DARE HE?

OR, A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER XXXV.—(Continued).

As he speaks, he begins to retreat towards the door, but so slowly as to give her plenty of time to recall him had she so wished. But she does not. She only stands looking uncertain and distressed. He cannot take such a melancholy impression of her little face away for the whole night with him—it would give him the blues too seriously after this dismal day—so he takes a step or two forward again.

"Are not you rather lonely?" he asks, with an expressive look round.

She gives a small, uncomplaining smile.

"Oh no; I do very well. I am generally alone at this time of day; they like to have their evenings to themselves—or least, father likes to have mammy to himself; I am sure it is quite natural."

There is not the slightest trace of any sense of being aggrieved in either words or tone.

Again that picture of the adored Elizabeth of former days, of whose prattle her father was never weary, whose jokes were always considered so unequalled, and whose pre-eminence in favor was so allowed that her intercession and influence were always employed by the others as certain in their efficacy, rises before Jim's eyes.

"They are like lovers still," continues Elizabeth softly; "it is very pretty when people are lovers still after nearly thirty years."

"And you—you write letters?"

"No, I do not; I have not anyone to write to."

A pang of shame at his unworthy suspicion, coupled with a sense of astonishment at her simple confession of friendliness, prevent his speaking; and it is she who goes on:

"I was writing an Italian exercise; I began to learn Italian in Florence"—with the inevitable low sigh that always accompanies her mention of that name—"and to-day, for something to do, I took it up again. It has been a long day, has not it? Oh, what a long day!"

"Long!" repeats Jim emphatically; "it might choose to call itself a day; but many a century has been shorter."

"Someone was playing battledore and shuttlecock in the hall. I wonder to what number they kept it up? how many years it is since I have played battledore and shuttlecock!"

There is a suppressed envy in her tone, which tells how far from disagreeable the innocent noisy pastime to which she alludes would be to her even now. She has sat down again on the straight-backed chair from whose elevation she had commanded her Italian studies; a large greyish cloak, lined and heavily collared, and bordered with fur, hangs, unfastened at the throat, about her. Out of the dark beaver her delicate neck and head rise, like a pale primrose from out of piled dead oak-leaves in a yet wintry wood. Through the door, which he has left open behind him, come bursts of maniac mirth from the votaries of Dumb Crambo.

"What a noise they are making!"

"I should think they were!"

"I wonder what they are doing?"

"I can inform you on that point; they are playing Dumb Crambo."

She repeats the words after him with a lingering intonation, in which there again is, or, at least, he thinks that he detects it, a tinge of envy.

"Dumb Crambo!"

"Would you like to join them?"

"No"—slowly—"not quite that; but—it sounds ridiculous—but I should like to play Dumb Crambo again. We used"—in an affectionate, lingering tone—"tao play it when we were children."

It is the first time that she has ever voluntarily alluded to the Moat, and he calls to mind her earnest prohibition addressed to him at Florence against any mention of it.

"I know you did; once or twice I played with you."

"You?"

She starts. It is evident that the unimportant fact of his having taken part in their games has quite escaped her; but, a moment later, her soft and courteous nature evidently making her fear that he will liik upon her obliviousness as unkind——

"Oh, yes, to be sure!" Then again lapsing into reminiscence, "what odd words we used to choose sometimes—words that nobody could guess! I wonder what words they have chosen?"

He thinks of saying jocosely, "shall I go and ask them?" but refrains, because he fears it would put it into her head to send him away.

A sort of piercing squeal makes itself heard from the salon.

"Do you think that can be meant for a pig?" asks Elizabeth, her fine ears pricked in unaffected interest. "Oh!"—with a return of uneasiness—"I wish that they would not make so much noise; father does so dislike noise. They might as well have put it off till to-morrow."

"Why would to-morrow's noise be more endurable than to-night's?"

"It would not have mattered to-morrow; father will not be here; he is going to Hammam Rhira."

Burgoyne's jaw drops. Is this the alternative course decided upon by Mrs. Le Marchant? Having failed to dislodge him from Algiers, is she going to remove herself and her daughter out of his reach?

"Do you mean—are you all going to Hammam Rhira to-morrow?—all going away?"

