DARE HE?

OR, A A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER VI.—(Continued).

"But it would not be fair; it would be asking you to give up too much."

The meek abnegation of her rather worn voice brings his remorse uppermost again on the revolving wheel of his feelings.

"Is not it my turn to give up something?" he asks, tenderly; "and, besides, it is time for me to settle! I am—I am tired of wandering!"

As this atrocious lie passes his lips, he catches his breath. Tired of the Sierras! Tired of the bivouacs among the dazzling snow! Tired of the august silence of the everlasting hills! Heaven forgive him for saying so! Perhaps there is no great air of veracity in his assertion, for she looks at him distrustfully; so distrustfully that he reshapes his phrase. "At least if I am not I ought to be!"

But still she gazes at him with a wistful and doubting intentness.

"If I could only believe that that was true!"

"It is true," replies he, evading her look; "at least true enough for all working purposes; we all know that life is a series of compromises, a balancing of gain and loss. I shall lose something, I do not deny that, but I gain more, I gain you!"

"That is such a mighty gain, is not it?" she says with a melancholy smile, as that intuition of the truth which sometimes comes to unloved or tepidly loved women flashes upon her.

"A matter of taste—a mere matter of taste!" rejoins he, hurriedly; aware of the unreal ring in his own words, and trying, with all his might, to feel as well as speak light-heartedly.

She shakes her head in a way which tells him how poorly he has succeeded. In a desperate, if not very well-judged attempt to convince her of his sincerity, his next speech is uttered.

"Why should not we be married at once? to-morrow? the day after to-morrow? at the Consulate—of course there is a Consulate—or the English Church, I suppose there are half-a-dozen English churches. Why not? We have nothing to wait for, and we are both of age!"

He has had no unkindly intention in the last words, but the moment that these are out of his mouth, a glance at Amelia's unblooming face and unyouthful figure tell him that they were not happily chosen. At the first instant that the suggestion of an immediate marriage reaches the hearer's brain, it sends a dart of joy over her features. To be married at once! To put an end forever to the interminable waiting, to enter at last—at last upon the possession of the so-long deferred Canaan. But in a second that first bright flash is chased away and gives place to a look of almost humiliation.

"You must be making fun of me, to suggest such a thing!" she says in a wounded voice; "you know how wildly impossible it would be that I should leave them all—my father, Sybilla, without any preparation."

"Without any preparation!" replies Jim, raising his eyebrows. "Have not you been preparing them for the last eight years?"

He feels a vague unjust irritation with her for opposing his proposition, though deep down in his heart he knows that he would have felt a much greater annoyance had she eagerly closed with it. As she does not answer a question, which the moment that it is uttered he feels to have been rather brutal, he goes on, against his will, in the same sarcastic key.

"I am afraid that you will have to leave them all some day; I am afraid that our Bayswater mansion—by-the-bye, I am sure it will not be a mansion, for I am sure it will not have a back-door—will not be likely to contain all. Your father, Sybilla—Sybilla and her physic bottles take up a good deal of room, do they not?"

It is fortunate for Amelia that she is too preoccupied by the thought of her own next speech to take in the full acerbity of the last remark.

"If you would consent to wait till we get home—father does not mean to stay in Italy beyond the end of next month—we might be married in June, that" (with a pink flush of happiness) "would not be so long to wait."

In a second a sum of the simplest description executes itself in Burgoyne's head. It is now the second week of April; they are to be married in June, he has then eight weeks left. It shocks himself to find that this is the way in which he puts it. All the over action that he permits himself, however, is to say with a shrug—

"As you will, then; as you will!" adding, since he feels that there is something discourteous even to unchivalry in so bald an acquiescence in his prospective bliss: "Of course, dear, the sooner I get you the better for me!"

No lover could have been overheard giving utterance to a more proper or suitable sentiment; so that it is lucky that this is just the moment that Cecilia chooses for entering.

"Do not be afraid," she says, with a laugh. "I will not stay a minute, but I just wanted to say 'How do you do?' How well you are looking! and how young!"—with an involuntary glance of comparison from him to her sister; a glance, of which they are both rather painfully conscious. "Ah!" (sighing) "with all your Rocky Mountain experiences, it is evident that you have been having an easier time than we have!"

