DARE HE?

OR, A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued).

"And to think that it is only April!" she says with an air of prosaic astonishment. "Last April we had four inches of snow on the front drive. It was when Cecilia had the mumps."

"When Cecilia had the mumps?" repeats Burgoyne in a rather dazed voice voice. "I did not know that Cecilia had ever had the mumps."

This is the form into which are frozen the love-words that the nightingale and the perfume of the Tuscan flowers and the Ave Maria had so nearly brought to his tongue. Had Amelia known what an unwonted burst of tenderness her unlucky reminiscence had choked, she would have regretted it probably with a good deal deeper bitterness than would many a woman with a happier gift of utterance. But she is blessedly ignorant of what Cecilia's mumps have robbed her, and presently again strikes athwart the nightingale's song with the placid remark:

"I like your friend very much; I think that she is a very nice woman."

This time Burgoyne has no difficulty in responding immediately. Miss Wilson's first speech had so effectually chased his dreams that he can now reply with commonplace kindliness:

"She has just been button-holing me to make the same confidence about you."

"And she is so fond of you," continues Amelia.

He laughs.

"She has just confided to me that so are you;" then, with a hurried change of tone, in dread lest the last speech shall call out some expression of the mute pent passion always lurking in her patient eyes, he adds lightly, "I seem to be very generally beloved!"

What effect the flat fatuity, as it seems to Jim himself, of this last observation has upon Amelia, does not appear, since she receives it in silence; and again the Ave Maria and the bird divide between them the province of sound.

As the great sun droops, the honeysuckle above their heads seems to give out more generously its strong clean sweetness. The rest of the party have drifted away out of sight and hearing; but by-and-bye their voices are again heard and their returning forms seen. As they draw near, it appears that their original number of three has been augmented by the addition of two men; and a still nearer approach reveals who the two men are. Mrs. Byng leads the way, talking animatedly to Mr. Greenock, who is evidently an old acquaintance. Byng trails after them by himself, and the rear is brought up by Cecilia and a portly clerically-dressed figure, whom Jim at once recognizes as the Devonshire clergyman, his failure in obtaining information about whom has embittered and fidgeted his whole day. Here then is the opportunity he has sought brought to his very hand. And yet his first feeling, as he sees the complacent priestly face, and the deliberate black legs pacing beside Cecilia, is one of dismay. There is nothing unlikely in the supposition that he may have been presented to her at the garden-party at the Bellosguardo villa, and yet he now realizes with a shock of surprise that they are acquainted, and, if acquainted, then at liberty to converse upon whatever subject may best recommend itself to them. He is absolutely powerless to put any check upon their talk, and yet at this very moment he may be narrating to her that story which his own loyalty had forbidden him to overhear. The first couple has passed, so absorbed in eager question and answer that they do not even see Burgoyne and his betrothed. Mrs. Byng left London only three days ago, and Mr. Greenock might return thither at any moment that he chooses, and yet they are talking of it with a wistful fondness that might have beseemed Dante questioning some chance wayfarer to Ravenna as to the prosperity of his Florence. The second pair's voices are lower pitched, and their topics therefore less easy to ascertain, yet by Cecilia's gratified and even hopeful air they are evidently agreeable ones. But though agreeable, there is no evidence of their being, by their riveting ear and eye, of the nature he dreads. They also are so absorbed in each other as to have no attention to spare for the quiet silent persons sitting on the stone bench.

Amelia looks after them with a benevolent smile. Her sense of humor is neither keen nor quick, but there is a touch of very mild sarcasm in her voice, as she says, watching her sister's retreating figure:

"Cecilia has found a new friend, a clergyman again; do you know what his name is?"

"I believe it is Burton or Bruton, or something of the sort," replies Jim reluctantly, feeling as if even in admitting knowledge of the stranger's surname he was letting out a dangerous secret. "I should have thought that she had had enough of the Church," he adds with a very much more pronounced accent of satire than Miss Wilson's. "She has not taken my advice of sticking to the laity. Shall we—shall we follow them?"

This last suggestion is the result of a vague, uneasy feeling that, by keeping within earshot, he may exercise some check upon the conversation.

