# DARE HE?

## OR, A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued).

As he receives no answer, he repeats the exhortation more imperatively, "Come."

"Why should I come? Where should I come to?" says the young man, lifting his head, "where can I find such plain traces of her as here? I will stay."

He says this with an air of resolution, and once more lays down his face upon the footstool, which, being entirely worked in beads, has impressed the cheek thrust against it with a design in small hollows, a fact of which the sufferer is quite unaware.

"You cannot stay!" cries Burgoyne, the more impatiently that his own share of anxiety is fretting his temper almost past endurance; "you cannot stay, it is out of the question; they want to come into the rooms, to prepare them for new occupants."

"New occupants!" repeats Byng, turning over almost on his face, and flattening his nose and lips against the beaded surface of his stool, "other occupants than her. Never! never!"

It is to be placed to the credit side of Mr. Burgoyne's account that he does not, upon this declaration, withdraw the resting-place from his young friend's countenance and break it over his head. It is certainly not the temptation to do so that is lacking. Instead, he sits down at some distance off, and says quietly.

"I see, you will force them to call in the police. You will make a discreditable esclandre. How good for her; how conducive to her good name. I congratulate you!"

The other has lifted his head in a moment.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you think," asks Jim, indignantly, "that it is ever very advantageous to a woman to have her name mixed up in a vulgar row? And do you suppose that hers will be kept out of it? Come"—seeing a look of shocked consternation breaking over the young man's face, and determining to strike while the iron is hot—"I will call a fiacre, and we will go home to the hotel. Put back her things into her basket. What right have you to meddle with them? You have no business to take advantage of her absence to do what you would not do if she were here."

Byng obeys with a scared docility; his eyes are so dim, and his fingers tremble so much, that Jim has to help him in replacing Elizabeth's small properties. His own heart is pricked with a cruel smart that has no reference to Amelia's illness, as he handles the departed girl's spools and skeins, and awkwardly folds her scrap of broidery. Byng offers no further resistance, and, equally indifferent to his own bunged-up eyes, bead-marked cheeks, and disheveled locks, follows his companion dully, down the stone stairs, compassionately watched from the top by Annunziata, whose heart is an inconveniently tender one to be matched with so tough a face. They get into the fiacre, and drive in dead silence to the Minerva. Arrived there, Jim persuades his friend, who now seems prepared to acquiesce meekly in whatever he is told to do, to lie down on his bed, since the few words that he utters convey the fact of his being suffering from a burning headache, a phenomenon not very surprising, considering his late briny exercises, since, even at the superb age of twenty-two, it is difficult to spend six hours in banging your forehead against a parquet floor, in moaning, bellowing, and weeping, without leaving some traces of these gymnastics on your physique.

Burgoyne stands or sits patiently beside him, bathing his fiery temples with eau de Cologne, not teasing him with any questions, having, indeed, on his own part, the least possible desire for conversation; and so the heavy hours go by. The day has declined to evening before Burgoyne quits his protege's side to dine, shortly and solitarily, previous to making a third visit to the Anglo-Americain, to learn the latest news of his betrothed.

He had left Byng still stretched upon his bed, apparently asleep, and is therefore the more surprised, on returning to take a final look at him before setting out on his own errand, to find him up, with hat and stick in hand, evidently prepared for a walk.

"You are going out?"

"Yes."

"Where are you going?"

The other hesitates.

"I am going back there."

"Impossible!"

"But I am," replies Byng doggedly; "it will not do her any injury, for I shall not attempt to go in, I shall only ask at the door whether any telegram has yet been received from—from them; they must telegraph to direct where their things are to be sent to, and it is most probable that they have done so already."

"It is most improbable."

"Well, at all events it is possible, it is worth trying, and I mean to try it."

There is such a fixed resolution in his voice, which is no longer quavering with sobs, and in his ashy face, that Jim offers no further resistance. The only concession he can obtain from him is that of permitting him to accompany him.

"You will not mind coming with me to the Anglo-Americain first, will you?" inquires Jim, as they set off walking across the Piazza.

"It will delay us quite half an hour," answers the other restlessly. "But stay" (a hazy look of reminiscence dawning over his preoccupied haggard face), "did you tell me that Amelia was ill—or did I dream it?"