"Are you alluding to Sybilla?" asks Jim, gravely. "I have no doubt, from what I know of her powers in that line, that she has been extremely trying."

"Yes, partly," replies the girl, doubtfully; "but I have had troubles of my own, too. I daresay that Amelia has told you, or probably" (with a second and heavier sigh) "you have been more pleasantly employed."

"Amelia did hint at some disaster," replies Jim, struggling to conceal the rather grim smile which is curving his mouth, a feat the more difficult since he has no moustache to aid him; "but I have been waiting to hear all the details from yourself."

"I know that you are apt to think I fancy things," says Cecilia, sitting down on a third hard chair, "but here could be no fancy in this case; I am sure I was as much engaged as any girl ever was. I had chosen the drawing-room paper and bought the dining-room grate!"

"That is further than we ever got, is not it, Amelia?" says Jim, breaking, at the relation of this prosaic fact, into the laugh he has been with difficulty swallowing; "but, Cis, if I were you, I should keep the grate; one does not know how soon its services may be required again!"

"It is all very well for you to joke," returns Cecilia, with an offended air; "it may be play to you, but it is——"

"Not death, not quite death to you!" interrupts Burgoyne, glancing with an expressive smile at her buxom outline. "I think you will live to fight another day, will not you? But I really am extremely sorry; tell me all about it."

"He was perfectly right when we left England," says Cecilia, mollified at once, and apparently relieved by the invitation to unbosom herself of her woes; "nobody could have been more so; he came to see us off at Folkestone, and the tears were in his eyes; they were really, it was not my imagination, was it, Amelia? And at first he wrote all right, and said all the usual things; but then his letters gradually grew fewer and fewer, and after I had written and telegraphed a great many times, I do not know how many times I did telegraph to ask whether he was ill, and you know how expensive foreign telegrams are, he sent me a few lines, oh, such cruel lines, were not they, Amelia? to say, that on reflection, he feared that the feeling he had for me was not such as to justify his entering on so sacred an engagement as marriage with me; but he ought to have thought of that before, ought not he?"

"Undoubtedly!"

"I will never engage myself to a clergyman again," says Cecilia, pensively.

Burgoyne's thoughts have strayed at the mention of the cloth of his sister-in-law elect's truant admirer, to that member of the same profession who has lately robbed him of his heritage, and he replies with a good deal of feeling:

"They do play one dirty turns now and then, do not they? Yes, Cis, stick to laymen for the future!"

Cecilia receives this counsel with a melancholy sigh, fixing her large eyes on the carpet, but presently resumes the conversation in a livelier key.

"Let us talk about something pleasanter," she says. "Had you a good journey? Do you like your travelling companion? Why did not you bring him with you? Is he nice?"

"At all events, he is not a clergyman," replies Jim, with a rather malicious smile; "but, no, my dear, do not let your thoughts turn in that direction! You must look at him as poor women look at diamonds!"

"I am sure I do not know what you mean!" replies Cecilia, reddening. "I have not the slightest wish to look at him! I am not in spirits to 'look,' as you call it, at any one!"

A moment later, she adds, with a suspicion of malice in her tone:

"We are certainly an unlucky family in our loves! I heartlessly thrown over, and Amelia engaged for eight years!"

Burgoyne smiles. "Amelia is not going to be engaged any longer," he says, putting his arm round his betrothed. "Amelia is going to be married at once!"

CHAPTER VII.

It would seem natural that, after so long a separation, Burgoyne should dine and spend the evening with his betrothed; but such is not the case. For this, however, he is not to blame; he is quite prepared to stay with her until she turns him out. Had he not better school himself to domestic habits, since he is so soon to assume them for life? But in consideration for Sybilla he is dismissed undined. It is not that she ever shares the family dinner at their table a part in the salle a manger, but the thought of their entertaining a guest with a conviviality far greater in her imagination than would be the case in reality, while she herself lies lonely on her couch of suffering, preys upon her spirits so much that her family have to abandon the idea. So, towards sunset, Jim is dismissed. He has no opportunity for any particular endearments to his lady-love, as the whole family are in the room, and it is Cecilia, not Amelia, who volunteers to walk across the hotel court-yard with him, for the advantage of a last word. What the last word is he is not slow to learn.

