DARE HE?

OR, A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued).

Amelia has passed her ...nd through Jim's arm—since his late increased kindness to her she has been led to many more little freedoms with him than she had hitherto permitted herself—and though she is very careful not to lean heavily or troublesomely upon him, yet the slight contact of her fingers keeps him reminded that she is there. Perhaps it is as well, since to-day he is conscious of such a strange tendency to forget everything, past, present, and to come. Has one of the monk's numb hands been laid upon his heart, to lull it into so frozen a quiet? To-day he feels as if it were absolutely impossible to him to experience either pleasure or pain, as if to hold Elizabeth in his own arms, or see her in Byng's, would be to him equally indifferent. His apathy in this latter respect is to be put to the test sooner than he expects. Not indeed that Elizabeth is lying in Byng's arms—it would be a gross misrepresentation to say so, she being, on the contrary, most decorously poised on a camp-stool—least romantic of human resting-places—when they come suddenly upon her and him in the course of their prowl round the inhospitable walls. She is sitting on her camp-stool, and he is lying on his face in the grass, just not touching her slim feet.

The advancing party perceives the couple advanced upon before the latter are aware of their nearness; long enough for the former to realize how very much de trop they will be, yet not long enough to enable them to escape unnoticed. Jim becomes aware of the very second at which Amelia recognizes the unconscious pair, by an involuntary pinch of her fingers upon his arm, which a moment later she hastily drops. His own feeling on catching sight of them—no, not his very first—his very first is as if some one had run a darning-needle into his heart—but almost his first is to shout out to them in loud warning:

"Be on your guard! We are close to you!"

He will never forgive either himself or them if they ignorantly induge in any endearment under his very eyes. But they do not. There are no interlacing arms to disengage; nothing to make them spring apart, when at length they look up and take in the fact—an unwelcome fact it must needs be—of their invasion.

On hearing approaching footsteps, Byng rolls over on his back in the grass; on perceiving that most of the footsteps are those of ladies, he springs to his feet. Elizabeth remains sitting on her camp-stool.

"What a coincidence!" cries Cecilia, breaking into a laugh.

They are all grateful to her for the remark, though it is rather a silly one, as there is no particular coincidence in the case. Burgoyne is irritably conscious that Amelia is covertly observing him, and before he can check himself he has thrown over his shoulder at her one of those snubbing glances from which, for the last ten days, he has painstakingly and remorsefully refrained. It is not a happy moment to look at poor Amelia, as she has not yet cooled down from the heat of her climb through the fir wood—a heat that translates itself into patchy flushes all over her face, not sparing even her forehead. Elizabeth is flushed, too. She has not met Miss Wilson since she had declined Burgoyne's offer of bringing his betrothed to see her, and in her deprecating eyes there is a guilty and tremulous recollection of this fact. But below the guilt and the deprecation and the tremor, what else is there in Elizabeth's eyes? What of splendid and startling, and that comes but once in a lifetime? Rather than be obliged to give a name to that vulgar radiance, Jim turns his back upon his own too glowing dear one.

"Did you come here all alone? You two all alone? What fun!" asks Cecilia, with an air of delighted curiosity.

Again her companions inwardly thank her. It is the question that both—though with different degrees of eagerness—have been thirsting to ask.

"Alone?—oh, no!" replies Elizabeth, with that uneasy, frightened look that Burgoyne has always noticed on her face when she has been brought into unwilling relation with strangers. "My mother is here—she came with us; why, where is she?"—looking around with a startled air—"she was here a moment ago."

A grim smile curves Jim's mouth. It is evident that the unhappy Mrs. Le Marchant, worn out with her role of duenna, has slipped away without being missed by either of her companions. Would they have even discovered her absence but for Cecilia's query?

"Mrs. Le Marchant was here a moment ago," echoes Byng, addressing the company generally; "but"—dodging his friend's eyes—"she said she was a little stiff from sitting so long; she must be quite close by."

"I will go and look for her," says Elizabeth, confused, and rising from her rickety seat as she speaks; but Amelia, who is nearest to her, puts out a friendly hand in prohibition.

"Oh, do not stir!" she cries, smiling kindly and admiringly. "You look so comfortable. Let me go and search for Mrs. Le Marchant; I—I—should be afraid to sit down, I am so hot. I should like to find her; Cecilia will help me, and Mr. Byng will show us the way."

It is not always that generous actions meet their meed of gratitude from those for whose sake they are performed; and, though Burgoyne recognizes the magnanimity of his fiancee's line of conduct, thankfulness to her for it is not the uppermost feeling in his mind when, a few moments later, he finds himself standing in uneasy tete-a-tete over the seated Elizabeth.

"Will not you sit down?" she asks, presently, adding, with a low, timid laugh, "I do not know why I should invite you, as if"—glancing round at the sun-steeped panorama—"this were my drawing-room."

