

# AVENGED AT LAST.

A Story of Love and Daring.

By the author of "What He Cost Her," "Gwendoline's Harvest," and other popular novels.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HUSBAND AND WIFE.

"Has Cyril's death made you so very sad, Ralph, that not even I can comfort you?" asked Mrs. Clyffard of her husband, as he sat in a small chamber communicating with his dressing-room, and in which he was accustomed to transact his business affairs. He smiled, not sadly, but gratefully, lovingly, in her false sweet face, yet gravely shook his head.

"You always comfort me, dear one. If I were dejected on my own account only, you would soon cheer me. But it is not so, Grace, although many would be sad who knew their doom had been spoken, who felt as I feel"—he laid his hand upon his heart—"that I have had my warning, and must soon go; yet I do not repine for that matter."

"I will not combat your opinion, love," answered she, "fallacious and ill-grounded though I believe it to be; with me, whatever you think is sacred."

"Sweet Grace, how I love you!" returned the old man. "It is only for your sake that I regret to go. I have reigned here my allotted time; how gladly would I leave all to my successor, heaven knows, if I might only think he would hold it. Poor Rue! poor Rue!"

Ralph Clyffard bent his head, and hid his face. His wife's arm still encircled his neck; her voice was low and soft, and seemed to tremble with love and pity; but her eyes looked down upon him with contemptuous scorn.

"And what is to prevent Rupert from holding his own, husband? Nothing save a dark legend of your house—a morbid fantasy of your own—a—"

"Did you never read my Uncle Roderick's will, Grace?" interrupted Ralph.

"His will?" cried Mrs. Clyffard, involuntarily withdrawing her caressing hand. "I never even heard that he had made a will. I did not know that he could have made a will. Is not the land entailed? Father to son, uncle to nephew; has it not been so with your ancient race?"

"It has ever been so," returned her husband gloomily. "Father to son, but never son's son, since Guy's time."

"Aye, aye," exclaimed Mrs. Clyffard impatiently; but masking her apprehensions with a great effort, she added, in a soothing tone: "Let us not talk of that, Ralph; let us not think of it, if possible." Then, with affected carelessness, she added, "Is yonder dusty parchment at your elbow this said will?"

She reached her hand towards it, but he was beforehand with her, and gently, but firmly, he retained his hold upon it. "Nay, do not open it, Grace, for mere curiosity's sake."

If he could but have seen her face in its rapacious earnestness—the intense longing in her greedy eyes; if he could have known what it cost her to restrain the nervous twitching of those taper fingers, he could scarcely have talked of curiosity—it was cupiditish aghast with fear.

"I will tell you all that Roderick would have me tell, wife, if he were alive. I hide nothing from you—nothing."

"Nothing, Ralph," returned she tenderly, her mind straining after the precious parchment like a greyhound in the leash. "If I thought you kept a secret from me, it would kill me."

"Would it so, dear one? Then, since I would have you live, you shall hear my Uncle Roderick's will. He herein leaves Clyffe to Arthur his son, and Cyril after him, for thirty years, and then—"

"But he could not leave it, Ralph. How mean you then he left it?"

"He thought he could. He was mad the second son, and yet mad; think of that, Grace! No lawyer has ever seen this writing; it would count as nothing in his eyes; he would smile at the dead Clyffard's ravings, and I do not choose that any man should do that. For thirty years would he Clyffe to my father and my brother, after which he shall return—soit ruer—and resume his own again. I have seen his coffin in the chapel vault closed with a mighty look like yonder chest—save that it opens from within as well—and a key is buried with him, that he may arise, and let himself out when the time comes. The thirty years will very soon be ended."

"I trust, Ralph, that you do not believe—"

"Fear not, Grace," interrupted her husband quietly; "I keep my own writ still, although they are sorely tried. I almost wish it was not so, and that I could deem that dead Roderick might come to life again. It is worse to think that he was mad, having no right to be so; and rather than men should know the contents of this said will, I would lose many a fair acre of those which it so strangely devises. It was the mere reading of it which set me sorrowing. How goes it with Rupert, think you, Grace?"

"He looks bravely, husband. He will fitly wear your honors after you, though not, I trust, for long, long years to come."

"He has heard the news, I suppose?"

"I told him myself, Ralph, lest some vulgar tongue should wound him with the rough delivery of it; and charged the household not to speak of it within his hearing."