"You will take us some excursions, wil not you?" she says, with a persuasive air, putting her arm through his. "Father is so unenterprising, we have really seen scarcely anything; but you will take us some excursions now, will not you?"

"Are you sure that your spirits are equal to them?" inquires Jim unkindly.

"I do not know about that, I am sure," replies she, growing pink at his tone; "but one must make an exertion some time, and I think a little distraction would do me good, and so I am sure it would to poor Amelia!"

"Poor Amelia will shortly have the distraction of being married," rejoins the young man, who feels as if he could not repeat the statement of this fact too often to himself and others.

"And I think it would be only civil," continues Cecilia, persistently, "in fact, I do not see how you can avoid it, if you invited your friend to join us."

But Jim escapes without having committed himself to this promise, and wanders about the town in the lovely, lowering light; finds himself on the Lung Arno, strolling along with the leisurely loiterers, among whom, for every two soft Tuscan voices, there is a loud metallic Anglo-Saxon one. He watches the carriages rolling back from their drive on the Cascine; the river falling over the weir; the river yellow as Tiber yesterday, and to-day shot with blue and green and silver, as it tumbles with a pleasant noise. The houses on either side of the Arno, the domes and roofs are all clothed in a strange serenity of yellow light; a golden air so transperent and fine and crystal clear; so free from the soft blur of mist—lovely, too—through which we see objects in our wet green home, that Jim feels as if he could stretch out his hand and touch the hill that backs gold towers and bridges, and see whether it really is made out of one whole amethyst, as it looks. The beauty of the world has always been very much to Burgoyne, though hitherto it has been chiefly in the austerity of her high and desert places that he has bowed the knee before the Universal Mother. This little gold evening city, sunset clad in the colors of the New Jerusalem, lifting her heavenly campanile to as heavenly a sky, is to him a new and wonderful thing. Her loveliness sinks into his soul, and with it a companion sadness as deep. From henceforth the sight of earth's fair shows will be, for the most part, forbidden him. He has always loved to look and adore in silence and alone; henceforth he will never have the right to be alone; henceforth he will never have the right to go anywhere without his wife. Strange and terrible word to which he tries in vain to accustom his mental ears; and, thanks to the narrowness of their means, neither of them will be able to stir from the strait precincts of their pinched home.

He comes back to his hotel, through the piazza of the Duomo. All the infinite richness of cupola and arch, high up, are still wrapped in the fiery rose cloak of sunset, while below the body of the great church with all its marbles and traceries, and carved wonders, is clad in the sobriety of twilight. On reaching the Minerva, he finds that Byng has not yet returned, or rather that he has been in and gone out again. He waits dinner half-an-hour for him, and then dines without him; dines in solitude, since it is not till his cup of coffee is before him, and his cigarette between his lips, that his young friend appears. It is evidently no unpleasant errand that has detained him, for he arrives beaming, and too excited even to perceive the menu which a waiter offers him.

"They have arrived!" he cries. Oddly enough it never occurs to Burgoyne to inquire who "they" may be; it seems as much a matter-of-course to him as to the handsome pink and white boy before him, that the pronoun must relate to Elizabeth le Marchant and her mother.

His only answer, however, is an "Oh!" whose tone is rather more eagerly interested than he could have wished.

"I thought that they could not stay more than another day in Genoa," continues Byng, at length becoming aware of the menu at his elbow; but only to wave it impatiently away. So I thought I would just run down to the station to meet the evening train, the one we came by last night; however, it must have been more punctual than yesterday, for, before I reached the station, I met them; I mean they passed me in a fiacre. I only caught a glimpse of her face, but I saw her hand; it was lying on the carriage-door like a snow-flake.'

"Like my grandmother!" cries Burgoyne in a rage, for which he cannot quite account to himself, at this ingenious and novel simile.

Byng laughs; the laugh of a thoroughly sweet-natured person, who, in addition has some special cause for good-humor.

"I do not know what color your grandmother was; but she must have been very unlike most people if she was like a snow-flake."