He complies, taking care to occupy a quite different six feet of herbage from that which still bears the imprint of Byng's lengthy limbs. The grass grows cool and fresh, full of buttercups and tall blue bugle; out of them the grey monastery wall rises, in its utter lifeless silence, with its small barred windows. Was ever any building, within which is human life, so unutterably still? As he leans his elbow among the king-cups, Jim says to himself that the lovers had chosen their place well and wisely—that the consciousness of the austere, denied lives going on so close behind them, in their entire joylessness, must have given an added point, a keener edge to the poignancy of their own enjoyment of the sweet summer day outside.

"You have not been to see us for a long time," says Elizabeth presently in a small and diffident voice, after having waited until the probability of his speaking first had become a mere possibility, and even that a faint one.

He replies baldly, "No."

His look is fixed on a knoll, whence the monks must have gathered their leopard's bane. They cannot have gathered much, so bounteously do the gay yellow flowers still wave on the hillock. Nearer stands a colony of purple orchises, and from them the eye travels away to the silent fir-wood, to the range of misty hills and the distant plain, touched now and again by a vague hint of sunshine, that makes one for the moment feel sure that one has detected duomo or campanile. How many hill ranges there are! One can count six or seven, like the ridges in a gigantic ploughed field, one behind another—all solemnly beautiful on this windless day of grave and ungaudy sweetness. Has the young man been reckoning the ranks of the Appennines, that it is so long before he adds a low-voiced, mocking question to his monosyllable?

"Have you missed me very much?"

The woman addressed seems in no hurry to answer. She has drawn her narrow brown brows together, as if in the effort to hit truth in her nicest shade in her answer. Then she speaks with a sort of soft self-remonstrance:

"Oh, surely! I must have missed you—you were so extraordinarily, so unaccountably kind to us!"

There is not one of us who would not rather be loved for what we are than for what we do; so it is perhaps no wonder if the young woman's reply strikes with an unreasonable chill upon the asker's heart.

"You must have been very little used to kindness all your life," he says, with some brusqueness, "to be so disproportionately grateful for my trumpery civilities."

She hesitates a moment, then:

"You are right," she replies; "I have not received any great kindness in my life—justice, well, yes, I suppose so—but, no, not very much mercy."

Her candid and composed admission of a need for mercy whets yet farther that pained curiosity which has always been one of the strongest elements in his uncomfortable interest in her. But the very sharpness of that interest makes him shy away awkwardly from the subject of her past.

"I always think," he says, 'that there is something fatuous in a man's apologizing to a lady for not having been to see her, as if the loss were hers, and not his."

"Is there? All the same, I am sorry that you did not come."

This simple and unsophisticated implication of a liking for him would have warmed again the uneasy heart that her former speech had chilled had not he, under the superficial though genuine regret of her face, seen, still shining with steady lustre, that radiance which has as little been called forth by, as it can be dimmed by him or anything relating to him. And so he passes by in silence the expression of that sorrow which he bitterly knows to be so supportable.

The still spirit of the day seems to have touched the very birds. They sing a few low notes in veiled, chastened voices from the fir-wood, and again are silent. The clock tells the hours in quarters to the doomed lives inside the monastery, self-doomed to suffering and penance and incarceration, even with the winning blue of the Tuscan sky above their tonsured heads, with the forget-me-nots pressing their feet, and the nightingales singing endless love-songs to them from the little dark forest near at hand.

"I suppose," says Elizabeth presently, in a reflective tone, "that the fact is, when people are in your position—I mean on the brink of a great deep happiness—they forget all lesser things?"

He snatches a hasty glance of suspicion at her. Is this her revenge for his neglect of her? But nothing can look more innocent or less ironical than her small profile, bent towards the gigantic forget-me-nots and the pulmonaria, azure as gentians.

"Perhaps."

"The big fish"—her little face breaking into one of her lovely smiles, which, by a turn of her head from side to full, she offers in its completeness to his gaze—"swallows up all the little gudgeons! Poor little gudgeons!"

"Poor little gudgeons!" he echoes stupidly, and then begins to laugh at his own wool-gathering.

"And now I suppose you will be going directly—going home?" pursues she, looking at him and his laughter with a soft surprise.

"I hope so; and—and—you too?"

She gives a start, and the sky-colored nosegay in her hand drops into her lap.

"We—we? Why should we go home? We have nothing pleasant to go to, and"—looking round with a passionate relish at mountain, and suffused far plain, and sappy spring grass—"we are so well—so infinitely well here!" Then, pulling herself together, and speaking in a more composed key, "but, yes, of course, we too shall go by-and-by; this cannot last forever—nothing lasts forever. That is the one thought that has kept me alive all these years; but now——"

She breaks off.

"But now?"

