his third-class carriage-was almost in favour now of the specious and futile policy of concealment. Why needlessly harrow the poor child's feelings? Why rake up the embers of her grief Surely she had been wounded and lacerated enough already. Let her rest content with what she knew so far of Massinger's cruel and treacherous selfishness.

But Edie met this plausible reasoning, after a true woman's fashion, with an emphatic negative. She stood out for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, come what might of it.

"Because," Edie answered, looking up at about it!" him resolutely, "it would be better she "No, darling," Edie answered, pressing her wicked man, who isn't and never was in any self at the Almundham Station; and Mr. sweet, gentle girl. She takes my heart. I disenchant her as much as I can before it's happened." too late. The sooner she learns to hate and everybody."

curious side-glance.

"Because," Edie went on, very earnestly, times happier as his wife, than this wretched, make any one. If we disenchant her at once, without remorse, it'll help that better man's case forward whenever he presents himself. If not" --- She paused significantly. Their eyes met ; Warren's fell. ling?" They understood one another.

fully. Edie looked up at him with a profoundly meaningless expression on her soft her mouth small. " I don't understand with it any way? Nobody spoke about any too quick. I merely laid on a young man in know who wrote it? Could she ever believe it? the abstract. I'm sure I'm right, absolutely and I can'thelp it."

position to Massinger." never really see an inch deep below the sur- | E!sie." face. -I'll tell you what she'll do, you great | A gasp burst from her bloodless lips. blind creature: she'll accept the forgery as if it | She laid it down, with both hands on her were in actual fact her own letter; she'll heart. That signature, E'sie, betrayed the never write a word, for good or for evil, to whole truth. She was white as a sheet now, contradict it or confirm it, to any of these and trembling visibly from head to foot, horrid Whitestrand people; she'll allow this But she would go right through with it hateful wretch Massinger to go on believing | she would not flinch; she would know it allshe's really dead; and she'll cease to exist, all-all, utterly. as far as he's concerned, in a passive sort of | "I never wrote it," she cried to Edie with wa , henceforth and for ever.

"Will she?" Warren Relf asked dubiously. "How on earth do you know what she'll do, | ered in her ear.

Edie?" "Why, what else on earth could she do, out terrified.

silly?" his sister answered, with the same | Edie nodded. "I know who did-at and say to him, with tears in her eyes and | want of crying.' a becoming smile on her pretty little lips: But Elsie couldn't cry yet. She put her "My own heart's darling, I love you de- white hand, trembling, into her open bosom, votedly-and I know you signed my name | and pulled out slowly, with long lingering reto that forged letter?" Could she fling | luctance - a tiny bundle of water stained letter herself on these Moxies, or Mumpsics, or They were Hugh's letters, that she had Mixies, or Meyseye, or whatever else you worn at her breast on that terrible night. call them, and say sweetly:"I did not run | She had dried them all carefully or e by away from you; I waen't in earnest? I one here in bed at Lowestoft; and she only tried ineffectually to drown myself, for hept them still next the broken heart that love of this dear, sweet, charming, poetical | Hugh had so lightly sacrificed to mammon. cousin of mine who diagracefully jilted Smudged and half erased by immersion as me in order to propose to your own daughter, they were, she could still read them in and then, believing me to have killed my- their blarred condition; and she knew them self for shame and serrow, has trumped up by heart already, for the matter of that, letters and telegrams in my name, of malice | if the water had made them quite ilicgible. prepense, on purpose to deceive you. He's Sie drew the last one out of its envelope a mean scoundrel, and I hate his very name; with reverent care, and laid it down side and I want him for myelf; so I won't allow by side with the forged letter to Winifred. him to marry vour Winifred, or whatever Paper for paper, they answered exactly else her precious newfangled high-faluting in size and shape and glaze and quality. name may be." Could any woman on earth | Hugh had often shown her how admirably so utterly efface herself and her own woman. he could imitate any particular handwritliness as to go and say all that, do you sup. ing. The suspicion was profound; but she pose, to anybody anywhere? - You may think | would give him at least the full benefit of so in your heart, I daresay, my dear boy; all possible doubts. She held it up to the but you won't get a solitary woman in the light and examined the water mark. Both world to agree with you on the point for one | were identical -an unusual paper; bought