"Why should we?" replies Amelia, for once in her life running counter to a proposition of her lover's, and turning her meek eyes affectionately upon him; "we are so well here, are not we? and"—laughing—"we should spoil sport."

As Jim can allege no adequate reason for pursuing Cecilia and her latest spoil, he has unwillingly to acquiesce, and to content himself with following them with his eyes, to gain what reassurance he can from the expression of their backs. But the peaceful if melancholy restfulness that had marked the first part of his abode on the stone seat is gone, past recall. He moves his feet fidgetily on the gravel; he gets up, and throws pebbles into the fountain; he snubs an officious little Italian boy who brings Amelia a small handful of flowers plucked out of the emerald grass.

Amelia does not share her lover's uneasiness, as indeed why should she? She puts the expected tip into the young Tuscan's dirty brown hand, and leans her head enjoyingly on the back of the stone seat.

"I think I like to come to these sort of places with you even better than to picture galleries," she says with an intonation of extreme content.

"Do you, dear?" replies he absently, with his uneasy eyes still searching the spot at which Cecilia and her escort had disappeared. "Of course you are quite right: 'God made the country, and man made the——' Ah!"

The substitution of this ejaculation for the noun which usually concludes the proverb is due to the fact of the couple he is interested in, having come back into sight, retracing their steps, and again approaching. It is clear as they come near that the desire to explore the villa grounds has given way, in this case, to the absorption of conversation. With a long pang of dread, Jim's sharpened faculties realize, before they are within earshot, that they have exchanged the light and banal civilities which had at first employed them for talk of a much more intimate and interesting character. Cecilia is generally but an indifferent listener, greatly preferring to take the lion's share in any dialogue; but now she is all silent attention, only putting in, now and again, a short eager question, while her companion is obviously narrating—narrating gravely, and yet with a marked relish. Narrating what? Jim tells himself angrily that there are more stories than one in the world; that there is no reason why, because Cecilia's clerical friend is relating to her something, it must necessarily be that particular something which he dreads so inexpressibly; but he strains his ears as they pass to catch a sentence which may relieve or confirm his apprehensions. He has not to strain them long. It is Cecilia who is speaking, and in her eagerness she has raised her voice.

"You may depend upon me; I assure you I am as safe as a church; if I had chosen I might have made a great deal of mischief in my day, but I never did. I always said that she had a history. I do not pretend to be a physiognomist, but I said so the first time I saw her. I knew that they came from Devonshire. I assure you I am as safe as a church!"

It is clear that the clergyman's hesitation, already perhaps more coy than real, is unable to withstand the earnestness of Cecilia's asseverations of her own trustworthiness. He has already opened his mouth to respond when an unexpected interruption arrests the stream of his eloquence. Jim has sprung from his bench, and thrust himself unceremoniously between the two interlocutors.

"Come and see the wistaria," he says, brusquely addressing the girl; "you were not there with us when we were looking at it, were you? You were maintaining the other day that wistaria has no scent; come and smell it!"

It is in vain that Cecilia protests that she has already seen quite as much of the wistaria as she wishes; that she had never denied the potency of its perfume; that her legs are giving away beneath her from fatigue. Jim marches her relentlessly away, nor does he again quit her side until he sees her safely seated in the fiacre which is to carry her home. It is indeed his portion to have a tete-a-tete drive back to Florence with her, Byng having absently stepped into the vehicle which bears the other ladies. He draws a long breath as they jog slowly away from the villa, leaving the clergyman taking off his tall hat, with a baffled and offended air of farewell. He is conscious that Cecilia is swelling beside him with feelings no less wounded, even for some moments before she speaks.

"You rather cut your own throat," she says, in an affronted voice, "when you interrupted me and Mr. Burton so rudely; he was on the point of telling me something very interesting about your dear friends the Le Marchants; he knows all about them; he has known Elizabeth ever since she was a child."

Even across Jim's alarm and anxiety there comes a flash of indignation and distaste at the familiar employment of the name that even to himself he only pronounces on his heart's knees.

"Who is Elizabeth? Do you mean Miss Le Marchant?"

"Mr. Burton talked of her as 'Elizabeth,'" replies Cecilia, with a still more offended accent at the rebuke implied in his words; "one naturally would of a person whom one had known in short frocks."