Even as he watches her, putting this echoed interrogation, he sees the radiance breaking through the cloud his question had gathered, as a very strong sun breaks through a very translucent exhalation.

"But now?" she repeats vaguely, and smiling to herself, forgetful of his very presence beside her—"But now? Did I say 'But now?' Ah, here they are back again!"

(To be continued).

THE REAL THING.

Cholly: "I'm doosid worried, y'know. My doctah says I'm suffering fwom bwain fag."

Jack: "Feel sort of cloudy in your mind?"

Cholly: "Pwecicely."

Jack: "Cheer up, old chap. That's not brain fag—it's only brain fog."

PRACTICAL PATERNALISM.

"Sir, I want your daughter's hand."

"You may have it with the greatest pleasure, dear boy, if you'll take the one that's always in my pocket."

HAPPINESS.

'Tis not in money nor in land
That life its happiness reveals;
It is in dodging microbes and
Assimilating three square meals.

PARTLY WILLING.

Maiden Lady (rescued from drowning—to her rescuer): "How can I ever thank you, noble young man? Are you married?"

Young Man: "No; have you got a pretty daughter?"

THE WAY OF IT.

"Why, this witness doesn't seem to know even what he is talking about."

"Of course he doesn't. Wasn't he called in as an expert in the case."

ON THE FARM

SANITATION OF THE DAIRY BARN.

I have come to believe firmly and honestly that the great uplifting in the dairying has got to come from patrons, writes Mr. John Gould. I believe that when the patron understands that a cheap thing is not the best thing, then he will realize as never before what good dairying is, and that a good barn is one of the greatest things in connection with good dairying. The idea of a good barn is to make the whole thing level and give the man on the farm 365 days of summer and make the cow a paynig animal ten months of the year instead of seven.

I was down in Georgia one winter and a dairyman took me to see his barn and a herd of Jerseys. He was an up-to-date dairyman who said he had one of the most complete barns in Georgia. I did not see anything lacking. It was a log-barn without chinking, with a lean-to around it. Two logs were taken out on three sides and pegs driven in, and the cows standing on the outside of the barn putting their heads through where the logs should be and eating hay. That was his idea of a barn. He was making butter, and selling it for 35 cents a pound in Georgia. That barn would hardly do in Canada, but it was all right there. Not long since I was in the Hon. J. Sterling Morton's $75,000 barn in New York state. It was the other extreme. There were 60 cows freezing to death in it. It was perfectly sanitary, only too much so. I get between these two extremes. Get down to the common farmer and make that common farmer the average farmer, and then that average farmer the way up-to-date farmer, and set him clean up to the sky. I want a barn so cheap that any man can build it.

A barn is so much inclosed out-of-doors. What is out-of-doors? Pleasant sunshine, uniform temperature, dry ground, tepid water in brooks, succulent foods and pure air. That is June. Now if I put all four of these into the stable I have summer there. While I admire a great many barns from the outside, I have very rarely seen one of these great barns that was in really fit condition in which to keep a dairy cow tied up. Nearly every one is chilly and damp, dark and unventilated, and smells clear up to heaven. A cow does better in summer than winter, because she has better sanitary conditions. Some men get away from nature and turn their cows out on a cold day to freeze and put them back in the barn to thaw out.

I want my barn light and so that the air can be controlled. It must be made especially as a dairy stable and not part of the general barn. It may be in the ell to the barn which is to be used as a feed barrel and go to the south as the ell part with a straw mow over it. I have great respect for cement and stone. A lot of men are building stone barns and stone basements, but there was never so perfect a stable for a cow to stand in as wooden walls made on 6-inch scantling tongued and grooved side, with tar paper on both sides. In that way we have a wall impervious to cold and that controls the heat. The only other thing we have to do is to get light into it. It has been demonstrated that each cow needs 3 feet square of glass, and the windows put as high as possible, so as to get the longest slant of sunshine in.

I want the stable made so small that the cow can warm the air in which she stands. It has been found that a cow can warm a room containing 600 cubic feet and maintain the temperature, that is 16 feet long, 5 feet wide, and 8 feet high. If the walls are made so the air will not get through, she will maintain the heat inside that space with the thermometer 20 degrees below zero; but she will smother before morning, and therefore we must have ventilation. A stable 32 feet wide is wide enough for two rows of cows and if we have 40 cows we want our stable 60 feet long and 32 wide. After having made these boxes 9x4x16 feet for each cow, we have to provide for ventilation.

I want the ventilators at least 40 feet long and carried above the ridge of the barn, so they will have a draft all the time. They must be a foot square inside and one air shaft for each ten cows. Fresh air is admitted at the corners by four 5-inch stove pipes with an elbow extending through the wall. The main tube is parallel to the wall. These furnish half as much entrance air as there is exit air. The air comes in at the top of the room where it warms, and in that way it equalizes the temperature; it then passes out through these ventilators at the bottom.