"You should have charged them not to speak of it at all," returned the husband sternly. "Great heavens are the misfortunes of our house to be the talk of grooms!"

"We cannot chain the tongue, Ralph; and since the law forbids to cut it out, as your high handed race were wont to do when a menial's speech displeased them, the most we can do is to direct its course."

"As wise as fair!" repeated Ralph in a low tone. "You have done right, Grace, as you always do."

"Nay, husband, I have only done my best. Little, indeed, is the best I can do, in return for what I have received at your hands. I was low, and you lifted me up; I was base, and you set me in honor." A shadow flitted over her husband's brow. "Not," she continued, "that I ever think of these things now, save when I am alone with you, as now. I have left the past behind me altogether. Connected with your race, although by marriage only, I feel myself well-born."

"That is rightly said, Grace. The Clyffards, like the king, confer nobility itself.

Never speak, then, of what was once your lowly lot, even to me. You are mistress of Clyffe; you will be so after I am gone—that is until—"

Ralph Clyffard paused and sighed, the wave of thought overtaken by another ere it could break in speech. "And what did Rupert say when you told him of poor Cyril?"

"He said he was grieved to hear it, but scarcely surprised. He hoped Uncle Cyril would be buried at the Hall and not at the Dene."

"Then he seemed lost in thought, and answered me at random; but presently on some trifling interruption—it was the organ in the gallery, played by Mildred Leigh, I think—brightened up at once. Music is good for him, and the companionship of the young. It is but a dull life he leads here, and fit to make a young man sad."

"Raymond is not sad," returned her husband, like one who, to gain time, urges something which he knows has but little force. "That is true," answered Mrs. Clyffard coldly. "To chase the stag, the fox, the otter, is happiness enough for Raymond. He might have been a huntsman born, for any instinct of gentle birth that he possesses. Nay, even a huntsman would have some reverence for the race which he served, whereas Raymond—"

"Well, wife, what of Raymond?"

"Nothing, Ralph—nothing. You are grave enough already, without my saddening you further. And, after all, perhaps he only does it to vex me. He does not love his step-mother; that is only natural. A man's sons, unless they are dutiful, like Rupert, too often resent their father's second marriage."

"Resent it!" cried Ralph Clyffard, starting up and smiting the table with his fist—"resent it! What! is he his father's tutor? Am I to be told my duty by this rude boy? Have I robbed him of gold or lands that he should be envious of me? Does he grudge an old man that which renders the last few years of his life less lonely, less drear? Even had we children, he would have his mother's portion; they would not rob him of a silver piece. Nay, I have left him thrice as much besides. Unnatural, ungrateful, base!"

"Hush, Ralph—hush. Be calm. Do nothing in anger. Let poor me, at least, be the means of sowing dissension between father and son; for he is your son, your kinsman, after all. What I was about to say was only this, that knowing how dear to me is the honor of your house, and with what worship I look upon the Clyffards, alien though I be, he scoffs and sneers at what should be held most reverend, at least, by one of their own blood; nay, he says, 'blood' is nothing. Why not bone—a gentleman of bone? If old blood is so precious, why then are old bones so cheap? But I fear I vex you, husband."

Ralph Clyffard's eyes were flashing fire. One hand clung to the table, grasping it like a vice; the other hand was pressed against his heart. His white lip moved as with a spasm twice and thrice before they could shape "Go on."

"There is little more to say, Ralph; I have said already more than I intended. You must please hold this a secret; you must understand it is to me alone he thus speaks out. He flings his gibes about at all, 'tis true, making a mock of ancestry; but he keeps his worst for me, because as I have said, he knows the barb goes home. His aim at me is the surest when he strikes through you and yours. For instance—"

"Ay, for instance," gasped Ralph Clyffard; "Give me that."

"He says 'the fair woman,' for whose sake Bertram killed his brother, and whom you yourself—"

Ralph uttered a cry of horror. "I see her now!" cried he. "Some death is coming or the curse is falling. Look—look; there—there!"

"Dear husband, you are pointing to the mirror; you behold only the reflections of myself." She spoke as lightly as she could, but her voice trembled with genuine terror. "Dear Ralph, 'tis I. Don't you know your Grace?"

He shrank from her caress with almost loathing. "Touch me not!" cried he, repelling her with one hand, while he shaded his eyes with the other. "I cannot bear it; so like—so like! was it indeed the mirror?"