Jim's cross mouth unbends into a reluctant smile. It is not the first time that he has discovered how useless, and also impossible it is to be out of humor with Byng.

"I had a good mind to tell my fiacre man to follow them," continued Byng, in an excited voice; "but, in the first place, I did not know how to say it—really, Jim, we must get up a little of the lingo—and, in the second place, I thought it would be rather too much in the private detective line."

"I think it would have been extremely ungentlemanlike!" rejoins Jim, severely.

Byng reddens; but still without losing his temper.

"That is coming it rather strong, is not it? but, anyhow, I did not do it." And then, by tacit agreement, they both drop the subject.

During the next three or four days it is not named between them, nor, indeed, do they see much of each other. Burgoyne spends the greater part of his days with Amelia. Whatever cause for the accusation he may have given during the previous eight years, nobody can say that he neglects her now. He passes long hours at her side, on the same hard chair that had supported him on their first interview, in the little dismal dining-room; going into calculations of house-rent and taxes; drawing up lists of necessary furniture. He even makes a bid for Cecilia's drawing-room grate; but that young lady whose forecasting mind can look beyond present grief to future sunshine refuses to part with it. The lovers are not always, however, studying Maple's and Oetzmann's lists. Sometimes Jim varies the diversion by taking his future wife to picture galleries and churches, to the Uffizi, the Academia, San Lorenzo. It is doubtful whether Amelia enjoys these excursions as much as she does the selection of bedsteads and saucepans, her pleasure being in some degree marred by a feverish anxiety to say what she thinks her lover expects of her as they stand before each immortal canvas. In her heart she thinks the great statues in the Medici Chapel frightful, a heresy in which she is kept in countenance by no less a light than George Eliot, who in one of her letters dares to say of them, "they remained to us as affected and exaggerated in the original, as in copies and casts." To Amelia many of the frescoes appear lamentably washed out, nor are her efforts to hide these sentiments attended with any conspicuous success, since nothing is more hopeless than for one utterly destitute of a feeling for works of art to feign it, without having the imposture at once detected.

Burgoyne's mind during these expeditions is a battle-ground for pity and rage; pity at the pathos of his poor love's endeavors; rage at their glaring failure. Cecilia sometimes accompanies the lovers, but his does not make matters much better. Cecilia devotes but a very cursory notice to the pictures; her attention being almost wholly centred on the visitors, and on finding resemblances for them among the inhabitants of her own village at home, for the accuracy of which she appeals at every moment to her sister. Every day she asks Burgoyne to fulfil his promise—a promise which he as punctually assures her that he never made—to introduce his friend to her. He has a strangely strong reluctance to comply with this simple request, which yet, he knows, will have to be complied with some day. When Amelia is his wife, Byng will have to know Cecilia, for she will probably spend a great deal of her time with them—make their house a second home, in fact.

And meanwhile Jim is keenly, and for some reason sorely, conscious of the fact that, during the hours in which he is stooping his weary head over catalogues of fenders and fireirons, carving knives and fish slices, blankets and ticking, Byng is searching Florence through her length and breadth for their two countrywomen. It is not indeed necessary to credit his friend with any special quest to account for his wanderings through the "adorable little city," as Henry James most truly calls it, since he is a young man of a wide and alert curiosity, with a large appetite for pleasure both intellectual and the reverse. Jim, whose acquaintance with him has chiefly been with his rowdy undergraduate side, bear-fighting, and proctor-defying, is astonished at his almost tremulous appreciation of the Ghirlandajos, the Lorenzo di Credis, the Giottos, that, in a hundred chapels, from a hundred walls, shine down in their mixed glory of naive piety and blinding color upon him.

One day the elder man is sitting in his bedroom with a despatch-box and a sheet of paper before him. He is embarked upon a weary calculation as to what his guns will fetch. He has made up his mind to sell them. Of what further use can they be to him? He will not be allowed to shoot at the Bayswater omnibuses, which will be the only game henceforth within his reach. While he is thus employed upon an occupation akin to, and about as cheerful as that of Rawdon Crawley before Waterloo, Byng enters.

(To be continued).

TREATMENT.

"So you don't believe in the faith cure?"

"Not entirely. It aways looked to me a little like trying to regulate the temperature by putting the thermometer in the refrigerator."

