A Story of Love and Daring.

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

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SCENE THROUGH THE SKY-LIGHT.

There are some men, whom one cannot itself (and yet somehow fails to do so) to public admiration. There are others, again, who shrink from giving pain to their fellow creatures, as from a surgical operaand selfish-who are moral Epicureans. Although Ralph Clyffard was a good man (as good men went in those days), he was one of these. He had a kind heart, and would have wounded nobody's feelings, if he could have helped it; but if somebody all." must needs be offered the cold shoulder, it was not likely to be that person upon whom his own happiness and comfort principally depended; it was not likely to be that person least of all. Expediency and Raymond. Throughout the interview, he if I do not prove my words!" he suffered him to say on.

military honors—what say you to a com- approval. mission in His Majesty's Foot Guards? "One moment, father," cried Raymond, Money, my dear Ray, you may be sure, laying his hand upon his arm, "I have will never be a subject upon which we shall staked all on this, and must go through disagree. At my death, you will at once with it; but it is for your sake I have done succeed to your mother's little portion, and it, as much, ay, more than for my own. thrice as much again. I have not forgotten | You have a right to look there; but though you in my will, Ray, and in the meantime she were Jezebel herself, I would not play -I wish you to want for nothing-here are spy without her husband's leave. That is notes to a considerable amount --- "

"What! father; am I to leave Clyffe at out-of-doors without warning!"

"Nay, lad, I meant not that; a week hence, nay, a month, if you will have it so; burning as bright and purely as though it ing. There had never, at least, been so mond now have borne her company all There are arrangements to be made, of course, friends to be written to, interest to look!" be made.

and pitying smile; he was not angry, son; then with a great effort he strode for. thew on his dressing gown, and started of Clyffe approved and smiled upon her. though deeply grieved; he well knew that ward rapidly, but firmly, and gazed down hitner as soon as I. He took the passage Such gentle ministering must, in her aunt's the old man was mentally contending, not through the sky-light upon what was pass- by my lady's room, meaning to call her by opinion, have, as her own had, some sel-

the young man reproachfully; "and now against his broken heart, and fell back- her; and it was strange to see how all should use. that she who has won it all away

things ?"

them," answered the old man hurriedly, patting the stripling's head with his great hand. "You are still very dear to me; you are indeed. Dear Ray! -dear Ray! Never

weep, lad; that is not like a Clyffard." "Who has seen me weep, save you?" returned the young man passionately. "But I have a heart, which some have not, believe me, who can weep when they please."

Ralph Clyffard knit his brows. "Hush!" said he; "that is Mildred playing the organ in the gallery, is it not? How placed his hand upon his heart, and really come? Was the game quite lost? I say! Lay but a finger on his sacred man's illness, while it weakened his physi-

tinued the young man earnestly, "I trust been unmistakable—faith shattered, love it; the precious time this fool had wasted had been indeed vouchsafed him, surely,

old man, still gazing on the night. "The her sworn enemy! it was to him doubtless, "For my father's sake," said the comfort herself with; but it scarcely time is drawing near when I shall be but a that she was indebted for this evil turn. young man, answering through his set fulfilled its office. She could not always

"yearning like a god in pain," was heard clean thing, he turned and fled. tumultuous.

story of our race, and of its curse, has been strange attire," she murmured; "the fool in a fit or something." combined together to make his wife's will the vision which you have seen so often is the harbinger of death. How were it if I mond?" sobbed Mrs. Clyffard. a law unto him, and to cause him to look no illusion indeed, but worse, the cruel really be so? 'My father is dying,' said coldly upon whomsoever she had cast out kick of a guileful woman; that the Fair he. Perhaps his heart has killed him, as the young man sternly. chamber, with the object of telling him dupe and fool you --- Strike, father, if you more. If I have the smoothing of Ralph son who was so dear to him!" that he was not wanted at home, the will, but listen. Nay, then, do but use Clyffard's pillow, another dawn shall never Master of Clyffe did not look forward to a your eyes!" Raymond opened a little trouble his vexed soul again."