Is it some effect of light from the rose-shaded lamp that makes it seem to him as if a tiny smile, and yet a smaller blush, swept over Elizabeth's face at the aghastness of his tone—an aghastness much more marked than he had intended it should be.

"Not to-morrow; not all of us. Father and mammy are going there for a couple of nights to see what the place is like—one hears such contradictory accounts; and if they are pleased with it——"

"Yes?"

"If they are pleased with it we shall all probably move on there in a day or two."

He would like to be sure that this sentence ends with a sigh, but a prodigious storm of hand-clapping from the extempore theatre prevents his hearing whether it has that regretful finish.

"And they are going to leave you behind?"

"Why not? there would not be much use in taking me; and, as I tell you, they love being tete-a-tete."

"And you love being alone?"

The moment that the question is out of his mouth, he realizes its full unkindness. He is perfectly aware that she does not like being alone; that she is naturally a most social little being; that, even now, these frightened five minutes of unsatisfactory broken talk with himself has made her look less chilled, less woebegone, less white. Her answer, if it can be looked upon as one, must be taken by him as a rebuke. It is only that she says nervously:

"One certainly does hear dreadfully plainly here with the door open."

Her tone is of the gentlest, her look no angrier than a dove's, and yet he would be obtuser than he is if he did not at once comprehend that her remark implies a wish that he should presently shut that door behind him on the outside. He complies. With that newly-gained knowledge as to to-morrow's Hammam Rhira, he can afford to comply.

The next morning's light reveals that the weather, pleased with having so indisputably proved its power of being odious, has recovered its good humor.

Beyond the tree-tops a radiant sea is seen laughing far below; and the wet red tiles on the little terrace shine like jewels. A sea even more wonderful than radiant; no servile copy of the sky and clouds to-day, but with astonishing colors of its own—a faint yet glorious green for a part of its watery breadth; then what our poverty compels us to call blue; and then a great tablecloth of inky purple, which looks so solid that the tiny white boats that are crossing it seem to be sailing on dry land. From amongst the glossy green of the wooded hill, mosque and campagne start out, dazzling, in their recovered lustre; one cool entrancing villa in especial, backed with a broken line of dusky stone-pines, stands, snowy-arcaded, enthroned high up among the verdure.

Jim is very anxious to be out of the way at the hour of the Le Marchants' departure. He has a panic fear of being waylaid by the mother, and having some earnest supplication addressed to him to abstain, during her absence, from any converse with Elizabeth. He is not quite clear at what time they will set off, so, to insure himself against mistakes, he resolves to spend the mornig and lunch at the Villa Watson. Arrived there, he is shown by an Arab man-servant into the court, and, finding it empty, sinks down into a cane chair, and lets his eyes wander round to the fountain, lullingly dripping into its basin; to the tiles, the white-arched doorways, carved in low relief, and themselves so low that it must be a humble-statured person who enters them without stooping. What a home for love in idleness! Who can picture any of the vulgar work of the world done in such a house? any harder labor ever entered upon than a listening to some lady singing 'with ravishing division" to her lute?

The lady who presently joins Jim appears, by her ruffled air, to have been engaged upon no such soothing occupation as luting to a recumbent lover.

"You will not mnid staying here?" asks Cecilia; "Dr. Crump is in the drawing-room with Sybilla; I am sure that you do not want to see Dr. Crump!"

"I cannot express how little I wish it."

"I cannot think what has happened to Sybilla"—wrinkling up her forehead in annoyed furrows—"but she is so dreadfully sprightly when he is there; she never was sprightly with Dr. Coldstream, and he is such an impossible man!—the sort of man who, when first he comes in, always says, 'Well, how are we this morning?' Do not you think that it stamps a man to say 'How are we?'"

"I think it does."

"He talks such nonsense to her!"—with irritation—"he tells her that he, too, is a bundle of nerves! if you could only see him! And one day he told her that when first he came here he had seen the Angel of Death waving his fans above her head! and she swallows it all!"

"I am not at all surprised."

"It makes me sick!" cries she energetically; "let us go into the garden."