"No, you did not dream it," replies the other, sadly. "She is ill."

Perhaps the wretchedness that pierces through his friend's quiet tones recalls the young dreamer to the fact that the world holds other miseries than his own. There is at all events something of his old quick sympathy in his next words, and in the way in which they are uttered.

"Oh, poor Amelia, I am sorry! By all means let us go at once and ask after her. Is there nothing that we can get?—nothing that we can do for her?"

It is the question that Jim, in baffled anxiety, puts when he is admitted inside the dull salon, where no love-glorified, homely face to-night lights up the tender candles of its glad eyes, from over its stitching, at his entry.

Sybilla is lying less comfortably than usual on her sofa, her cushions not plumped up, and her bottles of smelling-salts rolled out of her reach. Mr. Wilson is walking uneasily up and down the room, instead of sitting placidly in his chair, with the soothing voice—which he had always thought as much to be counted on, and as little to be particularly thankful for, as the air that fills his lungs—lullingly reading him to sleep.

"Cecilia is with her just now," he says, in a voice of forlorn irritation. "I wish she would come down again; I have no great opinion of Cecilia as a sick-nurse, and she must know how anxious we are." A moment later, still pursuing his fidgetty ramble from wall to wall, and exclaiming peevishly, as he stumbles over a footstool, "If it would only declare itself! There seems to be nothing to lay hold of, we are so completely in the dark—if it would only declare itself!"

A not very subdued sob from the sofa is the only answer he gets, an answer which evidently irritates still further his fretted nerves.

"I cannot think what Cecilia is doing!" he cries, hastening to the door, opening it noisily, and then listening.

"Let me run up and see," says Jim, his heart going out to the fractious old man in a sympathy of suffering. "Yes, I know where her room is—au troisieme, is it not?" (a flash of recollection lighting up the fact that Amelia's is distinctly the worst room of the suite occupied by the Wilson family; the room with most stairs to climb to, and least accommodation when you reach it). "I will knock quite gently. Do not be afraid, I will not disturb her, and I will come down immediately to tell you."

Without waiting for permission, he springs up the stairs, and, standing on the landing, taps cautiously on the closed door, whose number (by one of those quirks of memory that furnish all our minds with insignificant facts) he has recollected. His first knock is so superfluously soft that it is evidently inaudible within, since no result follows upon it. His second, a shade louder, though still muffled by the fear of breaking into some little fitful yet salutary sleep, brings Cecilia out. His first glance at her face shows him that she has no good news, either to warm his own heart, or for him to carry down as a solace to the poor old man below.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" says she, shutting the door behind her with a clumsy carefulness that makes it creak. "No, I do not think she is any better; but it is so difficult to tell, I am no judge. She does not complain of anything particular; but she looks so odd."

"If she is asleep, might not I just look in at her?" he asks. "I do not know what you mean when you say she looks odd."

"She is not asleep," replies Cecilia, in a noisy whisper, much more likely to pierce sick ears than a voice pitched in its normal key; "at least I think not. But I am sure you ought not to see her; Dr. Coldstream said she was to be kept very quiet, and nothing would upset her so much as seeing you."

"She need not see me; I would only take just one look at her from behind the door," persists Jim, who feels a desire, whose gnawing intensity surprises himself, to be assured by the evidence of his own eyes that his poor love's face has not undergone some strange and gruesome change, such as is suggested by Cecilia's disquieting epithet?"

"Do you think she would not know you were there?" asks she scornfully. "Why, she hears your step three streets off!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

So that night Jim does not see Amelia. After all, as Cecilia says, it is better to be on the safe side, and to-morrow she will be brighter, and he can sit by her side, and tell her lovingly—oh very lovingly!—what a fright she has given him. Yes, tomorrow she will be brighter. The adjective is Cecilia's; but, apparently, he cannot improve upon it, for he not only keeps repeating it to himself as he runs downstairs, but employs it for the reassurance of Miss Wilson's anxious relatives.

