DARE HE?

OR, A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"After all," says Mrs. Le Marchant presently, rallying a little, her naturally buoyant temperament—that temperament which she has transmitted with such curious fidelity to her child—coming to her rescue; "after all, there is no reason why you should see him, Elizabeth. There is no reason why she should see him, is there, Mr. Burgoyne? It could serve no possible end—could it?—and only be exceedingly painful to them both. You will explain to him, will not you? You will take any message from her? You will tell him that she really is not up to it, will not you? It is quite true, I am sure. You are not, are you, darling? She is not, is she?"

The mother turns as she speaks eagerly from one to the other, addressing each in turn; but from neither does she obtain any answer.

"Or I would speak to him myself, if you thought that better," continues she, still interrogating them with her handsome careworn eyes. "I would say anything you wished said to him, and I would be careful to say it as kindly as possible. I am sure he would understand; he would see the sense, the justice of it, would not he? There is no need for her to expose herself to such useless suffering, is there, Mr. Burgoyne?"—appealing desperately to him by name, since he will not respond to any less direct address—"when either you or I are more than ready to shield her from it, are not we?"

Thus apostrophized, Jim is compelled to break the silence, which seems to himself to wall him round like a petrifaction. It is to Elizabeth that he offers his hardly-won speech.

"I think I need not tell you," he says, gravely, and with passable steadiness, "that I would help you in any way I could."

She stands a moment or two irresolute, her features all quivering as if with pain; and yet, underlying and undershining the pain something that is not pain. Then she puts out a hand impulsively to each. If the one that gives itself to Burgoyne had struck him on the mouth, instead of offering itself with affectionate confidence to his clasp, it could not have hurt him more than do those small fingers that lie in his, trembling with passion that is not for him.

"You are both very good to me," she says, brokenly. "As to you, mammy, that is an old story. But I really believe that there is nothing disagreeable that you, too"—with a slight grateful pressure of the lifeless hand that so slackly keeps possession of hers—"would not do for me. But do not think me obstinate if I say that I think—I am sure—that it would be better—that it would hurt him less—if I spoke to him myself."

"It is not a question of what will hurt him least," cries Mrs. Le Marchant, with an agony of impatience in her tone. "The thing to be considered is what will hurt you least. Mr. Burgoyne, am I not right? Do tell her that I am! Ought not she to think of what will hurt her least?"

But Jim is incapable of coming a second time to her rescue. His eyes are painfully fastened upon Elizabeth and he is watching the pain fall off, as it were, from her face, and the light spread rosily over it. Some instinct makes her withdraw that hand of hers which he has shown so little eagerness to retain, ere she says, in a low but perfectly firm voice:

"Well, then, I think it will hurt me least, too."

Five minutes later Jim has left the room—ostensibly to make arrangements for his friend's arrival, in reality because he cannot count upon his own self-control if he remain in it. The survivors of Elizabeth Le Marchant's acquaintance remain undecapitated. The widow-headed Life Guardsman and the baby-bodied cornet lie unregarded on the table while Elizabeth herself is stretched along the floor, with her face pressed against her mother's knees. Jim has decided to sit up for his friend. He is perfectly aware that neither will the two women go to bed. But he has no desire that their vigil should be shared in common. It is equally impossible to him to take part in the noisy mirth of the rest of the hotel, which having taken the place of their measureless daylight ennui, now boils over in ebullient laughter, in dancing, squeaking and noisily scampering out of the public drawing-room into the hall and up the stairs. It is not till the clamor has declined, until indeed, its total cessation tells him that the promiscuous revellers have retired to their apartments, that he issues from his, and takes possession of the now empty smoking-room, whence he can hear more distinctly than from his own bedroom any noise of wheels approaching the hotel. The wind has risen again, and it needs an ear very finely pricked to dissever from its mad singing, and from the storming of the frantic rain, any lesser and alien sound. What a terrific night in which to be out on the raging sea! Worse even than that one last week, when the Moise broke her shaft or crank, and tossed for twenty-four hours at the mercy of the waves. Possibly the weather may have already yesterday been so rough at Marseille as to prevent his starting off. But the idea—at the first blush eagerly welcomed by him—is dismissed from his mind almost as soon as entertained. If the boat has started—and it is only under such heavy penalties that the mail-boats do not start, that this contingency hardly ever occurs—Byng will have started too. A terrific bang at the casement seems to come as a comment upon this conviction. He will have started; but will he ever arrive? It is said that in eight years during which they have been running, no catastrophe has ever sent one of this line of steamers to the bottom; but yet they are cranky little craft, with engines too big for them—built rather for speed than safety. The clock has struck, with a repetition that seems strangely frequent through the sleeping house: 11, 11.30, 12, 12.30.