SHEEP FOR EVERY FARM.

The percentage of farms in this province on which sheep raising cannot be made a profitable industry is very small indeed, says Mr. John Campbell. Farming has changed wonderfully during the last 15 years. We then sold our raw products direct. Now we have become manufacturers as well as farmers and are putting a more finished product on the market. Ten years ago I ventured the statement that we could double the annual value of our farm products by selling our grain in the form of live stock rather than in the raw state. What I then predicted has come to pass; our output has doubled. I believe there is no animal that can do more toward still further increasing the wealth-producing value of farms than the sheep.

No class of live stock can be handled with so little labor; and one of the greatest difficulties on the farm during the last five years has been the question of labor. There is no class of meat-producing stock that can be prepared so cheaply. The cost of producing mutton as compared with beef is altogether in favor of mutton. I am satisfied that one can produce 100 pounds of lamb at a cost of $1 to $2 less than it costs to put 100 pounds of weight on a steer when winter finishing is practiced, and, at the same time, the average selling price of well finished lambs in February and March has been from 75 cents to $1 per cwt. more than the selling price of export cattle in April and May.

The head buyer of a large Chicago packing house is predicting a much improved outlook for the sheep business. An Ohio farmer told me that he had been nine years in the cattle feeding business and in only one year in that time had he made a good profit. In a subsequent nine years in lambs he had failed only once to make a good profit. On one double-decked carload last year this feeder made a profit of $175. In 15 years, with the help of lambs, he had cleared a mortgage of $5,200 from his place, besides improving his farm buildings to the extent of $2,700. He can feed three lots of lambs in the time it takes to finish one lot of bullocks.

To draw attention to how sheep have been discarded in this country, I may say that recently I had a letter from a Hamilton firm stating that a few years ago there was as much wool marketed in Hamilton as there is now in the whole country between Detroit and Niagara. The price of wool has advanced in the United States by 10 per cent. in the last year and it has advanced here also. Another point in favor of sheep is that the consumer is beginning to learn the value of mutton. There is a good deal of waste in beef cattle and swine. The lamb, however, is edible meat from neck to heels.

During my 25 years' experience in sheep raising I have never seen so clear an indication of what was coming as I do now. Many, although they see these things, hesitate to take hold. After a while they get faith enough to dip in just when the turn is coming and lose money in consequence. Those who want to get the best end of the business must start now.

NOT WORTH HAVING.

He was employed by a city firm of dealers in bric-a-brac and old furniture to scour rural districts in search of antiquities, and suddenly he espied an old-fashioned cottage nestling at the foot of a hill.

Surely here, in this old-world spot, there would be something in his line.

He knocked sharply at the door, and a weary-looking woman answered:

"Do you happen to have any antique furniture, madam?" he inquired, "or any old ornaments, such as heathen idols, or such-like things?"

The woman looked puzzled for the moment.

"I think I've got one," she said at length.

Agog with expectation, he followed her into the house and to a room where lay a hulking fellow who was fast asleep on a couch.

"There it is," she replied, pointing to the couch.

"He's the only idle thing I've got in the place—hasn't done any work for years, he may do for you; but he's certainly no ornament."

MAKING IT WORSE.

Recently, in a case at one of the London police-courts, one of the witnesses evinced some disinclination to state her age.

"Is—is it really necessary?" she asked, coyly.

"It is absolutely necessary, madam," the magistrate assured her.

"Well," sighed the maiden, "if i must, I suppose I must. I don't see how it could possibly affect the case, for you see——"

"Madam," observed the magistrate, rather tartly, "I must ask you not to further waste the time of this Court. Kindly state your age without further delay."

"I am, that is, I was——" she stammered, unable to proceed.

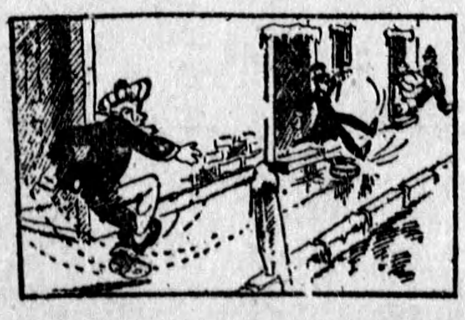
"Madam, I must beg you to hurry!" implored the magistrate. "Every minute makes it worse, you know!"

STILL LACKING.

"Say, old man, how do you like me in my new dress suit?"

"Fine. Now, if you only had a little dignity you'd look like a head waiter."

MasPherson—"Aha, a frost on the walk! I simply cannot——



"Withstand the temptation. I've got to try my——

"New curling stone. Whee! There she goes! Aw!

"Hoot, mon! Why didn't ye get off the walk when she saw it comin'?"

A WINTER TEMPTATION.