"She will be brighter to-morrow; sick people are always worse at night, are not they?"—rather vaguely, with again that oppressive sense of his own inexperience in illness. "Not that she is worse"—this is hastily subjoined, as he sees her father's face fall—"Cecilia never said she was worse—oh, no, not worse, only not distinctly better; and, after all, it would have been irrational to expect that. She will be brighter to-morrow—oh, yes, of course she will be brighter to-morrow!"

He leaves the hotel with the phrase, which sounds cut and dried and unreal, still upon his lips, after bidding a kinder good-night than usual to Mr. Wilson, after having offered to supply Amelia's place by reading aloud to him, a feat he has not performed since the evening of his disastrous experience of the Provident Women of Oxford; and lastly, having even—as a reward to Sybilla, who has been understood to murmur something tearful about letting her maid look in upon Amelia at intervals through the night—tucked in her Australian blanket, and picked up her smelling-bottle. He has expected to rejoin Byng outside, as he had promised to wait for him with such patience as a cigar could lend, and on the condition that his absence should not exceed a stipulated period. But either the promise has been broken, or the period exceeded, for Byng is gone. The fact does not greatly surprise Burgoyne, though it causes him a slight uneasiness, which is, perhaps, rather a blessing for him, distracting his mind in some slight measure from the heaviness of his own trouble.

He walks fast to the Piazza d'Azeglio; but he neither overtakes him of whom he is in pursuit, nor finds him at 12 Bis. He has been there, has inquired with agitation for the telegrams, which have naturally not been received, and has then gone away again immediately. Whither? The Padrona, who has answered the door-bell herself, and, with Italian suavity, is doing her best to conceal that she is beginning to think she has heard nearly enough of the subject, does not know. For a few moments Jim stands irresolute, then he turns his steps towards the Arno. It is not yet too late for the charming riverside promenade, the gay Lung Arno, to be still alive with flaneurs; the stars have lit their lamps above, and the hotels below. The pale planets, and the yellow lights from the opposite bank of the river, lie together, sweet and peaceful upon her breast. In both cases the counterfeits are as clear and bright as the real luminaries; and it seems as if one had only to plunge in an arm to pick up stars and candles out of the stream's depths.

Leaning over the parapet near the Ponte Vecchio, Burgoyne soon discovers a familiar figure, a figure which starts when he touches its arm.

"I thought I would wait about here for an hour or so," says Byng, with a rather guilty air of apology, "until I could go back and inquire again. The telegram has not arrived yet—I suppose it is too early. Of course they would not telegraph until they get in to-night. You do not think"—with a look of almost terror—that they are going through to England, and that they will not telegraph till they get there?"

"How can I tell?"

"There is nothing in the world less likely," cries Byng feverishly, irritated at not having drawn forth the reassurance he had hoped for. "I do not for a moment believe that they have gone home; I feel convinced that hey are still in Italy! Why should they leave it when they—when she is so fond of it?"

Jim looks down sadly at the calm, strong stream.

"I do not know, I cannot give an opinion—I have no clue."

"I will ask again in about an hour," says Byng, lifting his arms from the parapet, "in an hour it is pretty certain to have arrived; and meanwhile, I thought I would just stroll about the town, but there is no reason—none at all—why I should keep you! You—you must be wanting to go back to Amelia."

He glances at his friend in a nervous, sidelong way, as he makes this suggestion.

"I am not going back again to-night," replies Jim quietly, without giving any evidence of an intention to acquiesce in his dismissal. "There is nothing I can do for her—there is nothing to be done."

His tone, in making this statement, must be yet more dreary than he is aware, as it arouses even Byng's self-absorbed attention.

"Nothing to be done for her?" he echoes, with a shocked look. "My dear old chap, you do not mean to say—to imply——"

"I mean to imply nothing," returns Jim sharply, in a superstitious panic of hearing some unfavorable augury as to his betrothed put into words. "I mean just what I say—neither more nor less; there is nothing to be done for her to-night, nothing but to let her sleep—a good sleep will set her up: of course a good sleep will quite set her up."

He speaks almost angrily, as if expecting and challenging contradiction. But Byng's spirit has already flown back to his own woes. He may make what sanguine statements he pleases about Amelia's to-morrow, without fearing any demurrer from his companion. What attention the latter has to spare is evidently only directed to the solving of the problem, how best, with amicable civility, to be rid of him. Before he can hit upon any expedient for attaining this desired end, Burgoyne speaks again, his eye resting with a compassionate expression upon his junior's face, whose wild pallor is heightened by the disorder of his hair, and the hat crushed down over his brows.