"Look for yourself," said she, "and at the original." She smiled her sunniest smile, and, with her head aslant, shook her fair locks about her in a shower of gold. As different looked she from that rigid form which, with menacing finger, had just gazed itself before Ralph Clyffard's gaze, as Hebe from Atropos.

"Fair Grace!" cried he, enraptured, "how beautiful you are! it makes me young to look at you! How could I ever mistake you for another, far less that dread spectre—harbinger of ill! Thrice have I seen it. Was it not thrice, Grace? I can think now of nothing but of thee."

"You told me thrice, Ralph, and that it boded death, or worse; and on the fifth day these messengers arrive telling of Cyril's end. This must be more than chance."

"Ay, more than chance indeed."

"Yet Raymond says there is no 'fair woman' at Clyffe save me—a cruel saying, when we think of what she was."

"Does he dare to say that much?" exclaimed Ralph hoarsely. "Does he think I am befooled, then?"

"Nay, he knows nothing of what you have seen. How should he, husband, save through me alone?"

"True—true; he makes light of the legends of our house."

"Makes more than light, sir; makes merry with them, as with a church-yard tale told by a sexton to keep boys from playing leap-frog on the tombs; has no more reverent word for any of them than hobgoblin bogle; and no more courteous term than dupes and fool for those who have cause to know better. She was waiting for a storm of wrath, but this time it did not come. Ralph's mind had been working in a direction which, with all her skill, she could not follow. Like some out-maneuvred general, who suddenly finds his beleaguered foe at large, having emerged behind him underground, by sap, so she stared, foiled, in her husband's quiet face, and listened to his measured tones.

"This may be as you say, Grace; nay, if you say so, it is—and yet I must not be hasty. He was my late wife's favorite son."

"Parents should have no favorites,

Ralph. If she spoiled him, that is no reason why you should complete his ruin."

"You say well, Grace; parents should have no favorites; there is no selfishness which works such ill as undue partiality in father or mother towards any of their offspring."

"Where is it undue," slid in the woman. "And if, in spite of duty, such a feeling creeps into a father's heart, not only should he not exhibit it, but should strive by all means to make up to the less beloved child for the injury he has involuntarily done him. At times, I fear, upon the contrary, I have been harsh to Raymond, vexed with him, because I am vexed with my own heart on his account. His nature is so different from mine—from that of all our race."

"Ay, it is indeed."

"And yet, if he is rough in manner, he has a feeling heart."

"He went a fishing this morning, though his Uncle Cyril died but two days back," remarked Mrs. Clyffard. "I saw him by the beck's side myself. A feeling heart, forsooth! Nay, even if he has, what matter? Why should that poor excuse be taken for grave dereliction of duty, for vice, for disrespect?"

"What would you have me to do with Raymond, Grace?" asked her husband thoughtfully.

"I, Ralph? Nay, it is no concern of mine. It is your good pleasure to pass over faults that are patent to the world, by all means do so; but seeing your solicitude on poor Rupert's account, I—"

"Well, Grace?"

"I wonder at your blindness—that is all. Setting aside the ill effect that Raymond's example might have upon his brother—for he has the stronger will, although he is the younger—it is strange to me that you do not mark his assumption, his arrogance. Not only does he show respect for none, but lords it as though he knew he were the heir of all."

"Ah, does he so?" cried Ralph.

"He does, as though his brother were already doomed. This very morning, in the library he dared to twit him with his morbid feelings, his tainted mind, and angered him with hints at what might happen."

"Are you sure, wife?" inquired Ralph Clyffard, greatly moved. "How know you this? Beware how you advance this thing, if you have no certain knowledge."

"I am no tale-bearer," returned Mrs. Clyffard haughtily. "I know of myself that so it was. Believe me it would be best that these boys were kept apart."

"But Rupert would be more dull than ever, Grace."

"Then give him meet and gay companions; set the Hall doors wide, and bid your neighbors' sons be friends with the heir of Clyffe."

"I cannot do it, Grace; you know I cannot do it; and if I could, there is no neighbors' son that is his equal. They would be flatterers all."

"Then listen, Ralph; I speak this, once for all; the curse will fall, and it is you who will have called it down. Some companionship Rue must have, or he will mope—some one that will cheer, and yet will sympathize with him—some one with the same tastes, but with a healthier spirit; one he can love, and who will return his love, and above all, one who will render Clyffe—which is now hateful to him—familiar and beloved, as you have made its frowning walls to me, Ralph; and all beneath the eye of you, his father, who thus need never lose sight of your beloved son, but will be gladdened day by day to see this blessing work."