"I will give him half an hour more," says the watcher to himself, "and then I will turn in."

Of this allotted half-hour only five minutes are yet left to run, when, in a lull in the hurricane, the sound which Jim's hearing has been so long stretched to catch—the sound of wheels on the gravel—is at length audible. During the last two hours he has heard many phantom wheels—many of those ghostly coaches that the wind drives shrieking through the winter nights. But these are real ones. Before the drowsy porter, nodding in his little den, can reach the hall-door, Jim has opened it—opened it just in time to admit a man who, his pace still further accelerated by the mighty hands of the pushing blast, is bounding up the steps. If any doubt as to this person's identity lingered in Jim's mind, his first words would dispel it.

"She is here? There is no mistake? She is here?"

"How late you are!" cries the other, apparently regarding the new arrival's utterance more as an ejaculation than as a question expecting or needing an answer. "Why are you so late? Did the engines break down?"

"She is here?" repeats Byng insistently taking no notice of the queries addressed to him. "You have not deceived me? For mercy's sake say that you have not deceived me!"

"Why should I deceive you!" rejoins Jim impatiently. "Yes; certainly she is here."

They are in the hall by now—the hall which, the Grand Hotel being gasless, is lit by only one weak paraffin lamp, which the gust from the door, necessarily still open to admit of the carrying in of the travellers's bags and rugs, is making even more faint and flickering than its wont.

"You must have had a fine tossing!"

"I believe you; they all thought we were going to make a dinner for the fishes—ha, ha! All but I. I knew better. I knew that I could not come to grief when she had called me to her."

Byng's hat is rammed down over his brows, and his fur coat turned up so high round his ears that it is impossible in the obscurity to see his face; but there is something in the tone of his voice—a loud, wild rollicking—that makes the idea cross Jim's mind that he has been drinking. What a shock it will give to Elizabeth, if, in her covert vigil—he has no more doubt that she has been watching than he has been doing so himself—she overhears that thick, raised voice! Prompted by this thought, he says, hastily:

"Come into the dining-room. I told them to put something to eat for you there."

Byng complies; and when they have reached the empty salle a manger, whose whitewash looks weird and unnatural in the chill of the night, he sends his hat skimming down one of the long tables, and, grasping both Jim's hands in his, cries out, in the same loud tone of intoxicated triumph:

"Oh, my dear old chap, how good it is to see your ugly old mug again! If you had known—oh, if you had only known!—what I went through during the twentyfour hours after I sent you that telegram, when through every hour, through every minute and second of every hour, I said to myself, 'It may come now—my death-warant may come now! In five minutes it may have come!' But it did not, it did not! I ought to have known"—with an accent of ecstasy—"that of her pitifulness she would relent at last. She is infinitely pitiful, is not she? but I shall upbraid her a little—oh, do not be afraid; it will be gently, most gently—for having kept me so long, so inhumanly long, upon my gridiron! I had always"—breaking into a rather mild laugh—"something of a tenderness for St. Lawrence, but during the last seven months I have loved him like a brother!"

He goes on again, with scarcely a pause, or apparently any consciousness of the unresponsive silence of his auditor.

"But what does it matter, now?" beginning to stride about with his eyes cast up to the beamed ceiling and his lifted hands locked together—"what does it matter? "After long grief and pain, to feel the arms of my true love round me once again! You may think that I word it extravagantly," returning to Jim, as he leans downcast and shocked upon one of the chairs of the monotonous table d'hote row; "but in the hope itself, the more than hope there is nothing extravagant; you must own that yourself. If she had not meant to put an end to my long agony, she would not have sent for me; not to stop me was to send for me."

"You are laboring under a mistake," says Jim, coldly, and yet with an inward quaking as to the effect that his words may produce; "she had not the option of stopping you. By some accident I did not receive your telegram until four hours ago. She could not have stopped you if she had wished."

The idea, as I have already said, has occurred to Burgoyne that his companion is under the influence of intoxicaion; but either this is not the case, or the shock of the last words has the effect of instantly sobering him.

"I—I—do not understand," he says in a voice out of which all insane exhilaration has been conjured as if by magic; "I do not follow you. What do you mean?"

"I mean," replies Jim, in a matter-of-fact, level tone, meant to have a calming effect upon his auditor, "that owing, I suppose, to my name being spelt wrongly—Bourgouin instead of Burgoyne—your telegram was given to someone else, and did not reach me till nine o'clock this evening."

Byng puts up his hand to his throat, and, unfastening the collar of his fur coat as if it were strangling him, throws back the coat itself. Now that he sees him freed from enveloping wrap and concealing hat-brim Jim can realize the full amount of change and deterioration that are visible in his appearance; can see how bloodshot his eyes are; how lined his mouth; and how generally ravaged and dimmed his good looks.