"And he—he told you something very interesting about her?"

"No, he did not," returns Cecilia snappishly, "he had not the chance; he was just beginning when you rushed in like a bull in a china shop, and now"—in a key of excessive vexation—"I shall probably never have another chance of hearing, as he leaves Florence to-morrow."

Jim's heart gives a bound. "Leaves Florence to-morrow, does he?" he repeats eagerly.

"I do not know why you should seem so delighted to hear it," rejoins Cecilia, looking at him from under her smart hat, with a mixture of surprise and resentment. "I do not see anything particularly exhilarating in losing an agreeable acquaintance almost as soon as one has made it!"

"Perhaps—perhaps it was a false alarm," says Jim, set, to some extent, on his guard by her evident astonishment at the keenness of his interest in the subject; "perhaps"—beginning to laugh—"he only said it to frighten you; why do you think that he is leaving Florence to-morrow?"

"Because he told me so," answers she impatiently; "he is at the Grand Bretagne, and he was complaining of not being comfortable there, and I was advising him to move to another hotel, and he said, 'Oh, no, it was not worth while, as he was leaving Florence to-morrow.'"

Jim draws a long breath, and leans back in his corner of the fiacre. He has gained the information he sought. It has come to his hand at the very time he was chafing most at his inability to go in quest of it.

"So your interruption was the more provoking," continues Cecilia, her indignation puffing out and ruffling its feathers at the recollection of her wrongs, "as it was our last chance of meeting; however, you cut your own throat, as he evidently knew something very interesting about your dear friends, something which he does not generally tell people, and which he would not have told me only that he saw at once I was no blab."

Jim shivers. He had only just been in time then—only just in time to stop the mouth of this blatant backbiter in priest's raiment. His companion looks at him curiously.

"Are you cold," she asks, "or did a goose walk over your grave? Why did you shiver?"

He pulls himself together. "I was shivering," he says, compelling himself to assume the rallying tone in which he is apt to address the girl beside him, "at the thought of the peril I had saved you from. My poor Cis, have not you and I suffered enough already at the hands of the Church?"

She reddens. "Though I do not pretend to any great sensitiveness on the subject, I think you have worn that old joke nearly off its legs."

But during the rest of the drive she utters no further lament over her lost clergyman.

(To be continued).

CLAIMS TO CURE FEVER.

Swiss Professor Says He Has Discovered a Remedy.

Prof. Koller, of Berne University, in collaboration with Prof. Wasserman, of Berlin, has discovered, a serum cure for cerebro-spinal meningitis (spotted fever), even in acute stages. Prof. Koller communicated his discovery recently to a meeting of the Medical Society of Berne. He gave examples of complete cures. After injection of the serum, he stated, the patient's fever ceased almost instantly, and recovery followed within a fortnight.

Epidemic cerebro-spinal meningitis, or "spotted fever," which has quite recently ravaged parts of Germany, has for its chief symptoms convulsions, constant vomiting and severe headache, followed frequently, if the patient recovers, by paralysis. It is said that strong men are especially susceptible to it, and that the most common age of contraction is between 20 and 25. Death frequently takes place only a few hours after the attack.

TIME ALTERS ALL THINGS.

Dr. Russel H. Cornwell, the famous pastor of the Baptist Temple in Philadelphia, in a lecture delivered in New Haven not long ago predicted wonderful progress in rapid transit facilities in the near future, and at the same time deprecated the slowness of present railroad travel. To illustrate this point Dr. Cornwell told an amusing story of a woman who was travelling with her child. The train was delayed by many tiresome and seemingly unnecessary stops, and when the conductor was collecting fares the woman refused to pay for her little girl.

"That child is old enough to have her fare paid," said the conductor very sternly.

"Well, perhaps she is old enough now," replied the woman, "but she wasn't when the train started."

POVERTY.

The little princess, Victoria Louise of Prussia, was playing with her friends one day, and longed for some new, original play.

All the old games were worn out and exhausted. If only they could think of something quite different! Her serene highness considered the matter seriously until a novel idea occurred to her, and she cried with enthusiasm:

"We will play poor people! Let us play that we are poor, frightfully poor, so poor that we have only two lackeys!"