man had to say for himself; and even streaming in the autumn wind, his bronzed ber where her husband had supped, and when that defence took something of the face pale with rage, and in expectation of whence the sound of many voices and the form of accusation of Mrs. Clyffard herself, he knew not what, the Master of Clyffe tramp of many feet could now be heard. followed close upon his younger son. The "I do not deny, son Raymond," rejoined | moon was small and hidden at times by the old man, pacing the little chamber to the flying clouds: but there was light and fro with his hands behind him, "that enough from it and from the stars to show you have something to complain of. Your the vast expanse of roofing, diverse in form step-mother has, I fear, been somewhat as any frozen sea-here level, there ridged; imperious; while you, Ray, on the other here rising four square, there shooting hand, are not of a conciliatory disposition. into pinnacles and gables. The various There are troubles enough threatening this periods of the stately place were pictured house without the continuance of this there to the antiquarian eye in the horiannatural dissension-I cannot bear it. zontal section; not a ray from within was I have come to the conclusion that, for the to be seen save in one spot, to which they present at least, it would be better that were rapidly drawing near; this shone you should absent yourself; travel is an through a sequestered sky-light, set in the excellent thing for a young man of your right angle, formed by the junction of two age; spend, therefore, the next few months towers. Three hideous gargoyles leaned or a year abroad. When you were quite a from their stone bases, as though to lad, you used to be very ambitious of peep down at the scenes below, and grinned

Mrs. Clyffard's private chamber, sir."

once? Even a servant is not thus turned hoarsely; "she bade me 'good-night' ere you joined me at the supper-table.'

there shall be no haste, no harshness. were an altar-candle in the chapel yonder. good a Clyffard as this last.

Raymond looked at his father with a sad leaned heavily upon the shoulder of his returned a domestic respectfully; "and he and since she was not his sister, the Lady with him, but with another not then pre- ing in the room beneath. For a few the way— But here is my lady, sir." moments there he stood, unmoving, with Ralph mistook his glance. "Is the eyes that devoured the scene; then over her dress only half fastened, and her hair now; it was "Mildred, love," or at least money not enough, good lad? Then let his face a shadow fell, as falls on him who disheveled, like one suddenly aroused in "my pretty Mildred," whenever she me double it. Heaven knows, I have at the grave's mouth looks his very last her preparations for retiring to bed. addressed her niece in Rupert's hearing, upon the wife he loves; and uttering one "What is the matter?" cried she. "Nothing but your love, father," returned great cry of anguish, he pressed his hand

Raymond sprang towards him, and, as ride? The boy whose light-hearted laugh, was practicing her role before the tire-glass. from lothing or from respect? you said, was the only music you cared to The shroud was in one had, and needle have unmasked the foul fiend himself, "No, Ray, no-I have not forgotten though clad in angelic garments. One his breath. instant, she stared upward as though spellbound, and then quenched the light.