So into the garden they go; both the new one, whose luxuriant growth of verdure is the outcome of but eight or nine years; and the old one, along whose straight walks the feet of the Moorish ladies used to patter under the orange trees. Beneath them now there are no white bundles of muslin; only on the ground the oranges lie thick, no one in this plenteous land thinking it worth while to pick them up. Jim and his companion pace rather silently to a pretty Moorish summer-house, dug, a few years ago, by the English architect out of a farmhouse, into which it had been built. It is dainty and cool, with a little dome and lovely green and blue tiles; and an odd small spring, which is taught to wander by tiny snaky channels into a little basin. They go into the summer-house and sit down.

"Yes, it is pretty," says the girl absently; but her mind is evidently preoccupied by some other subject than the beauty of the giant bignonia which is expanding the multitude of its orange-red clusters all over a low wall, making it into one burning hedge, and has called forth an exclamation of delight from Burgoyne. What that subject is immediately appears.

"Do you know who is in Algiers—whom I saw driving through the Place Bressant on Sunday afternoon?"

"Who?"

"The Le Marchants. Ah, you are not surprised!"—rather suspiciously. You knew already!"

Jim hesitates a second; then reflecting that whether or not he acknowledges the fact now, Cecilia is certain to learn in a day or two at latest,-he answers with a slight laugh:

"It would be odd if I did not, seeing thet they are staying at my hotel."

"You knew that when you went there?"—very quickly.

"Of course not!"—with a movement of impatience.

A pause.

"I suppose," says Cecilia, rather cautiously, as if aware that she is treading on dangerous ground, "that you have not found out why they stampeded from Florence in that extraordinary way? Oh, no, of course not!"—as this suggestion is received with a still more accented writhe than her former one. "It is not a thing upon which you could question them; and, after all, it was their own affair; it was no business of ours, was it?"

"Not the slightest."

"I always used to like them," continues Cecilia pensively; "at least"—becoming aware-of an involuntary movement of surprise at this statement on the part of her neighbor—"at least, they never gave me the chance of liking them; but I always admired them. I wonder are they more accessible than they were in Florence? There are so few nice English here this year; everybody says that there never was a year when there were so few nice English!"

The tentative towards sociability implied in this last speech is received by Jim in a discouraging silence. He has not the slightest desire to promote any overture on the part of Cecilia towards intimacy with Elizabeth. He knows that they would be unsuccessful; and, moreover, he is conscious that he would be annoyed if they were not.

"I can fancy that this would be a very pleasant place if one had someone to go about with," continues she; "but father grows less and less inclined to move. Poor dear! he is not so young as he was, and I am not quite old enough yet, I suppose, to go about alone."

She makes a rather wistful pause—a pause which he feels that she intends him to fill by an offer of himself as escort. But none such comes. Realizinz this, she goes on with a sigh:

"There are not many advantages in being old; but, at least, one is freer, and in a youth spent as mine is, there is really not much profit or pleasure."

The tone in which she makes this lugubrious reflection is so extremely doleful that Jim cannot refrain from a laugh.

"Cheer up, old girl! there is a good time coming! It is a long lane that has no turning."

But he contents himself with these vague forms of consolation. He has no engagements of his own. Why, then, is he conscious of so strong a reluctance towards tying himself by any promise to the broadly-hinting lady beside himself? There is another pause, during which Cecilia looks down on the floor with a baffled air, and traces the outlines of the tiles with the point of her red sunshade.

"There is a band plays twice a week in the Place de Gouvernement—plays admirably. Now, I suppose that there would be nothing odd; that no one could say anything; that it would not be the least improper, considering our connection and everything, if you were to take me to hear it some day?"

"I never have the slightest idea of what is improper and what is not," replies he; but there is more of alarm than of encouragement in his tone.

"No more have I"—laughing rather awkwardly—"but in this case I am pretty sure. Tuesdays and Fridays are the days on which the band plays."

"Oh!"

"To-day is Tuesday, is not it?"

"Yes."

Another pause.

"I thought that perhaps, if you had nothing better to do, you might take me to-day?"

The direct proposal which he has in vain tried to avert has come. If he accept it, of what profit to him will the absence of the Le Marchant parents be? He does not formulate this fact to himself, not having, indeed, owned to his own heart that he has any set design upon Elizabeth's company for the afternoon.

