LORD KILLEEN'S REVENGE

CHAPTER XXX.

The coarse insult was not completed, he had barely time to notice how she blanched and shrunk from him in her hurt purity, when the sound of a woman's hurrying feet along the graveled path caught her ear. All minor passions died then, her heart flew back to her child. She confronted the nurse (who now appeared, breathless, pale, and terrified), and cried aloud to her in her terror, with white lips, and hands tightly pressed against her bosom.

"What is it? What?" she gasped.

"The baby, my lady. She is not so well. The doctor is with her. He—"

"She is not dead!" said Lady Varley in a low, awful tone. She looked at the woman as though she would tear the answer from her. "Speak, woman, speak!"

"Oh, no, my lady—God forbid. But the doctor—"

Lady Varley did not hear her; she had rushed passed her, putting Varley, who was in her path, to one side by a quick gesture, as though he had been a branch, or some other inanimate obstruction. She ran through the ivied gate and into the brilliant sunshine of the garden once more, seeing nothing, heeding nothing, feeling numbed, blind, senseless. The lovely, glowing life around her seemed to mock at her misery. The flowers that bloomed into a fresh existence every moment, what could they give to her of hope, since her sweet blossom was fading, dying! Yet, though she hurried past them with white lips and strained eyes that seemed dead to their beauties, and though she herself was unconscious that she saw them, the glory of that summer noon, dwelled with her, and cast a shadow over her during the long years of her after life.

She reached the nursery at last. What a year it was to her since that terrible moment when she had seen the anxious face of the woman! The doctor was there, bending over the little snowy cot, and Constantia came hurriedly forward as she entered. But she pushed her aside, and went up to the bed. She did not see even the doctor then, she saw only the tiny occupant—she saw what was her life, her heart, her all! There seemed little change, but to the mother it was awful. She had fought passionately against the truth, but now it came home to her. Her darling was indeed going from her. She looked. She fell upon her knees. Some broken words came from her miserable lips: "Blessed Lord, have pity! Thy mercy it is great—it is everlasting! But—where is it?"

She fell forward on the bed; she had given up to despair. Constantia tried to raise her, but she repulsed her gently, and the doctor, who was a kindly man, and who understood, took her aside, and sent her into the boudoir to rest—and wait. He himself went into an adjoining chamber, that the poor mother might feel herself alone with her dying child.

How the day went, no one knew; but the hours followed each other, and at last darkness fell upon the earth. Some one lighted the lamps, moving with cautious step and slow; but no one spoke to Lady Varley, who crouched beside the bed with her eyes devouring her little one, as though she believed it could not be taken from her, so long as she thus held it in her sight. Now and then the doctor crept in and looked at the child; but nothing could be done for it. A gentle sleep had caught it, the end of which would be death.

And at midnight all was over! Lady Varley upon whose arm the little head was lying, made an inarticulate cry, and threw out her unoccupied arm toward the doctor in a mute agony that unnerved him, strong as he was. He caught her hand and held it firmly.

"Let us thank God," he said, "that there was no pain, no struggle."

She flung him from her.

"I am thankful for nothing," she said defiantly.

"Lady Varley! such words just now! Look at her," said the good doctor very tenderly.

To look at the little, still, heavenly face, was to be indeed calmed. A cry broke from her in which all her heart went out. After awhile she spoke.

"If I might be alone with her," she said faintly; "she and I—together!"

"I will arrange that for you," he said.

She scarcely heard him; she had taken the small dead form into her arms and was crushing it against her breast as though she could still, by her own warmth, reanimate it. She had apparently forgotten him, and presently he withdrew silently; he did not desert her, however. All that night through he sat in a chamber, apart but near, where he could see her occasionally from the open door, and where he could direct the women who, after a little while, saw to the last solemn laying out of the peaceful little body.

By that time the gray dawn of the peaceful morning was stealing in; one of the women had drawn back a curtain, but Lady Varley, by a silent, passionate gesture had compelled her to close it again. How was she to face another day, bereft as she was? The child seemed still with her whilst the darkness that had taken her away lasted, but to begin another day without her—she could not do that.