WHEN THE VALUE GROWS.

"We never realize the full value of a thing until we lose it," remarked the man who was fond of moralizing.

"That's right," replied the practical man, "especially if the thing lost was insured."

SHOULD DOCTORS SHAVE

A WRITER WHO CLAIMS IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

For They May Carry Infection From House to House in Their Beards.

It is a fact that many of the most famous surgeons and physicians of to-day wear beards and moustaches. It is also a fact that many hundreds of local practitioners allow their lips and chin to be covered with what they term "hirsute adornments." But is it healthy? Is it safe for the patient to be visited by a doctor who may be carrying from the last person he visited the germs of some more or less virulent disease in his beard? asks a writer in Pearson's Weekly.

Medical men are supposed to be the apostles of health and hygiene. Surely the wearing of beards and moustaches is a direct contradiction to their precepts. It is not that doctors can be accused in the slightest degree of uncleanliness, or that they do not take the greatest care, in most things, of preventing the spread of disease.

It is true, of course, that the more sickness that prevails, the greater will be the number of their patients, and that the outbreak of a grievous disease in the neighborhood may be a veritable gold mine to them. But the profession, from top to bottom, is a honorable one. No certificated practitioner would wilfully spread disease among his patients. That may be taken for granted.

Thus the practice of wearing beards and moustaches by medical men is all the more astonishing. The danger to which such men expose their patients is

ALARMINGLY OBVIOUS.

In the big hospitals the skilled surgeon, because of his high fee and his lack of time, usually performs so many operations at a time. In an hour a dozen persons, some suffering from an infectious disorder may have passed under his knife.

If the surgeon be a bearded man, it is impossible for him to avoid making a collection of disease germs. He may be in the habit of sterilizing his beard and moustache, and so preventing the disease attacking his own system; but the process takes time. He would not sterilize his beard a dozen times for a dozen operations.

The patient under the anæsthetic is naturally in a very weak condition—a ripe ground, in fact, for any disease germs to rapidly develop themselves and create a complication of disorders. Many a mysterious "case" in the hospitals has been traced eventually to the

OPERATING SURGEON'S BEARD.

Now take the case of the local practitioner. Upon his daily rounds he goes from sick room to sick room. From one patient suffering with, say, influenza he passes to another whose only trouble is a weak and feverish condition induced by overwork. The overworked man, however, one day develops symptoms of influenza, but his bearded doctor is never for a moment suspected of introducing the disease.

It is unnecessary to enlarge upon similar instances. Considering the multitude of patients a busy medical man visits every day, the mixed and often infectious nature of their ailments, and the number of surgeons and physicians who are not clean-shaven, it is simply astonishing that an Act of Parliament has not been passed prohibiting beards and moustaches among medical men.

Such laws are in existence in other countries. In Alleghany, Pennsylvania, they go even further than this. Every man in the town must undertake to keep his beard disinfected, or his "hirsute adornment" will be

FORCIBLY STERILIZED FOR HIM.

To prevent the spread of infectious disease the Alleghany Board of Health decided to distribute a solution of bichloride of mercury to every man in the town with a beard. Those living in houses where there is contagious disease are kept under observation by inspectors, and if they neglect to use the fluid, they are forcibly shown the way to use it.

From the point of view of medical men, a moustache acts as a microbe trap, and restrains bacteria from entering the nostrils and lungs. "Not only that," said the distinguished surgeon to whom this question was put, "it filters, as it were, the air as it enters the nostrils. A moustache is not only a manly ornament, but one of Nature's most hygienic provisions."

The matter, therefore, amounts to this: A moustache and beard may be beneficial to a medical man, but a grave source of danger to his patients.

NOT DOING A THING.

"Yes, lady," said Hungry Higgins, "police persecution ruined my life. Why when I wuz first arrested, years ago, I hadn't been doin' a blessed thing."

"Poor man," said the kind old lady; "here's a dime for you. And what charge did they trump up against you?"

"Vagrancy, ma'am."

HOME, SWEET HOME.

Newly (proudly)—I always make it a point to tell my wife everything that happens.

Old Sport—Pooh! that's nothing. I tell my wife lots of things that never happen at all.