"And in whom is such a paragon—such a flower of friendship—to be found?" asked Ralph Clyffard, gloomily.

"Where you have found some comfort or have told me so, dear husband—in a wife."

Ralph stared in silence, then—she silent too—observed, "But Rue is a mere boy, a child."

"Then let him wait—if you think there is no danger in his waiting. In the meantime, let him engage himself, let the girl reside here—here with me—and her good influence begin at once."

"But how can this be done, Grace? Who would consent to do it? Would it not arouse suspicion, too—the misfortunes of our house being known to all—the very thing we fear? What girl of fitting birth and station would thus be wooed, or rather would thus woo? You would not have my Rupert demean—"

Ralph stopped and stammered.

"You are thinking of me, husband. I am not thinking of myself, but of you and yours. I answer what you are going to say with your own words. The Clyffards like the king, confer nobility on itself." However, let us talk more of this at present; only think upon it, there may be no occasion for the remedies you seem to think so desperate. There is no hurry for a month or so."

"A month!" cried Ralph with agitation.

"Well, say, then, for two months. But remember this; once let the mischief go too far, and although your race were twice as ancient as it is, and your rent roll ten times as long, no woman gentle or simple, pure or frail, would consent to link her fate with that of Rupert Clyffard."

"I will think of it," groaned the master of Clyffe. "Leave me now, Grace; I cannot bear even your sweet company."

She stooped, touching with her lips his stern, unconscious brow, and left the chamber without a word; but on the other side of the closed door she paused, and whispered to her own triumphant face, reflected in the dark and polished oak. "The doating fool is mine; for I have sown the seed of much, and it will grow!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CLEMENT CARR DINES WITH THE FAMILY.

It has been well said, with respect to early rising, that the morning song and the evening song of most persons are very different; promises of being up with the lark, of seeing the sun rise, of having a bathe in the river before breakfast, being often given over night with an enthusiasm in strange contrast with the loathing with which you are fulfilled. We draw the bill with the utmost readiness, since the hour of payment seems so far away; but in the dark dawn of acceptance and liquidation how we curse our former facility for autograph-writing! Similar, although in inverse proportion, are the alternations of the human mind before and after food. No man save a fire-eater, can fight well fasting; whereas, after a plentiful repast, if a man

is afraid of anything, it were rank flattery to call him coward.

Thus Mr. Clement Carr, whose conduct on his arrival at Clyffe Hall before breakfast we have seen to have been almost pusillanimous, was, after breakfast, in a condition to bid defiance to the powers of at least the supernatural. He had consumed the half of a large game-pie, beside such kickshaws as trout and marmalade; while, in place of tea, he had imbibed the whole of a flagon of old ale, as well as that glass of brandy "to top off with," which is termed by would-be dyspeptic persons "a constable," and he wanted to know what the devil was meant by putting him in the housekeeper's room, and why the devil he had not been asked to breakfast with the family, and how the devil it all was. In vain did Mr. William Cator endeavor to persuade him that no personal slight had been intentionally put upon him; that it was not the custom in great houses, or, at least at Clyffe, for the gentlemen to take their morning meal together; and the Master of Clyffe himself broke his fast alone, and even dined alone.

"I shall dine in my dining-room, however," interrupted Mr. Clement with resolution. "I am not going to be fobbed off with accommodation of this sort twice; not going to be set down again at the same table with serving men like you. Fire and furies! Am I not own brother to the mistress of the house, and uncle to wash-her-name the other young woman? O cosh, I dine with the family!"

"When Mr. Gideon is here, he does not do so," returned Cator quietly.

"Well, and what then? Hoosh, Gideon I suppose I can do as I think proper? Ain't I a—?" Here Mr. Clement Carr had to contend with those sworn foes of eloquence and especially the eloquence of indignation, called the hiccupps. "Ain't I a—Trout and marmalade always gives them to me; it's most astronomy; nothing but brandy stops them. Wash is I going to say? Ain't I a gentleman bred? Wash the dush do you mean by my sleeping at the village inn? Don't interrupt, sir. O cosh, there's no village inn. I shall sleep in the best room in the house."

"That's the Blue Room, where the ghost is, Mr. Clement."

"Who kairsh for the ghost? I shall sleep in the best room, whether it's blue or green, or yellow, or whatever colorsh it is."