"I am afraid——" he begins slowly.

"You are vamping up an excuse!" cries Cecilia, reddening. "I see it in your eyes. You cannot have made any engagements here yet. You do not know anybody, do you, except the Le Marchants?"

"And they have gone to Hammam Rhira," replies he precipitately.

He is ashamed the moment that the words are out of his mouth, for he knows that they convey a falsehood.

"At least——"

But she interrupts him before he can add his conscience clause.

"To-morrow, then?"

Again he hesitates. The same objections apply with even greater force to the morrow.

"But the band does not play to-morrow."

"Oh! what does that matter?" subjoins she impatiently. "I had just as soon go somewhere else—the Arab town, the Kabyle village, anywhere."

He is driven into a corner, and remains there silent so long that there is a distinct element of offence in the tone and large sigh with which the girl resumes.

"Well, times are changed! I always used to make one in those happy excursions at Florence; and somehow—thanks to her, I suppose—I never felt a bad third."

She rises as she speaks, and takes a couple of huffy steps toward the house; but he overtakes and stops her. The allusion to Amelia has annoyed and yet stirred in him the sea of remorse, which is always lying but a very little way below the surface in his soul.

"Why, Cis!" he says, in a tone of affectionate rallying, "are we going to quarrel at this time of day—you and I? Of course I will take you to the band and the Kabyle village, and any other blesed sight you choose to name, only tell me by which of them you would like to begin to ride round."

As he leaves the house and the appeased fair one, after luncheon, an hour and a half later, he tells himself that he has got off cheaply in having vaguely sacrificed the whole of his Algerian future, but having preserved to-day and to-morrow.

(To be continued).

ON THE FARM.

CAN WE AFFORD TO FEED GRAIN TO OUR COWS?

This question is ever present with the dairy farmer. It will not down. Some answer it confidently by saying "Yes!" Some shake their heads doubtfully and say "I hardly know. "Others declare, "At present prices of such feed it doesn't pay." If we take a census of these farmers, we will land on about this ground:

That those dairy farmers who feed a grain ration, are, as a rule, the most prosperous. They will tell you that it pays, providing you will take care to do two things: (1) Have good cows. Either breed them or buy them; don't keep a poor cow a minute longer than you are obliged to, for she is a constant loss. A cow must yield 200 pounds of butter a year to barely pay for her keeping. From this conclusion there seems to be no escape. If you want more, you must have a better cow.

(2) Take care that the cow is stabled and handled in a way most favorable to milk production. If by your fault, you hinder her in her best work, she will surely charge you for it and you must pay the bill.

These are the two general conclusions and conditions that surround the question. From these two we may go on and deduce a score or more of other impertant conclusions. For instance: (1) The problem is so difficult that only men of active, well informed minds can make a good success of it. (2) That we must be dairymen, using dairy bred cows, and a good supply of dairy intelligence in feeding as well as in providing the right conditions to surround the cow. (3) That if we produce our cows by breeding, we must look into the laws and principles of dairy breeding. We must not come at it in loose, haphazard ways for we are doing work for a long time. We must understand that breeding of profitable dairy cattle is based on just as distinctive, well settled principles as is the breeding of trotting horses, beef cattle, mutton sheep, or game fowls. (4) Because of loose, haphazard ideas of dairy breeding among farmers, we have the abundance of poor cows and the scarcity of good cows, that is seen on every hand. (5) That breed is a very important thing if it really means what it should; if the development of dairy qualities, dairy type, dairy individuality has been made the leading purpose. A cow or bull so bred is much more apt to give results, than any other. Hence, when we choose from a certain breed, it is well to be assured of the skill and wise judgment of the breeder. There are wise men and foolish men among breeders. As he is, so are his cattle in a very large degree.