his cold brow. "I suppose you're right, but she would go right through with it: she Edie," he answered, bewildered. "But must know the truth. She gave a great gasp,

word for it? Why, do nothing, of course- ening within her the instincts and ideas of be; suffer; exist; mourn over it. She'd an experienced detective. They were the like, if she could, poor tender, bruised, three previous letters she had last received broken hearted thing, to creep into a hole, from Hugh, in regular order. A stain caused with her head hanging down, and die quiet- by a drop of milk or grease, as often happens, ly, like a wounded creature, with no one on ran right through the entire quire. It was earth to worry or bother her. She mustn't biggest on the front page of the earliest die; but she won't do anything. All we've letter, and smallest and dimmest on its back got to do ourselves is just to comfort her : fly leaf. It went on decreasing gradually to be silent and comfort her. She'll cease by proportionate gradations through the within her.

to live now; she'll annihilate herself; she'l retire from life; and that horrid man'll think she's dead; and that'll be all. She'll accept the situation. She won't expose him; she loves him too much a great deal for that. She won't expose herself; she's a great deal too timid and shrinking and modest for that. She'll leave things alone ; that's all she can do .- And on the whole, my dear, if you only knew, it's really and truly the best thing possible."

So Edie took the letter and telegram pitifully in her hand, and went with what boldness she could muster up into Elsie's bedroom. Elsie was lying on the sofa, propped up on pillows, in the white that last night by the river near the dress she had worn all along, and with her face and hands as white as the dress stuff; and as Edie held the incriminating documents, part hidden in her gown, to keep them from Elsie, she felt like the dentist who hides behind his back the cruel wrenching instrument with which he means next moment in one fierce tug to drag and tear your very nerves out. She stooped down and kissed Eisie tenderly. "Well, darling," she said-for illness makes women wonderfully intimate-" Warren's come back .-Where do you think he's been !-He's been over to day as far as Almundham."

"Aimundham!" Elsie repeated, with cheek more blanched and pale than ever. "Why, what was he doing over there to-day, dear? Did he hear anything about-about-Were they all inquiring after me, I won-"Why?" Warrenasked with a relenting der?-Was there a great deal of talk and if she had had the heart to think of herself gossip abroad ?- O Edie, tell me quick all

should get it all over at once. It's like pull- hand tight, and signing to her mother, ing a tooth - one wrench, and be done with who sat by the bed, to clasp the other one; unspeakable thing had Hugh Massinger it! What a pity she should spend her whole "nobody's talking. You shall not be life long in mourning and wailing over this discussed. Warren met Mr. Mersey himway worthy of her !- Warren, she's a dear, Mersey was going to Scotland; and he said they'd heard from you twice arready, to love her dearly already.-She'll mourn and, explain it all; and nobody seemed to think wail for him enough anyhow. I want to that anything serious in any way had

"Heard from me twice!" Elsie cried, despise him as he deserves, the better for | puzzled. "Heard from me twice-to explain it all! Why, what on earth did he mean, "Why?" Warren asked once more, with a Edie? There must be some strange mistake

Edie leant over her with tears in her eyes. "she may some day meet some other better It was a horrible wrench, but come it must, man, who could make her ten thousand and the sooner the better. They should understand where they stood at once. "No, sordid, money-hunting creature could ever | no mistake, darling," sheanswered distinctly. "Mr. Meysey gave Warren the letter to read. -He's brought it back. I've got it here for you. It's in your own hand, he says .-Would you like to see it this moment, dar-

Elsie's cheek showed pale as death now; "But isn't it selfish?" Warren asked wist- but she summoned up courage to murmur

It seemed the mere unearthly ghost of a round face. "Selfish !" she cried, making | yes, so hollow and empty was it; but she forced it out somehow, and took the letter. you. What cn earth has selfishness to do | Edie watched her with bent brows and trembling lips. How would she take it? particular truer and better man. You jump | Would she see what it meant ? Would she