"Well, I dare say Miss Grace herself, as was, will be here presently," observed Mr. William Cator: "you had better tackle her about it; it's no use bragging to me." Accordingly, when the Mistress of Clyffe did pay the housekeeper's room a visit, not, however, until the morning had so far advanced that Mr. Clement Carr had seen fit to refresh himself with another meal, and had thereby kept up courage, he at once "tackled" that lady upon the lack of personal respect that had been paid to him, Clement Carr, Esq.

"I am sure I am very sorry, brother, returned she gravely; "you have had enough, however, I trust, to eat. I need not ask as to your drinking."

"What can one do but drinksh," inquired her relative in a tone half-apologetic, half-defiant; "shut up with a serving-man without any conversationsh?"

"What does he want, Cator?" inquired Mrs. Clyffard contemptuously.

"He wants to dine in the dining-room, and sleep in the Blue Chamber, ma'am."

"Best room in the house," muttered Mr. Clement.

"You are very easily satisfied, brother, and so it shall be; only before you dine, you must get sober. The young gentlemen of this family do not drink to excess, and what is more, there will be a young lady at the table."

"Only Mildred Leigh, I suppose."

"Only Mildred Leigh, sir! May I ask by what right you take upon yourself to speak in that manner of a gentlewoman whom you have never seen? If this is a specimen of your best manners, you are not fit for the dining-room of Clyffe Hall."

"But is she not my own nesh, Grace?"

"A misfortune of birth, sir, should not expose any person to rudeness. If you are determined to play the gentleman to-day, see you do not forget your part. Dine with us, sir, and welcome; but keep you away in the meantime from the ale-flagon and the brandy-flask, for—mark me—it would be better for you to drown yourself this day in yonder most than to disgrace me and mine at the table of the Clyffards!"

With this ceremonious conditional invitation to dinner, Mr. Clement Carr was fain to put up, although, when he had obtained it, he did not feel by any means comfortable. The social distinctions after which we strain and strive, with a devotion that would win us heaven, if an attempt were directed to that end, are often very disappointing; placed among the gold fish in a sphere far removed from our own, we do not feel at ease; they are only carp like ourselves, it is true, but we are conscious of the absence of the auriferous scales from our own backs. They are not lively fish, these gold ones, but their dull steady stare is extremely disconcerting; and if it were not for the after-pleasure of boasting of our experiences in the crystal bowl, we should generally wish ourselves back in our native pond. The fox who observed that the grapes that hung out of the reach of his moderate exertions were sour, made a very just remark, and one which, in my opinion by no means deserves the ridicule it has universally met with.

Mr. Clement Carr made every attempt of which he was capable to persuade the dinner-party at Clyffe that he was born with the auriferous scales, but therein signally failed, for he had not a characteristic in common with gold fish except their stupidity. He had determined to establish his character as one of the family, by kissing his niece, upon his introduction to Miss Mildred Leigh in the drawing-room; but that young lady met him with so dignified and elaborate a courtesy, that he dared not venture upon such an act of violence. Mr. Rupert Clyffard gave him his hand, and uttered a few words of polite welcome in his character of host; but Mr. Raymond drew himself up, and bowed, with no more evidence in that cold and stately curve of a desire to shake hands than is exhibited by the crescent moon. Dinner à la Russe was at that time unknown, but, for frigiditv and silence, the meal might have been served upon a steppe of Tartary. At first Mr. Clement racked his brains for a topic of conversation, but finding nothing but a dissertation upon the treatment of the insane, which it fortunately struck him

would be inopportune, he confined himself to asking everybody, one after another, to take wine; a ceremony which in each case froze him to the marrow. From a scarcity of cutlery, or some other sufficient cause, it was the custom at the Dene to retain one's knife and fork throughout the repast, and Clement stuck to his upon the present occasion, notwithstanding the reiterated efforts of the servants to remove them, with the tenacity of an ensign defending his colors. Upon the other hand, being unaccustomed to a napkin, and imagining it to be the property of the attendant, he pressed it upon his acceptance whenever he came near him; finally, on becoming conscious of both errors, he essayed the first few notes of a whistle, which elsewhere had often stood him in good stead in moments of embarrassment; but catching his sister's basilisk glance fixed sternly upon him, the tune quavered into silence, and he broke out into a profuse perspiration.