"You have not had anything to eat all day—had not you better come back to the hotel and get something to eat?"

"Eat!" cries the other, with almost a scream, "you must have very little comprehension of——" Then, checking himself, and with a strong and palpable effort for composure—"it would not be worth while, I should not have time, in an hour—less than an hour now, for I must have been here quite ten minutes at the least—I have to return to the Piazza d'Azeglio."

"Then go to Doney's; why not get something to eat at Doney's? It will not take you five minutes to reach the Via Tornabuoni."

"What should I do when I got there?" asks Byng impatiently. "If I tried to swallow food, it would stick in my throat; no food shall pass my lips till I learn where she is; after that"—breaking out into a noisy laugh—"you may do what you please with me—we will make a night of it with all my heart, we will—

"'Drink, drink,
Till the pale stars blink!'"

Jim looks blankly at him. Is he going mad?

"If you think that you will get me to go back to the hotel tonight, you are very much mistaken," continues Byng recklessly; "no roof less high than this"—jerking back his head, to throw his fevered look up to the cool stars—"shall shelter my head; and, besides, where would be the use of going to bed when I should have to be up again so early? I shall be off by one of the morning expresses; until I have learnt—as, of course, I shall do to-night—where she has gone, I cannot tell which; but neither of them starts much later than seven."

(To be continued).


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# ALTON HAS A TALE OF WOE

**THIS PLUCKY SCOT WILL TRY HIS LUCK AGAIN.**

**He Lost $40,000 in Wyoming, But Now He Will Locate in Red Deer District, Alberta.**

Fourteen years ago a young Scotchman, Geo. H. Alton by name, decided to leave his native country and try his luck in the Western States. In Aberdeen he had many pictures placed before him of the glorious, free life of the Western States, and after reading all the literature available on the country, he was seized with the fever so badly that he decided he would go out and try his luck in that great country where all one had to do was to ride around his land and see that the wolves were not destroying his cattle.

SPENT HIS $20,000 FORTUNE.

The vision of himself decked out in schaps, spurs, and several very large weapons, was very pleasing, also the visions of fighting Indians was a great drawing card to him. His father tried to persuade him against taking a rash step, counseling him to go first and see how he liked the country, and if pleased with it to then invest his heritage amounting to some $20,000.

But the advice of the father was not taken, and the lad sailed away from Liverpool with enough baggage to have set several settlers of the present Western Canada up in housekeeping; in this baggage were braces, boots for the next ten years, clothes of all descriptions, and enough armament to do the Calgary 15th Light Horse. From New York he travelled west until he reached the State of Wyoming, and he then purchased a large piece of land about 40 miles from Cheyenne, and spent the balance of his fortune in buying cattle.

For a number of years he flourished in the cattle business, and at one time had increased his fortune up to $40,000. He then brought his two younger brothers out to the ranch, and all were as happy as clams until three or four years ago, the scabbe struck his cattle and the loss started. He made a game fight, as any Scotchman would, but to no avail, for no sooner had he eradicated the scabbe than he ran into a couple of dry years, and his remaining cattle nearly all perished from lack of food and the thirst which comes in semi-arid country. Alton and his brothers stayed on until he had lost everything, hoping for a good year to recoup his fortune, but the year never came, and this spring he decided to try the country of Alberta, where one may get a little cold but never suffer from the drought.

DOES NOT DESPAIR.

The other afternoon he passed through the Red Deer district, not down-hearted after losing his entire fortune, but looking forward to the time when once more he could return to his home in Aberdeen with his fortune increased threefold.

This is the kind of settlers that Alberta wants, never beaten, and always ready to make a game fight to overcome the bad hand of fortune.

Mr. Alton will settle on the north side of the Red Deer River, and was very much surprised to see the mild weather at Calgary, as he had read in many of the papers from the States of the country being one mass of frozen plains, and the dead cattle lying around the streets.

Go slow—and the other fellow may beat you to it.