She sat on, beside the little bed, holding one of the child's dead hands within her own—tearless, comfortless, alone! Dr. Moore, coming in presently and seeing the strange, set look upon her face, felt a little uneasy, and touched her shoulder and said something to her in a quick, energetic way. She assented listlessly as if not understanding, and with a sharp decision he himself once more drew aside the curtains, and let a rush of early sunrise into the room.

That roused her. She started as if a knife had been plunged into her, and suddenly the anguish quickened in her eyes, and all her loss grew plain to her. But that was better than the dangerous apathy that had held her awhile since. She looked haggard and wretched in the cold light of the growing day, and utterly without hope. She had no husband, and to-day she had no child; where was consolation to be looked for, under the sun?

Constantia, who had not slept, and who had spent a miserable, tear-stained night walking two and fro, and stealing every now and then to the doorway to see how it was with her, now approached timidly, and kneeling beside her, laid a nervous hand upon her knee. Lady Varely turned and looked at her with melancholy eyes. Constantia had expected an outburst, had indead dreaded a command that would have sent her forth again, but Lady Varley's glance was calm as despair could make it, and her eyes, dry and tearless, regarded the girl without displeasure.

"It is you, Connie," she said indifferently. Then her eyes wandered back again to the tiny corpse. A quiver ran through her that shook all her slender frame. "They have told you?" she said. "Yes, it is true. She is dead— quite dead!"

As she was speaking, Lord Varley appeared in the doorway, and stood there hesitating. Scenes were abhorrent to him. He had, of course, been told of the child's death almost immediately on its occurrence but had shrunk from going then to his wife, knowing well that he was the last one in the world who could give her comfort of any sort. Now, at last, shame, fear of what the world would say, drove him to her presence; but though her large, wild eyes wandered to where he stood, she took no notice of him—indeed, hardly appeared to see him. She bent her head, and laid her lips upon the little cold, wan cheek.

"Dead, dead!" she said again convulsively, turning to Constantia. Great heaven! what a face they gazed upon! . . . She forgot them after a moment or two, and went back to her forlorn watching of her baby. There was something greedy in her expression. The tiny waxen hand was lying within hers, as she gazed, she smoothed it softly, lovingly, oh, how tenderly! as though her very soul was wrapped in contemplation of its fairness.

"Was there ever such a little hand!" she said. "Where is its counterpart?"

She sighed heavily. Varley, after a hasty word or two to the doctor, who received them coldly, beat a hasty retreat; but his wife seemed unaware of his coming or going. In truth, she knew only, saw only the dead form of the child who had been her all in all.

Constantia crept close to her, and encircled her with her arms. She was frightened.

"Do not look like that," she entreated, in a low tone. "Try to think of—" she hesitated—"of Heaven," she would have said, but the words died on her lips. Lady Varley pressed her arm.

"Is that your advice?" she said, with a strange smile—"to think! To think!" She raised her right hand to her head, and pushed back the hair from her forehead. "You fear I shall give way," she went on, presently, "Do not. The worst has come. For the future no pain can touch me. The worst is mine, my portion!" She bent over the bed with that awful hunger in her eyes that had already unnerved Constantia. But her manner was singularly calm. "How pretty she looks!" she said. "Have you noticed? My darling, my baby! Dear Lord, what have I done to Thee? What have I done?"

There was no violence in her tone; the question was breathed soft and low, to the Great Giver and—the Great Taker of all. If there was reproach in it, it was gently uttered. Her voice was subdued, as though she feared to disturb the deathless sleep of the infant.

Constantia, who was sobbing silently, still knelt beside her; but after a little while Lady Varley seemed to forget that she was there. She sat motionless, except that once or twice she stooped to caress the dead child, or murmur over it some loving word.

The doctor, who was growing seriously uneasy as he noted her manner, at last made a step forward and signed to Constantia to rise. As she did so, Lady Varley rose too, and turning, called aloud to the nurse in a sharp, imperious tone.

"It grows late," she cried. "Where is baby's bath? Surely it is past the hour! You—you—"

Dr. Moore went quickly up to her. As he caught her hands she looked vaguely into his face, then suddenly flung her arms above her head, and fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER XXXI.