ON THE FARM

THE POULTRY YARD.

No animals on the farm are more alert in the morning and more anxious to rise early than the poultry, writes a correspondent. When kept in dirty and evil-smelling houses it may be their instinct for self-preservation makes them anxious to get into the open air, but they have also a keen interest that the early worms and other tit-bits of which they are most fond are not available long after sunrise. The desire for the open-air and the natural foods of the early morning induce the desire of early rising summer and winter. Those who keep their fowls shut up till long after the sun is up, or probably seven or eight o'clock, deny them much that is of the highest benefit to them. In the summer season it is a good plan to allow an outlet to remain open all night that the fowls can have liberty at daylight, unless vermin prohibits this, but in winter conditions are altogether different, and must be met accordingly. The early mornings, as a rule, are muggy and chilly. To let the fowls out from a warm night-house into such an atmosphere is very trying for them. There are few grubs to induce activity, and they only mope about longing for their warm breakfast, and if not kept in till the temperature rises and their comforting and sustaining breakfast supplied at once they will be in a very unsatisfactory state and not lay to pay their way and leave profit.

To add to their comfort the interior of their home should be invariably clean and sweet. In such an atmosphere they will never experience any setbacks if detained in it until the open air has lost its early morning rawness. Probably this may be at 8 a.m. or a little later, according to the weather. Some may ask on considering the drift of my contentions, if it would not be best to feed them in the house and let them have their breakfast early or at daylight. In rough weather this would be a decided advantage, and they would enjoy and profit by it; but do not throw the food down on the dirty floor. This would be a great waste. It should be put in dishes or shallow and narrow troughs. But I would only adopt this plan in rough weather, as they relish their food more keenly in the open if circumstances are in favor of this. These remarks apply more particularly to laying hens and all capable of laying, and others being fattened too, as comfort adds much to the quickness and efficacy of accomplishing this. Ducks and geese are more hardy, particularly the latter. Turkeys are great hands for the open air. They do not appear as indoor feeding, and while shelter in the morning is beneficial to them too, feeding need hardly ever be attempted till they are liberated.

CREAM SEPARATORS.

The efficiency of a cream separator depends upon the manner of its operation, and if this work is to be uniform it must be uniformly worked. In other words, the directions accompanying the machine when bought must be faithfully followed if good results are obtained at all times.

A recent bulletin from the United States Department of Agriculture entitled "Butter Making on the Farm," devotes a good deal of space to the operation of cream separators, and from it is submitted the following summary of points to be observed in running one:

"First. The speed of the separator must be uniform and up to the standard required by the makers of that particular machine.

"Second. The temperature of the milk should be such as will make it flow readily; the warmer it is the more perfect will be the separation.

"Third. The amount of milk that is run through the machine should remain constant, and should not be increased over that which is intended for the machine.

"Fourth. The machine should be set on a solid base or foundation, so that there will be no jar or shaking about as it is turned, such as would tend to interfere with the even flow of the milk through the bowl and thus destroy its efficiency in skimming.

"Fifth. The separator must be kept thoroughly and scrupulously clean, particular care being taken that none of the tubes through which the milk flows become obstructed in any way.

"Sixth. The test of the cream can be readily changed by changing either the cream outlet or the skim milk outlet.

"In the mechanical operation of a machine none but the best of oil should be used, and this should not be allowed to gum or become dirty on the bearings. It is good practice to flush the bearings with kerosene occasionally by making a run with kerosene in the oil cups. This will serve to cut out any gum or dust that has accumulated in the bearings, and will make the machine run much freer and easier, thus greatly increasing the length of time that it will last and do perfect work."

CHOICE VARIETIES OF APPLES.

Whatever variety gives greatest assurance of success in the business is the variety to plant and grow, writes Mr. J. W. Kerr. Fruit growers have long been accustomed to, and bear with good natured composure, the frequent dinning into their ears the injunction to endeavor to educate the public taste to a preference for fruits only of the higher quality. It must not be overlooked that teaching the public and growing apples are two separate and very distinct occupations.