Elsie gazed at it in dumb astonishment. right. I always am. It's a way I have, So admirable was the imitation, that for a moment's space she actually thought it was "Besides which," Warren Relf interposed her own hand-writing. She scanned it suddenly, "if Massinger really did write close. "My dear Winifred," it began as that forged letter, she'll have to arrange usual, and in her own hand too. Why, this something about it, you see, sooner or later. | must be just an old letter of her own to her She'll want to set herself right with the friend and pupil; what possible connection Meyseys, of course, and she'll probably could Mr. Meysey or Mr. Relf imagine it make some sort of representation or pro- had with the present crisis? But then the date-the date was so curious: "September "She'll do nothing of the kind, my dear," 17"—that fatal evening! She glanced The universe swam like a frightful blank Elie answered promptly with brisk confi- through it all with a burning eye. "Great dence .- "You're a goose, Warren, and you heavens, what was this? "So wicked, so don't one tiny little bit understand the ungrateful: I know Mrs. Meysey will never inferior creatures. You men always think forgive me."-"By the time this reaches suspended alone above an awful abyss, a you know instinctively al. about us women, you, I shall have left Whitestrand, I fear and can read us through and through at a for ever."-" Darling, for heaven's sake, do single glance, as if we were large print on a try to hush this up as much as you can." street-poster; while as a matter of fact, you | -" Everyour affectionate, but heart-broken

a choking voice.

"I know you didn't, darling," Edie whisp-

"And you know who did?" Elsie sobbed

perfect conviction in her own inbred sagacity | least, I suspect.-Cry, darling, cry. Never and perspicacity as ever. "Could she go mind us. Don't burst your poor heart for

at a funtastic stationer's in Brighton. It The painter drew his hand slowly across was driving daggers into her own heart; what'll she do with herself, then, I wonder?" and then took three other letters singly from "Do ?" Edie echoed. "As if do were the the packet. Horror and dismay were awak

other three. She looked at the letter to Winifred with tearless eyes. It correspondthe middle sheet of the original series.

Elsie laid these all down on the sofa by her side with an exhausted air and turned with an anxious face. "Is she very ill? And wearily to Edie. Her face was flushed and feverish at last. She said nothing, but leane I back with a gaastly sob on her pillow. She knew to a certainty now it was Hugh who had done it, believing her, his lover, to | wounded cretaure." be drowned and dead-Hugh who had done it at the very moment when, as he himself supposed, her lifeless body was tossing and dancing among the mad breakers, that roared and shivered with unholy joy over the the position, leaving things exactly where hoarse sandbanks of the bar at Whitestrand that wretched being has managed to put -It was past belief-but it was Hugh who | them; and as far as he's concerned she'll drop had done it.

She could have forgiven him almost anything else save that; but that, never, ten thousand times never! She could have forgiven him even his cold and cruel speech poplar: "I have never been engaged to you. I owe you nothing. And now I mean to marry Winifred." She could have forgiven him all, in the depth of her despair. - She could have loved him still, even-so profound is the power of first-love in a true pure woman's inmost nature-if only she could have believed he had melted and repented in sackcloth and ashes for bis sin and her sorrow. If he had lost his life in trying to save her! If he had roused the county to search for her body! Nay, even if he had merely gone home, remorseful and self-reproaching, and had proclaimed the truth and his own shame in an agony of regret and pity and bereavement.-For her own sake, she was glad, indeed, he had not done all this; or at least she would perhaps have been glad him-she was ashamed and horrified and stricken dumb to learn it.

For, instead of all this, what nameless and really done? Gone home to the inn, at the very moment when she lay there senselesa, the prey of the waves, that tossed her about like a plaything on their cruel crests-gone home to the inn, and without one thought of her, one effort to rescue her-for how could she think otherwise ?-full only of vile and craven fears for his own safety, sat down at his desk and deliberately forged in alien handwriting that embodied Lie, that visible aud tangible documentary Meanness, that she saw staring her in the face from the paper before her! It was incredible; it was past conception; but it was, nevertheless, the simple fact. As she floated insensible down that hideous current, for the sea and the river to fight over her blanched corpse, the man she loved, the man who had so long pretended to love her, had been quietly engaged in his own room in forging her name to a false and horrible and misleading letter, which might cover her with shame in the unknown grave to which his own cruelty and wickedness and callousness had seemingly consigned her! No wonder the tears stood back unwillingly from her burning eyeballs. For grief and horror and misery like hers, no relief can be found in mere hysterical weep- | that which made you so very late, Deacon?