Mrs. Clyffard had not seen her husband that his stern reproachful eyes would have fessed, "I cannot wed Rupert, fall! but there were some precious moments given her the like answer. before her yet, she knew. Swiftly she "My poor, poor Ralph!" exclaimed the have been to produce a catastrophe such entered the next chamber, which was her widow-for death was already setting that as she dared not even picture to herself, ewn, and seizing a large jewel case from blank, which is its signature to our release since its consequences would certainly have the dressing table, emptied its glittering from all worldly cares, upon the slowly extended to her lover. She feared, with contents into her pocket! from a small stiffening face—"and am I only here in reason for his very life; and so the poor locked drawer in the same table she took a time to close thine eyes?" sighed, then listened in silence, with his She paused upon the threshold of her brow, which you have helped to wrinkle cal strength, seemed to have healed his eyes turned to the unshuttered window and chamber, and worried her own fair lips and I will take you by the throat, and pro- mental malady. There was nothing now with her sharp teeth. Yes! utterly lost. claim your crime!" "Father, since I am to leave you," con- The expression of her husband's face had He had not, then, at present proclaimed look beside its love and if returning reason that you will listen to a few last words, misplaced, unutterable pain and shame, were golden moments to her indeed. An with his natural generosity to second it, he which may be the very last that will ever had been all pictured there. He had been accusation thus delayed was already robbed would withdraw—when her dread hour of undeceived with a vengence. That other of half its danger. Why had Raymond confession came—from his unwelcome "They may be indeed," returned the form, too, she had seen was Raymond's- spared her? memory to you, Raymond; then think She had been baffled, beaten by that teeth her unspoken question, "I have forget how insecure was the foundation of spoken word to plight my troth to yourge hateful boy. That was the bitterest draught spared you hitherto; not because 1 love this hopeful faith; for not only might to prove med me then because the prove med me the prove med me then because the prove med me the prove me the prove med me the prove med me the prove med me the prove me the prove med me the prove me the prove med me the prove me the prove med me the prove me t "Say not so, father; you are yet strong in all the cup. How came he wandering you—you fair devil!—but that I would not Rupert's seeming calmness be untrustand hale; I trust there are many happy on the leads at midnight in this fashion? the world should know how this great and worthy, even as matters were, but a revela-So, doubtless, however, it had happened, and seeing what he saw, he had brought his father to look likewise. Curse the first time in her life worth, even as matters were, but a revelation was at present withheld from him, which was likely to try it sorely. He had been vehence to look likewise. Curse the first time in her life worth, even as matters were, but a revelation was at present withheld from him, which was likely to try it sorely. He had been vehence to look likewise. Curse the "Happy!" interrupted the Master of and seeing what he saw, he had brought woman?" Clyffe with a quiet scorn; "how should a his father to look likewise. Curse the For the first time in her life, Grace not as yet been told of his father's death. Clyffard having a son, be happy? I speak cunning boy? And yet, was she not her-Clyffard quailed and shuddered; the con-When given to understand that he was not!" not of you, Ray; your light and wayward self to blame, running the risk she did, centrated passion with which the young ill, he had received the information with nature may be somewhat out of tune with however small, of such unmitigated ruin? man spoke was terrible to listen to. She quiet sorrow but without surprise. "I

"Nor in Rupert either," answered the ened at the thought. No, she dared not tones of her step-son. She knew that course avoided. He meant to say that he sorrowfully; "and though I prize it—being was speaking; or perhaps he already knew to beat such an assailant back. all that I may claim, it seems—yet will I all, and addressed her thus imperiously, as "Away, away, fiend!" muttered her step- words. tion on themselves, not necessarily from risk its forfeiture. If I tell you lies I will one upon whom courtesy and all fair son furiously; "your presence is pollution high, or even benevolent motives, but give you leave to hate me; nay, if I do not dealing would be thrown away. "Quick, -your work is done here. That poor a-" Running towards her in hot haste, Away, I say!" "Prove what, Raymond?" asked the old calling thus, both speech and motion Mrs. Clyffard arose from her knees with "I am thinking of one who would have man with kindling eyes. "Trust me, having seemed to fail him all upon a sudden; with as little haste as she dared to use. As she loved his father well, if there had been

flowed forth from the wound toward poor down upon the stones of yonder court-yard self in the dress she had worn that evening; then stepping forth into the now vacant was patient in listening to what the young With hasty and uneven steps, his hair gallery, took the way that led to the cham-

CHAPTER XV. OVER THE BODY.

In the same room where father and son had talked together of parting a few minutes back, Ralph Clyffard lay upon a little couch, with Raymond kneeling by his side. Another sort of parting than that of which they had spoken was taking place, and the stiffening fingers could not even return the lad's mute pressure in token of farewell. The mighty chest of the Master of Clyffe still rose and fell, but in uneven spasms, as though his gloomy soul was to death; but for his step-mother's cunstruggling to flit away. Around stood ning hand, which bled him ere the leech many a serving man and maid, summoned could reach the castle, Raymond would by that mysterious messenger misfortune, surely have been heir of Clyffe; while afterthat flies so swift and far, and to whom wards the sick man would have sunk had the night is as the day. Scarce one of them it not been for her niece. Long weeks had ever before ventured to intrude upon his elapsed before his head could leave the pilprivacy, but now they watched him with low, where it lay calm and patient, while reverence, but without fear, setting forth Mildred was in his chamber, and restless, upon that journey which rich and poor with roving eyes, when she was absent must alike make. One groom had already Her voice revived his failing strength like been dispatched for a doctor, another for a wine; her hand upon his brow was as the priest; but somehow it was known to all magnetic charm which beckons away all that their lord would never open his proud pain, and as the precious drug which "She is not up," returned the old man eyes again. They had been kind eyes, for dowers the dullest with delicious dreams. all their pride—the voice, now hushed for- It pleased her well to be of service to him; ever, had been a gracious one to all his she gave up rest, and exercise, and pleasure "She is up, father; that is her light, household. Some honest tears were fall- beyond words to tell (for might not Ray-