(6) If we buy our cows, we must be a good judge of a cow, else we will be throwing away our money, feed and care. To be a good judge of the dairy quality of a cow, one must have a natural love of the animal, well supplemented by a study of the external signs of dairy capacity. (7) If we do well with the cow, we must have also a good judgment of true dairy conditions. Now, all these things call for study, thought, information. A successful dairy farmer must give himself a dairy education, the same as a good lawyer must have a good legal education. It is nonsense to suppose that so deep a subject, one that means so much, can be solved successfully without a well informed mind. And all this talk has come logically from the single question: Shall we feed grain to our cows? Verily, the cow is a fruitful subject.

BETTER POULTRY ON THE FARM.

Now that poultry is in such demand and at double the former prices for eggs and chicks, poultry on the farm has become a greater interest than ever before. It is just as easy to grow good chickens as scrubs, and they eat no more and bring much more money. A lady who gives much attention to growing chickens on the farm sends the following letter on the subject. She says:

I would like to see more and better poultry on our farms, and I believe there is no way in which we can more readily and surely increase the returns from our farm. The point at which we should stop increasing the size of our flocks is that at which there is nothing more for the fowls to clean from the fields in the way of bugs and lost grain. The tender grass and the young clover that are to be found all over the farm in late summer and fall make good feed for fowls and we should utilize them as much as possible by having a large number of fowls to use it.

We need more poultry on the farms, as is evidenced by the increasing price for poultry products. This means that the demand is ahead of the supply. When the prices get high there is a tendency for the people to buy other food in the place of poultry products; therefore we are the losers. There is another reason why we should increase the amount of poultry on our farms and that is that poultry meat is not as solid as other meat, and therefore, in selling it we get more for the same food value parted with than from a like weight of beef or pork.

The better the poultry the more we will get for the food consumed, which is, of course, of great moment. We have in most of our flocks hens that eat and eat and never lay an egg. Some of them have passed beyond the age of laying and the owners have lost track of them in the flock. We can get better flocks by weeding out these unprofitable layers.

WHITEWASH THE QUARTERS.

This is the season of the year when the hog quarters should all be put into the best kind of shape by cleaning them out thoroughly, whitewashing them inside and out wherever the hogs touch them. Air slaked lime sprinkled around the floor of the pens, especially in the corners and sides, is an excellent method of treating the floor. Troughs should be whitewashed inside and out and air-slaked lime scattered freely around where the pigs are in the habit of eating. If there is some lime in the troughs it doesn't hurt, it is an advantage.

By exercising care, sickness may be prevented. Cleanlinness is one of the essentials. It is a great preventive, and the lime wash is an excellent disinfectant. We cannot endorse this too strongly. Give the hogs some charcoal. It is a regulator and an aid to good digestion. Have clean, sweet sleeping quarters. Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.

NO FLIES ON HIM.

A young couple were observed as soon as they entered a railway carriage, and immediately put down as a briday pair. But they were remarkably self-possessed, and acted just like old married folk, so that after a short time the other passengers began to doubt their belief, after all.

As the train moved out, however, the young man rose to remove his overcoat, and a shower of rice fell out. The passengers smiled broadly. But even that did not affect he youth, who also smiled, and, turning to his partner, remarked audibly:

"By Jove, May, I've brought away the bridegroom's overcoat!"

DISCHARGED WITH A CAUTION.

A laborer was charged with a petty offence.

"Have you anyone in court who will vouch for your good character?" queried the judge.

"Yes, sir, there is the chief constable yonder," was the reply.

The chief constable was amazed. "Why, your honor, I don't even know the man," protested he.

"Now, sir," broke in the accused, "I have lived in the town for nearly twenty years, and if the chief constable doesn't know me yet, isn't that a character for you?"

No alien can own a British ship, or any share or interest in one; but a limited liability company composed entirely of foreigners can do so, provided the vessel is registered in England.

"You have a splendid position here. People are constantly passing by," said Sampson. "That's just the trouble," returned the tradesman. "They're always pasing by, and never stepping in."

Green: "What do you mean by saying John Brown is a distant relative of yours? I thought he was your brother." Brown: "Well, there are twelve children in our family. He's the oldest and I'm the youngest."

A gentleman bought a new variety of potatoes, and told his gardener to be sure and plant them far enough apart. "Well., Sam, did you plant the potatoes far apart, as I told you?" Sam: I did sir. I planted some in your garden and some in mine, so they are four miles apart."