And who had done this heartless, this dastardly, this impossible thing? Hugh Massinger-her cousin Hugh-the man she had set on such a pinnacle of goodness and praise and affection—the man she had worshipped with her whole full heart-the man she had accepted as the very incarnation of all that was truest and noblist and best and most beautiful in human nature. Her idol was dethroned from its shrine now; and in the empty niche from which it had cast itself prone, she had nothing to set up instead for worship, There was not, and there never had been a Hugh. around her. The sun had darkened itself at once in her sky. The solid ground seemed to seething and tossing and eddying abyss of

utter chaos. Edie Relf held her hand still; while the sweet gentle motherly old lad; with the swam wildly round and round in a norrible | take the new." phantasmagoria, of which the Hugh that was not and that never had been formed the central pivot and main revolving point; while the Hugh that was just revealing himself utterly in his inmost blackness and vileness and nothingness whirled round and round that fixed centre in a mad career, she knew not how, and she rsked not wherefore. "Cry, cry, darling, do try to cry," both the other women urged upon her with sobs and tears; but Elsie's eyeballs were hard and tearless, and her heart stood still every moment within her with unspeakable awe and horror and incredulity.

Presently she stretched out a vague hand towards Edie. "Give me the telegram, dear," she said in a cold hard voice, as cold and hard as Hugh Massinger's own

on that fearful evening. Edie handed it to her without a single

word. She looked at it mechanically, her lips set tight; then she asked in the same metalife tone as before: " Do you know anything of 27 Holmbury Place, Dake Street, St James'?

"Warren says the club porter of the Cheyne Row lives there," Edie answered

Eslie fell back upon her pillows once more. "Elie," she cried, "oh, Edie, Edie, hold me tight, or I shall sink and die! -If only he had been cruel and nothing more, I wouldn't have minded it; indeed, I wouldn't. But that he should be so cowardly, so mean, so unworthy of himself -it kills me, it kills me-I couldn't have believ-

ed it !" "Kiss her, mother," Edie whispered low. "Kiss her, and lay her head, so, upon your dear old shoulder! She's going to cry now! I know she's going to cry Pat her cheek : yes, so. If only she can ery, she can let her heart out, and it won't

quite kill her." relief of tears; they rose to her eyes in a torrent flood. She cried as if her heart would burst. But it eased her somehow. The two other women cried in sympathy, holding her hands, and encouraging her to let out her pent up emotions to the very full by that natural outlet. They cried together silently for many minutes. Then Elsie pressed and they knew she would live, and that the estate security. Application may be made to either shock had not entirely killed out the woman of the Company's Iccal Appraisers or to

An hour later, when Edie, with eyes very red and swollen, went out once more into the ed exactly in every respect ; for it had been | little front parlour to fetch some needlework, Warren Relf intercepted her with eager questioning. " How is she now?" he asked how did she take it?'

"She's crying her eyes out, thank Heaven," Edie answered fervently. "And it's broken her heart. It's almost killed her, but not who had done this nameless thing-Hugh quite. She's crushed and lacerated like a

" But what will she do ?" Warren asked, with a wistful look.

"Do. Just what I say. Nothing at all. Annihilate and efface herself. She'll accept altogether out of existence." " How ?"

"She'll go with mamma and me to San Remo.'

"And the Meyseys?" "She'lt leave them to form their own conclusions. Henceforth, she prefers to be simply nobody."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Dr. Pillbags' Diagnosis.

To Dr. Pillbags, Patrick came With a most woeful face;

Says he, "Dear Docther, phat's your name, Will you plaze trate my case." The doctor looked him in the eye. His tongue he made him show ;

Said he, 'My man, you're going to die; You've got tic-douloureux."

"My faith," ays Pat, phat's that you say?
I've got 'tick-do lar,' oh!
Yez yiu' thafe, I always pay Your bills before I go.

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Deacon-I was terribly shocked, my dear, to discover on my way home from church a match game of baseball being played on the vacant lot near the park. Wife-Was it

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Hostess (Spruce street boarding-house) snow-white hair and the tender eyes put a Which do you prefer, Mr. De Lean, new cold palm up against her burning brow to potatoes or old?" Mr. De Lean-"It help her to bear it. But Elsie was hardly | doesn't matter about the potatoes, madam ; aware of either of them now. Her head but if you have two kinds of chicken I will

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