For many days she lay in a sort of stupor, dense enough to prevent her fully realizing the extent of her loss. This seemed to those attached to her a rather merciful happening than otherwise. It spared her at least the last poignant details—the laying in the coffin, the burial, and other mournful rites.

Constantia herself placed the little body in its last bed, and bade it farewell with many tears. Such a wan, frail little creature as it looked, lying shrouded in its grave-clothes, with all the wealth of waxen blossoms round it that the weeping nurse had placed within the tiny coffin, and that were scarcely as waxen as the small, tired baby they encircled.

It was such a mournful sight, that bit of a coffin and its inmate, that they were all silently grateful that the mother was spared the sight. Many tears were shed over it before the cruel lid hid the little one from sight, and for a long time afterward Norah, who loved it and had often been allowed to nurse it, was inconsolable.

The day after the child had been laid within the grave, Lady Varley awoke to consciousness once more, and lay prone and passive on her pillows, but in full possession of her senses. Yet she made no mention of the dead baby. There was something in her face— a strange, new, listless expression—that convinced them more than words could do that she remembered all that had passed—that she understood how the priceless treasure that had been lent to her for so short a time, and to which she had clung with such a desperate longing, had been taken away from her forever! Who shall say what she saw in the poor little thing to raise such a frenzy of devotion in her breast? It was sickly, weakly, barely alive; yet because she was its mother she loved it, and cared for it, and would in truth have gladly laid down her own sad life for it. It had been snatched from her outstretched arms, and all her heart lay bleeding; but if she felt grief, she made no sign. Some of those around her at this time felt some disappointment at her seeming indifference; but Constantia, who in a vague fashion understood her, was a little frightened. She was so still. If she would speak, or show concern about anything; but she was so wonderfully still.

It was the most glorious summer weather, and the world outside the sick-room was great with life perfected. The morning had arisen with a glory unequaled, and the world of nature was up and about, and quick with a sense of joy that grew with every hour.

The sunbeams fought their way valiantly into Lady Varley's chamber through the folds of the thick curtains with a persistency that defied denial, and flung themselves broadcast upon the couch on which she lay there in a silent mood that threatened to last forever. The windows were wide open, but she would not have the curtains drawn, refusing, with a wild petulance that sat strangely on her, to emerge from the gloom of the self-imposed twilight to which she now seemed to cling. Perhaps it had something to do with that past terrible hour in which she had first learned that her secret fear had become a mournful reality.

She had expressed a wish to-day that no one was to be admitted; but just now, hearing Constantia's voice upon the corridor outside, asking how she had passed the night, she suddenly lifted her head, and desired the maid in attendance to admit her visitor.

Constantia, looking pale and troubled, came in slowly, and kneeling by her side, pressed her lips to her cheek. She had not seen her for some days, and was, in a degree, unnerved by the haggard glance that settled upon hers.

Lady Varley put out her hand, and pushed back the girl's hair from her brow.

"You are faithful, Connie," she said. "I have not wearied you to death?" Then her expression changed, and she grew ghastly. "Death! death!" she said, in an awe-struck tone.

"No; I am not wearied," said Constantia, earnestly, though her heart sunk within her. Would such grief as this ever know assuagement? "I came to know if you"—she hesitated; and then went on boldly—"if you would let me drive you out to-day somewhere—anywhere."

Lady Varley shrunk from her.

"Oh, no; impossible!" she said. And then: "If I talked forever I could not explain; but I think I have been badly treated. What had I done—or she—" She stopped abruptly. "Oh, my poor baby!" she cried, pressing her hands to her eyes in a distracted fashion. She recovered herself, however, in a moment, and was once more calm and reserved as usual. "You must not mind me," she said, with a wan smile. "I have thought it all out, and why should I bore any one with my grief—a grief that is without remedy? If you will try to understand—to—"

"But I will not," cried Constantia, sinking on her knees beside her and bursting into tears. "Why should you be silent, and to me—to me who loved her?"

She threw her arms round Yolande and drew her toward her. This simple action, full of honest grief and affection, as it was, did more for Lady Varley than all the doctor's stuffs. She accepted the girl's embrace, and clung to her for awhile silently, and then at last the blessed rain of tears came, and bedewed her heart, and softened it, and soothed it in a measure.