Common sense business principles imperatively decree that he shall grow such varieties as yield the largest cash returns on his investment. If Ben Davis best meets such essentials, the grower would lack business wisdom if he did not grow it. While personally I would not like to be found in polite society with a Ben Davis apple in my pocket, there are numberless hundreds of sane people whose estimate of this much abused apple differs widely from mine. The question of varieties is one overflowing with deception. The opinions of the most conservative are not, in all cases, a safe guide. The only really determinate method by which the whole truth is attainable pertaining to this all-important feature of the business is by the slow grinding of individual experience.

DEATH FOLLOWS MARRIAGE.

Seventeen-year Courtship Ended by the Hand of Death.

A singularly sad story was that unfolded by the inquest held by Dr. E. C. Hart on the body of Mrs. William Jones, who died at Victoria, B. C., after a few hours' illness.

Mrs. Jones was formerly Miss Florence Stringer of Staffordshire, England, and 17 years ago Mr. Jones and she were companions as boy and girl. Some years ago Mr. Jones went to Victoria and entered into business as an auctioneer, and during the past four years had corresponded faithfully with his old-time sweetheart with a view to matrimony. At last Miss Stringer arrived, and Rev. Mr. Ard made her the wife of her childhood companion. Twenty-five hours later she was dead, having succumbed to a sudden hemorrhage of the brain.

These are but a few incidents in this sad ending romance, which seems to have been replete with misfortunes almost from the time Miss Stringer left England. In crossing the continent she lost her purse containing her ticket, baggage, checks, money, and other belongings, and for a week was placed in the Home of the Friendless in St. Paul. It was while in the waiting-room of the big railway depot in that city that the bag disappeared. She had to wait there three hours to connect with the Great Northern train going west, and an hour of this time had elapsed when the loss was discovered. Miss Stringer then fell into the hands of the matron, by whom she was removed to the institution. In the meanwhile a telegram had been sent on to Mr. Jones, but the latter having gone to Seattle to meet his fiancee, was there patiently awaiting her coming while the telegram was lying uncalled for in Victoria. Mr. Jones remained in Seattle five days, and then returning to Victoria found the message with its distracting note. Then the wires were again put in motion, and it was not for two days that his bride-to-be could be located. She had telegraphed to her brothers in Philadelphia, whom she had visited before undertaking the overland journey, but by the same singular misfortune which pursued her during the trip they could not be reached.

All these troubles weighed heavily on the young woman, who was totally ignorant of the conditions of travel on this continent, and it is believed greatly affected her health. To add to her miseries on arrival her baggage had not arrived, and so far has not been traced, although the Great Northern Railway Company is doing all in its power to locate this, as also the hand-bag stolen at the station in St. Paul.

PERHAPS—PERHAPS NOT!

Married in January's chilling time;
Widowed you'll be before your prime;
Married in Febr'ys sleety weather,
Life you'll tread in tune together;
Married when March winds shrill and rear,
Your home will lie on a foreign shore;
Married 'neath April's changeful skies,
A checkered path before you lies;
Married when bees o'er May-blooms flit,
Strangers around your board will sit;
Married in queen-rose month of June,
Life will be one long honeymoon;
Married as July's flower-banks blaze,
Bitter-sweet memories in after days;
Married in August's heat and drowse,
Lover and friend in your chosen spouse;
Married in gold September's glow,
Smooth and serene your life will flow;
Married when leaves in October thin,
Toil and hardship for you begin;
Married in veils of November mist,
Fortune your wedding-ring has kissed;
Married in days of December cheer,
Love's star shines brighter from year to year.

WHEN THE DISEASE LET GO.

An old man was just recovering from an operation, and as he lay regaining consciousness he heard the doctor say to a nurse, regarding some powders to be given him, "If one every hour is too much give him a half-one every half hour." The old gentleman raised himself up on his elbow and said.

"Say, doc, that reminds me of a man that had a Newfoundland dog. His wife got so tired of having him (the dog, not the man) track up the floors and porches that finally she made her husband take the dog to town and sell him. That afternoon he returned radiant. 'Well,' he said, 'I've sold him for $25!' 'Good!' cried his wife. 'I can get that hat now.' 'But,' continued the man, 'I bought two puppies with the money.'"

The doctor looked at the nurse and said:

"I think he'll recover."

P. S.—He did