Raymond huskily. For an instant the Master of Clyffe "I told him what had happened, sir,"

became conscious at once of their relative

knees beside his pillow.

leathern purse, filled tightly with bank- "Touch him not!" hissed Raymond passion with which Rupert was consumed notes. "I did not dream when I began fiercely. "Have you not heard that, when yet trusting that the flame would never grandly it swells forth into the summer this hoard," she muttered, "that the day a murdered man is touched by the vile gain such head but that her "no" at last night; something divine seems gathering whereon to use it was so near, or it would hand that slew him, the blood will flow might quench it, or at all events procras have been thrice as large." Had the day afresh from his drained wounds? Beware, tinate, as before, the evil day. The young

ance of him. "Make haste!" cried he- brother Gideon much like that, just ere he his son marry, Mildred?" "That must be light love, father, which "quick-quick!" He spoke impatiently, had strove to tear him limb from limb. She was in the act of handing him a cup

pleasant evening. His conscience pricked door in the Turret chamber, and flung it Hastily she put away her black garment room. "Heaven forefend that I should you by my side; for as some eastern king Lady of Clyffe, as she hurried to Rupert's paid indeed. Smile on me now, and seat him, and the milk of human kindness wide. "Follow me," cried he; "and cast me in a safe and secret place, and attired her- have frightened the fool to death! My delights in hearing his own greatness protenure of Clyffe is valueless indeed if it claimed to his own ear, so yearn I, Mildred, has to be shared by that dark boy yonder; to hear you say, 'I love you,' although yet even in such a case, I will be revenged none knows you do so well as I." His upon him. He has missed his turn; but nerveless hand closed on one glossy curl, when my turn comes round, look to your- and carried it to his lips; while, lapped no self, Raymond Clyffard! No man shall less in the sweet assurance of reciprocated make me pale as you have done, and live love than in the calm content that comes to boast of it. I would that Gideon were to the recovering frame long racked by here, or Cator, or even the poor coward sickness, he waited for her answer. Clement. This Mildred is scarce safe; she | "Rupert," said she, " I thought that the nerves me, but it is with grudging. If last time we spoke of-the last time, that Rupert lives this bout, he must be married is, this subject was touched upon by you, to her, mad or sane. If she denies him- we agreed to wait awhile before it was let her, too, look to herself. I have not resumed. When I then said, 'You are

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EXTORIED PROMISE.

Rupert Clyffard was very ill, and near She is dressing for her part to-night. Look! "Where is my brother Rupert?" asked glad at heart that she had such such opportunities of proving her good will towards fish end; and what end could this be save Mrs. Clyffard entered very swiftly, with one alone? She never called her "child" as though she would have suggested to his No one answered, but all made way for mind the very words which he himself

So helpless and enfeebled was poor Rupfrom me may not requite you ill for so he did so, could not but see that which had arrived. Some even left the room, awak- nothing but his weakness, and how she so moved his father. In a small room, ened to the consciousness of having no might conduce to his recovery. But when "Raymond, you do me wrong; I love windowless save for the sky-light which business there, and fearing sharp rebuke. the color came back to his cheeks, and you, boy; how should I not have love for had betrayed her, stood Mrs. Clyffard, Quite a great space was left between the some vigor to his limbs, and he could sit up with her eyes cast up in terror and dismay; half-circle of curious domestics and the and talk to her, Mildred almost regretted "Ay, how should you not?" returned the they had met her husband's downward couch where the young man was still kneel- her past kindness. He was grateful to her, young man bitterly. "The babe you gaze at the very moment when she, in the ing by his father's side. Had Raymend of course, but with his expressions of gratidanced upon your knees so often—your quaint black robe in which she was wont spoken against her yet, or had her husband tude was mingled something warmer, which blackbirdie? The child you took before to play her guileful part, and with her had voice to speak? Had the servants she could not affect not to understand, and you upon your pommel for many a breezy black hair loose, and fallen to her waist, withdrawn thus suddenly at her approach yet which in Mrs. Clyffard's presence she dared not utterly reject. Though her aunt listen to? How should you not, indeed? and thread in the other, while her face wore husband?" murmured she, falling upon her the girl well knew that only so much the "What has happened to my own dear felt satisfaction at present with her conduct, greater would be her hate and fury when "Murder!" returned Raymond, under she came to learn the truth. Nor was Mildred, to blame for this dissimulation. It She did not hear him so much as to see | was not a matter with which " moral courthe movement of his lips, but even without age" had anything to do. To have con