Any affection she had had for Constantia before, grew now into a fuller life, that never afterward knew any diminution in its strength. But to her alone she relaxed; with her only she permitted herself the luxury of giving way to a grief that every day seemed to make more intolerable. Her arms were empty; there was nothing to fill them. A faithless husband, a little grave—truly her hearth was left unto her desolate!

So far as the outer world went, she seemed cold, uninteresting. Those who hastened to assure her of their sympathy, went home again to tell each other on their next meeting, that after all, delicate sentiments had been thrown away upon her, and that evidently she did not feel the death of the child nearly so much as they had been led to believe. Ah! if they had lost their little ones, how differently they would have felt; how they would have shown, by tears and sighs, the grief that was consuming them!

Lady Killeens was specially hard on her. She had called and had been received by Yolande, and had advanced toward her with uplifted brows and hands eloquently outstretched.

"Ah! this has indeed been a terrible grief!" she said, in tones carefully tremulous.

Lady Varley paused. Her eyes were on the ground, her face seemed frozen into the purest marble.

"Yes, it was a great grief," she said.

Her tone was calm. How could her visitor guess the effort the very utterance of the words cost her? How know that the hesitation was born of a wild struggle to conquer tears—that the downcast lids concealed wells of grief unspeakable?

Lady Killeens was disappointed! Was she as cold was they had all declared her? Had she been foolish in believing her warmer-hearted than most, with a terrible capacity for suffering? She went straight from Araglin to pay a visit to Mrs. Dundas, and to her recounted the unsatisfactory little scene through which she had just gone. She was a garrulous old lady, who would be talking, and she described the affair very minutely.

"She was a positive icicle," she said at last, looking to pretty Mrs. Dundas for sympathy. But Donna's sympathy was a broken reed on which to lean. Just now she smiled. Lady Killeen's density amused her. She, Donna, had in a moment grasped the touch of tragedy in the forlorn little story. She, of all others, was able to read between the lines. Strange anomaly! The woman totally without feeling, was the one who understood best the woman, of feeling most acute!

"Icicles are deceptive," she said, with her brilliant smile. "Even as you look at them they melt away into water. Believe me, had you stayed long enough, Lady Varley would have dissolved into water too. She lowered her eyes because they were full of hysterical moisture they call tears. She seemed to you cold, because she dreaded betraying publicly a feeling that, if once roused, she knew would be difficult to quell. Such people, of such intense emotions, are naturally a bore, and one perforce pities them, but one despises them too. Still, I think you should be grateful to her that she spared you a scene."

She smiled again, and stifled a faint yawn behind her fan. Why be intense, why be anything, with the thermometer at ninety? Lady Killeens, who thought the "scene" hinted at would have been more decent than Yolande's studied coldness, and who had come fully prepared for it, and was therefore annoyed and disgusted, had little to say in answer to Mrs. Dundas's sneering little speech, and presently took her departure. But she spoke of Yolande's "unnatural calmness," as she called it, wherever she went, and after awhile most people believed in it—save two.

Even Lord Varley was in a certain degree deceived. Once she resumed her old duties, and sat at the head of the table and received her guests, there was little in her manner, which had always been grave and gentle, to speak of any inward, torturing regret. Her composure never forsook her. Her smile, if rarer, was always kind; and there was no reason why he should regard her as cherishing a grief that was inconsolable. He knew nothing of the long hours spent alone in the deserted nursery, where she knelt beside the empty little cot, and prayed for patience and a speedy finish to her solitary life, and conjured up the dead past, in which her dead darling's pale face smiled at her again—where the tiny arms were extended to her, where the pressure of delicate baby hands fell upon her breast, her cheek. She was wasted and worn with grief, but she kept her eyes dry before the world, lest that careless thing should enter into and disturb the sacredness of her despair.

She sat before her davenport now, answering two or three letters of kindly inquiry from some acquaintances in the North. She was clad in deep mourning, and the somber hue of her gown seemed to increase the pallor of her face. As she answered the notes of condolence, her baby's face seemed to rise before her, and great tears gathered in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. At this moment Varley, whistling gayly a light operatic air specially affected by Mrs. Dundas, strolled into the room by an open window. He had not expected to see her here, and he started visibly. Of late he was a little uncomfortable in the presence of his wife, and he would now have retired as he came, but for the fact that she had seen him, and that it was impossible for him to take no notice of her sorrow. He came toward her in a somewhat awkward fashion, and stood beside her chair. She made a vain effort to conceal her face, and shrunk from him instinctively.