With much greater equanimity, as she had already hinted, could Mrs. Clyffard have borne to see her brother taken out dead and dripping, by the heels, from the castle moat, than thus misbehave himself. She dreaded to leave him alone with those young gentlemen (one of them, too, her sworn foe) when his tongue should be loosened by wine; and yet she could scarcely summon him to leave with the ladies, as though he were a little boy. Nor, indeed, would he have obeyed her. He looked for the departure of the hostess and her niece as the period when he should begin to recompense himself for the past restraint, as a gentleman attached to strong liquors, who had taken the temperance pledge for a limited time, regards the date of his franchise. Nor, when the opportunity arrived, did Mr. Clement Carr throw away his chance. Bumper after bumper, bottle after bottle, did he drink, and still did his youthful host and Mr. Raymond keep him company, as in duty bound. He had now not the slightest difficulty in selecting a topic of conversation, nor in illustrating the same when found, with much inappropriate grimace and gesticulation. He had really some talent for imitating the lower animals, and by the exercise of this accomplishment, he transformed the stately dining chamber of Clyffe Hall into a dog-kennel, a nursery for kittens, and a sty tenanted by a sow with a young family. Later in the evening, he arose and caught an imaginary bumble-bee in the red damask curtains, and pursued a fictitious mouse upon all fours, till it found shelter under the sideboard. Never did performer, bent upon making himself agreeable, exhibit before so undemonstrative an audience. Mr. Rupert smiled, but it was with polite amazement. Mr. Raymond smiled, but it was with something like gratified revenge. Yet there was a feeling common to both, though unconfessed by either, which made them regret that their guest's vulgarity was of so very pronounced a type; and it was this same reason which caused the young men to look at one another, with their eyebrows raised, when Mr. Clement Carr expressed his opinion (somewhat tardily) that he had had enough of liquor, and that it was time to join the ladies.

"I think it is too late," observed Rupert quietly, "to join the ladies to-night; indeed they have probably left the drawing-room."

"Stuff a nonshensh," returned Mr. Carr; "mush't av a song. I musht get a song out of Mish Mildred; schmack her sholderssh elah."

"What!" exclaimed the brothers, starting up with a single impulse, and regarding their guest with flashing eyes.

"My nesh," exclaimed Mr. Carr, apologetically; "my own nesh, you know. Now, which of you young vag—that is, young gentlemen—are sweet upon her? You, Mr. Rupert, ish it? Or ish it you, Mr. Raymond? Ha, ha, I've foundish you out. Leave me alone for seeing into a—"

"Sir," interrupted Rupert with dignity, "these remarks are most offensive, and must not be repeated. You are not in a fit state to enter a drawing-room."

"Whash a matter with me?" inquired Mr. Carr with virtuous warmth.

"You are drunk," observed Raymond impetuously. "Do not venture to utter that lady's name again within my hearing."

"Hoity-toity!" replied the guest; "so it's you who are her sweetheart, ish it? Shly dog!"

"What my brother has said," observed Rupert hastily, "is what I feel myself, and what every gentleman must feel." He laid a stress upon the word, such as could not escape the observation even of one less sober than the person he addressed.

"Take you care, Rupert Clyffard," answered Clement, stung for the once into sober rage. "I have clipped the wings of as fierce bantams as you; you may come some day into my—"

"Your what?" asked a woman's voice, low and clear as the song of a snake charmer. "What folly is this you talk, Clement? I am afraid you have been setting these young gentlemen but a bad example. How late you sit over your wine! Mildred has retired to her room, and I should have done likewise, had I not been attracted on my way by what sounded almost like a broil."

"There was no broil, madam," observed Raymond haughtily; "there was only Mr. Clement Carr."

"Whash a matter now?" inquired the latter gentleman, awakened by the mention of his name from a slumber (induced by his sister's harangue) of the probable duration of two seconds, but which had left his mind a blank as to all past transactions.

"Whash a matter, Grace?"

"Follow me, sir, and I will show you your room," observed Mrs. Clyffard icily. "It is the Blue Room, is it not?"

"The best room in the house," returned Clement triumphantly, "whatever colorsh it is."

She led him up the grand old staircase, ample enough for a hearse and four, to pass its fellow—along the picture-gallery, silent, but all eyes, and through an echoing passage, where, from out of the dim obscure, four footfalls seemed to come forth to meet their own.

"What a long way to come to bed!" observed Clement greatly sobered by their cold and lonely travel, as well as by certain apprehensions which were gradually making themselves apparent, pushing their heads up like coral islands above the ocean of wine which he had swallowed. "And wash my room got three doors

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