girl temporized, only too well aware of the mine, and may vex and anger others; but there is nothing in you to cause the current have used a light at all? Could Mildred guile with their own weapons, but not the reference to the immediate cause of his rightly come under the head of current have betrayed her? Her fair face black- physical fury which was revealed in the own ailment, all allusion to which was of literature.

young man resolutely, while the organ have done it. Her trembling fingers, had she stood in danger of that awful some- had seen the herald of calamity in the Fair pealed and thundered; "although it may she been privy to the scheme, could never thing whose shadow was on Raymond Lady of Clyffe, and was prepared for be some one's interest to make his father have beaten out those organ thunders, Clyffard's face—that if she dared to insult domestic misfortune. Still, it was strange think so. What I would say to you, father, which even now were swelling through the that forehead-already loosing its pained that he never asked after his father-laid has reference to this very matter, and are house. She was still playing, and there- look, and growing calm and cold, with her long since by the side of the Clyffards mad words of warning, not of hate, upon mine fore her aunt could not make her exit, as false lips, Raymond would surely rise and and sane, in the chapel vault-nor remarked she had meant to do, through the great perhaps strangle her. She did not mind upon the sable suits all around him. This "Being thus requested, I cannot refuse gallery. She opened another door, and what things they might say against her— was not, however, because he had not thee, Raymond; yet remember that it is the went out thence. She did not wish to meet her chief peril in that respect was passed observed them. One morning, Mrs. Clyflast draught which leaves its flavor on the a human being! She would leave Clyffe -but she feared his powerful fingers. Once fard, doubtless by design, having left the help envying, that will as readily execute a palate, and men who would be praised for and all it held and begin life again else- round her throat, they might not part with room, and the sick man and Mildred being painful duty as confer a benefit of pleasure; their good wine, offer not their friends its where. She was fair as ever, and not poor, it again; it may be that she judged him by left alone together, he addressed her thus. who feel no embarrasment whatever at lees at parting. My heart is towards you, as she had been at first—but alas! here herself in that; but certainly dark Ray- It was the first day he was able to leave having to say a disagreeable thing, and Raymond; it is indeed. I pray you turn was Rupert coming, and at speed, in the mond had a look she well might fear. She his bed, and that only for a sofa. "How whose facility for managing unpleasant it not away just as we are about to separ- narrow passage; there could be no avoid- had once seen Cyril at the Dene look at her soon, think you, after a man has died, may

is so lightly lost," returned the young man and seemed scarce to knew to whom he She had no leaded weapon, as Gideon had, of broth, and her tremulous fingers almost refused their office, as she listened to his

"How soon, Mildred?" said he again. prove that I speak truth, then you shall I say; my father is ill—is dying; bring a— abused fond ear can drink in lies no more. cannot answer. It depends upon the love