"I am to understand, then, that—that she would have stopped my coming if she could."

Jim is silent. He cannot answer that question with any certainty even to himself.

"She would have escaped me again if she had had the choice! What am I saying?"—with a sudden access of terror in his tone—"she may have escaped me already! She may be gone! Tell me the truth—do not dare to tell me anything but the bare truth! I saw that you hesitated when I asked you whether she was really here. Is she gone?"

"Gone!" repeats Jim, with an exasperated jerk of the head toward the window, against which the rain and wind are hurling themselves with threefold rage, as if to recapture the victim just escaped them. "To-night—in this storm? How likely! Come, be rational; try to keep your head, and let us have a truce to this ranting. I give you my word of honor that she is here, under this roof; asleep, I should hope, if your bellowings have not awoke her."

The latter clause may perhaps come under the head of a pardonable fiction, at all events, it has, despite its incivility, the desired effect of soothing, to some extent, the agitation of him to whom it is addressed.

"Asleep!" he repeats, while an ecstatic smile breaks over his handsome, dissipated face. "Good angels guard her slumbers! But"—with a rather ominous return of excitement—"are you sure that she is asleep—that she has gone to bed yet, why should not I see her; why should not I fall at her feet now—to-night?"

"My dear boy," rejoins Jim, with a praiseworthy attempt to answer this modest and sensible proposal with patient good-humor, "have you any idea what time it is? I should have thought it might have occurred even to you that 1.30 a.m. is scarcely a suitable hour for paying a morning call! Do not be a fool! Pull yourself together. I swear to you that she has every intention of seeing you to-morrow. Come"—trying to laugh—"you will not have long to wait! It is to-morrow already; and, meantime, sit down and eat something; you must be as empty as a drum."

But to this prudent if homely counsel Byng opposes an obstinate negation, adorned with excited asseverations that food shall never cross his lips until they have pastured upon his lady's pardoning hand.

The same prohibition does not, however, apparently apply to drink, as he pours more than half the bottle of happily not very potent wine, prepared for his refreshment, into a tumbler, and losses it off at a draught. He offers an even stouter refusal to Burgoyne's suggestion that he should go to bed; and as he utters it a flash of cunning suspicion comes into his eyes, shocking his friend with a gleam as of possible and scarcely latent madness. Across the latter's brain darts the query, which had proposed itself more than once to him last spring at Florence:

"Is there insanity in Byng's blood?"

Not certainly on the distaff side, the side of his eminently sane and wholesome mother; but can he be throwing back to some distempered ancestor?

"What security have I if I go to bed that she will not steal away from me in the night? It was in the night—almost in the night—that she stole away from me before."

From this logic it is impossible to move him; and although with some return to his old sweet-natured kindliness of manner he begs his friend not to think it necessary to keep him company, yet the latter is far too ill at ease as to his condition, both of mind and body, to comply.

(To be continued).

When a man makes up his mind that he will never run to catch a car again, he has taken the first step towards becoming a philosopher.

THE PAGEANT FEVER.

All England This Year Going to the Great Outdoor Shows.

You would think if you had seen one pageant that you would have had quite enough; you would think if you had that you would have had more than enough. You would think if you had been to both Romsey and Oxford that you would not have the least desire to go to Bury St. Edmunds. Not a bit of it. The more pageants you saw the more you'd want to see. You would catch the pageant fever, the fashionable epidemic which has broken out all over England this summer and is still raging in spite of the untoward weather.

There are lots of others besides the three mentioned above. There is St. Albans and goodness knows how many more there have been or are going to be. And just think of it! At Romsey there were only three performances announced and a fourth had speedily to be arranged for; at Oxford there were six performances and a grand stand to hold 5,000 people and yet on the last day seats were at a premium.

To what is it due, then, this fascination of the pageant? It is not the fact of its being a gorgeous display of dresses, a magnificent spectacle full of stirring incidents. It is the intimacy of the whole thing in spite of the fact that it is carried out on such a vast scale. To get to your seat you walk across the pageant ground; both before and after the performance you mingle with the performers, among whom are often some personal friends; no footlights act as a barrier between you and the scene of action. As the horse of the messenger who brings ill tidings dashes perilously close to you the hand of the small schoolboy sitting next to you tightens on your arm and he holds his breath in sympathy with the boy from one of the schools founded by Edward VI. who bravely stumbles through his speech of welcome to Queen Elizabeth. To him Boadicea is no longer a name that is hard to pronounce and harder still to spell, but a splendid queen, a real woman who can drive her chariot and spirited steeds easily with one hand, and he is jolly glad when her hardy uncouth warriors bash the fat Roman Faustinus on the head till he is killed and put his centurious and feasting friends to flight. The schoolboy is not in the least deceived by the bits of red paper that are stuck on to St. Edmund's white tunic to simulate the blood that is supposed to flow from the wounds made by the arrows, but all the same he is so impressed by seeing the murdered body of Gloucester borne along on a bier that when you look for the figure of the noble duke in the tableau he whispers in your ear, "He can't come on again, he's dead."