"I'm sorry to see you like this," he said, with an affectation of friendliness. "I had hoped you had got over it. Poor little beggar; you know she was bound to go sooner or later."

The careless tone—meant, perhaps, to be kindly—the untender allusion to her lost darling, the very uneasiness of his manner, all maddened her. Her subdued anguish, refusing longer to be controlled, sprung into life once more, and passion, terrible in its intensity, took possession of her. It shook her as a storm might shake a fragile flower. She rose abruptly, and pushing back her chair, looked at him with a face that was death-like in its pallor.

"It sits lightly on you!" she said, in a voice so low as to be almost inaudible. "Are you dead, then, to all feeling—honor, affection, self-respect? Has that woman killed all? Great Heaven! what is to be the end of this? And to speak of her—her, my beloved, my angel!—to speak of her so!"

She had grown incoherent in her vehement reproach. Varley made a gesture as if to speak, but she would not listen to him. She clasped her hands tightly as though to compel herself to some self-restraint, and tried to speak, but could not.

"You are so excitable," he said at last; "if you would but listen—if one might be allowed to explain—"

"What?" she demanded, "your inability to feel sorrow?" Then all at once her scorn died from her, and the tears ran down her wan cheeks. "Are you her father, that you can speak thus?" she cried; "is there no grief in you—no nature? Was not her sweet body your own flesh and blood, that you can thus coldly comment on her death? Oh! where is love or pity? Oh! my darling,—my little one!—my child!"

It all seemed to culminate in that last word—her child. She raised her hands suddenly to her face as if to shut out from him any visible demonstration of her pain, and, with a bitter cry, she dropped, as a stone might, into her chair; her arms fell prone upon the desk, and her head found shelter on them.

Varley shrugged his shoulders. These impossible women, with their highly wrought nerves, were—er—the very deuce! He crept cautiously from the room, fearing only that she might recover herself sufficiently to address him again before he had made good his retreat.

But she had already forgotten him; he had ceased, indeed, for a long time to be anything in her life save a vague shadow of coming disgrace or a suggestion of years wasted.

After awhile she sighed heavily and raised her head, and lay back languidly in her chair, with a sense of physical weariness that touched her not unpleasantly. The minutes came and went, and grew into hours, and twilight was already stealing over the land, when the door was again opened, and a servant announced:

"Mr. O'Grady."

(To be continued.)

ROUND THE WHOLE WORLD.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.

Old and New World Events of Interest Chronicled Briefly—Interesting Happenings of Recent Date.

The British Government owns nearly two-thirds of the navies of the world—9,984,280 tons.

The largest bell in Japan—that in the temple of Kioto—is twenty-four feet high and sixteen feet in diameter across the rim.

The English Wesleyan returns, just published, reveal that during the past year there has been a decreased membership of 2,275.

English coal mines produced 188,277,525 tons of coal in 1894, exceeding the highest previous record, that of 1891, by nearly 3,000,000 tons.

Our globe now contains 1,479,729,000 inhabitants according to the latest statistics. More than half of this number is claimed in Asia alone.

Eggs are now imported into Great Britain from Russia, shelled, beaten up, and preserved in hermetically sealed tins, from which they are drawn off through a tap.

At Delphi, a beautiful bronze statuette of Apollo, eight inches high, has been discovered, arousing the hope that more valuable votive offerings may be found at the same place.

Habibulla and Nasurilla Khans, the two oldest sons of the Ameer of Afghanistan, have been made Knights Grand Cross of the order of St. Michael and St. George by Queen Victoria.

The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen was robbed of $13 by bandits in Italy. It was all the money he carried with him, but he reflects with satisfaction that he preserved his incognito.

Lady Londonderry has had a lugger built at Southampton of cedar and mahogany, 26 feet on the water line, with silver-plated aluminium fittings, and silk sails. It is to be called the Metucada.