said so much, though it grows near to mid- mouth agape with terror, and eyes starting did so, a female servant touched her on the room within his heart; but there was no night, and I need my rest, you shall say from their sockets, he stood dumb, then, shoulder; "Mr. Rupert is taken very ill, room. There was space for nothing there shrinking from before her with fear and madam. Miss Mildred is with him, and but love for the girl who was to be his wife Above his hoarse deep tones the organ, loathing, as from some terrible and un- has help, but she bid me tell you as soon -You tremble, dearest. Pretty fluttering as possible. She was coming hither her- dove. How soon, how soon, sweet heart?" For a moment, Grace Clyffard watched self, and came upon him lying upon the His languid eyes looked on her earnestly, "I will prove then, father, that the sad him with irresolute eyes. "I forgot my floor in the passage close by his own door, but without a trace of doubt, as one who convenience, as well as doting fondness, all made the handle of deceit and fraud; that takes me for the fair lady; he thinks I am Do you hear this new misfortune, Ray fall between his palms while another shakes the tree. "Whatsweet revenge you "Ay, go you to my brother," returned have taken on yourself, for your pretence of from her good graces. But, at the same Lady of Clyffe"—("Achieved is the he always thought it would. If so, all may And as she moved away with anguished to be my nurse before you are my bride time, he would never knowingly have com- Glorious Work" here broke forth jubilant yet be well My word is as good as Ray- but tearless eyes, and firm, swift tread, the __that is rare indeed. I will not think mitted an injustice to please her; and it and full, and stormed about their ears in mond's. Who will believe an idle tale like bystanders murmured to one another, "How that pain itself could shadow that fair was very painful to him even to do what wild acclaim)—" that the haunter of our this, vouched for but by a dead man and a wise and strong she is in all this trouble! brow, or shrink that dimpled cheek; but was harsh. Thus when he invited his sechouse is flesh and blood; nay, is the boy. I will put by this masquerading gear, How dutifully she leaves the beloved dead, if ever it doth, my Mildred, I will wait upon ond son to sup with him in his own turret woman whom you have made your wife, to and play my own part of a tender wife once for whom she can do no more, to tend the you day and night, counting all toil as pleasure, all weariness as bliseful rest; and "In a fit or something," soliloquized the while you have strength to smile, be over-

gone so far to turn back now; and though I still very young, Rupert,' I did not mean be alone, I am yet a match for all of them. too young by weeks or even months but years."

"Am I so young, dear girl?" said he, with a tender smile. "I thank heaven for it. There will be then more time in which to show my love to you. How happy shall we be together, and how long! Youth is sweet-ah! me, how sweet it is-and after youth there is the prime; and then beyond the prime is that which I have read as best of all—the calm content of tried and faithful love; two hearts bound up in one, with joys, regrete, and memories in common. My bud, my full-bloomed flower-my rose, whose faded leaves (if you can fade) shall be odorous and precious to the end, ah, how I love you!"

Mildred's heart sank within her. If she had been his wedded wife already, the young man could scarcely have uttered these words with a more settled faith. "Why speak of this, which we were not

to speak of, Rupert?" "Because, sweet, there is no longer any reason for keeping silence. I am the Master of Clyffe now, and there is none to say me 'nay,' when I say 'yea.' Moreover, I have learned that my good father gave his consent in private to our union, so the very dead will smile upon our nuptials; while your Aunt Grace- Nay, then I will not mention her, since you dislike her, but she has been a trustworthy friend to me, Mildred. When the light of love was low within my cheerless heart, she fanned its embers with encouragement; not that she knew why they were so faint and pale; not that she guessed the secret-ah, you have not forgotten it, I see. I hoped you had, Mildred. There is no need to remember it any more. By you, fair saint, that demon has been exorcised, I hope."

His voice, so confident hitherto, though low and weak, here wavered and broke off. His hand, which he would have carried to his forehead, failed by the way, and sank down, as it happened, upon hers; then straightway, as though revived, Anteuslike, by that sweet contact, he spoke again. "She bade me woo you, since I loved you so-that surely was no evil counsel, Mildred? and when I found you cold, she bade me press my suit—did she not do well? 'Twas she that sent you to me on that morning to her private chamber-"

"I knew it," interrupted the girl gravely; and sent you, too, to Ribble Cave to spy upon your brother." " Mildred !"

"Ay, Rupert; she came between Raymond and his own father, and now she would come between Raymond and you. She is the go-between of hate, and not of love; her offices are evil and not good. The tender mercies of the wicked, Rue, are oruel."

"She is not cruel to me, Mildred, but kind," returned the young man; "and strange it is that, though she stands not in your favor, it is for your sake only that she stands in mine. For her I have no more liking than the sailor hath for the biting north wind, whose favoring gale is bearing him for the wished for haven. She would wreck me if it suited her purpose, I doubt not; but since her interest and my happiness are fellow passengers---

"Be not so sure of that, Rupert Clyffard," broke in Mildred earnestly. "Beware lest there is no pleasant shore awaiting you, no isles of paradise-beware rather tha she is not driving you on the rocks. If she suit. Something like this she framed to has represented what poor tendance I have paid you in this sickness in any other light to proxy-wed me, then has she deceived both me and you-nay more, if she has