The greatest corporation on earth is the London and Northwestern Railway Company of England. It has a capital of $595,000,000 and a revenue of $6,500 an hour, 2,300 engines and employs 60,000 men.

The oldest armchair in the world is the throne once used by Queen Hatfu, who flourished in Egypt 1600 B.C. It is made of ebony, beautifully carved, and is so hardened with age as to appear to be made of black marble.

Westminster Hall has been closed to the public, except when under surveillance since the dynamite explosions 11 years ago. The St. James' Gazette suggests that it is time to take away the policemen and let visitors enter the hall freely.

The latest musical prodigy, now playing in Vienna, is a little Polish girl, aged nine, named Paula Szalit. It is said of her that she can not only play works by all the great masters, but is capable of improvising to a considerable extent.

A suicide in Lyons, France, arranged a rude guillotine for himself. A sharp hatchet was weighed with a sledge-hammer, just over the block. The inventor placed his head on the block, pulled a string, down came the hatchet and off came the man's head.

A new warehouse in Paris has been built with glass floors. The initial cost is considerably over that of the ordinary floor, but, in view of the fact that toughened glass is so much longer lived than wood, the experiment is likely to prove cheaper in the long run.

A Monthyon prize has been awarded by the French Academy to Capt. Danrit, author of "La Guerre de Demain," a work which when it first appeared caused its author to be put under arrest for thirty days, as his superior officers did not like the book.

Of the seventy thousand breweries in the world, thirty thousand are in Germany, Great Britain has eighteen thousand and the United States five thousand. Each country uses nearly all its own product, except Germany, which manufactures more than it consumes.

Durand, the man who undertook to hang from the gallows for thirteen days in a Paris cafe, has completed his performance. He was let down for thirty seven hours in all while it lasted, but slept while hanging. He now proposes to allow himself to be buried for a long period.

The following curious advertisement appeared recently in the London Daily Chronicle: "Lost, a Bulwark—Not long ago it was maintained by its supporters that the Church of England was the bulwark of Protestantism. Any information concerning the said bulwark will be welcomed by a greatful community."

Visitors to Holland this June may see at Utrecht a series of processions in mediaeval costumes, modelled on the famous tournament given at Vienna in 1560 by Maxmilian II. The festival will last a week, and is in honor of the 260th anniversary of the foundation of the university, which was founded in the same year as Harvard College.

A duel with knives was fought in the court yard of the Louvre one evening recently between two ticket speculators, who quarrelled at the entrance to the Theatre Francaise. This spot is one of the most frequented in the city, being one of the main avenues for omnibuses and foot passengers from the right to the left bank of the Seine.

A delightful official dinner is that given by the Mistress of the Robes on the Queen's birthday. All the Ministers wives are invited, and as their husbands cannot be present on account of their giving official dinners to men themselves, the men for the dinners are selected from the brightest and most promising of the younger politicians.

An old scandal in the English royal family is recalled by the sale of the old French furniture belonging to the Duke of Sussex and kept in Kensington palace since the death of his widow, the Duchess of Inverness. The Duke, who was one of George III.'s worthless sons, married Lady Augusta Murray, a marriage annulled as being without his father's consent, and later married Lady Cecilia Underwood, whom Queen Victoria created Duchess of Inverness.

Alma Tadema, the artist, has the most beautiful home in England. The wall of the drawing room is paneled with tall, slim pictures, each of them by a different painter—Leighton, Boughton, Sargent, Whistler, and a score of other artist friends each contributing to this remarkable decoration. Another interesting feature is the oak and ivory piano, on the inside lid of which are inscribed the autographs of the most celebrated singers and musicians in the world.

The sum of £20,000 is needed for the clearance and restoration of the Crypt of Canterbury cathedral, England—the repair of the cloisters, the repair, sustentation and restoration of the chapter house, and the restoration of the ancient chapel of St. Andrew, which is now unsightly from neglect and disfigurement. Dean Farrar appeals to the English speaking Christians throughout the world, including Americans, for contributions for a restoration fund, as the cathedral authorities have no funds available for the purpose.

LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT.

How is it that Watley has so many new suits? He gets a small salary.

Oh, he is an electrician and his clothes are all charged.