Yes, all the pageants have the same reality and intimacy, but each has a quality of its own. Romsey is the most dramatic, Oxford the most learned, and Bury St. Edmund's the finest as a spectacle.

THE CHEERFUL MAN.

His Praises Sung in Cheerful Tone by Cheerful Mr. Knozzleton.

"I like the cheerful man," said Mr. Knozzleton, "the man who refuses to be cast down, but takes always a cheerful view.

"'D'you ever see such weather as this?' says the dismal man, wearily, shedding more sultriness all around.

"'Didn't you feel that breeze?' says the cheerful man, smiling, and as a matter of fact there was the faintest flicker of a movement in the air just at that moment, and he caught it, because he is receptive to all good things; and he magnified it to all his hearers by his breezy cheerfulness.

"The cheerful man for me every time—he makes life worth living; and I like especially to see him around in hot and humid weather. But he's helpful at all times.

"So many people are so easily depressed; good people, but with only a narrow margin of courage; so that if any little thing goes wrong they think that everything's going to pieces and the world is coming to an end, but then——

"'Pooh!' says the cheerful man, 'what's that?' and he actually laughs at this little picayune trouble, and just brushes it away and forgets it, making the faint hearted to laugh and forget it, too; and in time he may bring the easily discouraged man to acquire the blessed habit of laughing at all the petty troubles that pop out at us on the road of life, and so driving them away, instead of gloomily letting them climb on him to ride on his back. Good man to have around is the cheerful man.

"'I haven't caught a fish to-day,' says the disappointed man in the fishing party, and you'd think from his general castdownness that catching fish was the main object of life, and that if you didn't catch any life was a failure.

"'Well, I haven't caught any, either,' says the cheerful man, 'but I've had a darned good time and I've caught an appetite like a team of horses, and what I want now is to get back to where they cook those fish the way they cook 'em here, and if I don't eat seventeen of 'em I miss my guess.' Does the cheerful man perk up the whole party? Why, sure; and when they've got a few of those fish inside of them they all think they've had a great time."

Little Ethel (with an eye to business): "Suppose, Tommy, you were to give me the choice of those two apples of yours, you would tell me to take the bigger, wouldn't you?" Tommy: "No." Little Ethel: "Why not?" Tommy: "'Cos 'twouldn't be necessary."

ON THE FARM

FEEDING DAIRY COWS.

On this subject Dr. W. M. Shirley, writes as follows:

You can not have any set rule to feed all cows by, but you should have a basis for feeding them. I make my basis about like this: A cow giving 30 to 40 pounds of milk daily and weighing 750 to 800 pounds, I feed eight pounds of grain, composed of corn chop and oats four pounds, and bran four pounds. For the corn chop and oats I take two-thirds corn and on-third oats. If I think oats are too high I use three pounds of corn chop and five pounds of bran, also 15 to 20 pounds of clover hay.

I like the oats because they make a change in feed and the cow relishes them, but so often they are too high to feed. I much prefer alfalfa hay to clover, but it is almost impossible to buy it here. I also give a teaspoonful of salt each morning, and I would say do not forget the salt. I try each cow by increasing and see if she responds any better, or I decrease as the flow of milk decreases by being in milk a long time.

Oil cake is too high to feed regularly here, yet I feed a little about the time a cow freshens, and a few weeks after a small amount, though I do not feed while on grass if pastures are good. I will give you the ration I fed Annie Pogis 2nd. She dropped her calf February 2, 1904. I fed her two-thirds corn and one-third oats to make four pounds, and four pounds of bran each day and about 20 pounds of clover hay, some timothy in it, all second crop and not overly good.

For the twelve months she gave 8,518 pounds of milk, average test 5.6, making butter fat 476.99 pounds or 556.47 pounds of butter. She never made over 15 pounds and a few ounces any week, and never gave over 32 pounds of milk per day, but was giving 20 pounds when she died from clover bloat May 6, 1905, in her sixteenth month in milk, with no feed while on grass. She was six years old July, 1904. This was a private test, and if I had not been trying to force her I would have fed her while on grass.

My stables are warm, well ventilated, and never freeze. I water morning and evening and always take the chill off the water. I feed grains twice a day, also hay in winter. Keep cows in stable all the time during the cold season unless warm and pleasant, then turn out for a few hours about noon.

I always figure the cost of my ration before I decide what I will feed them. Try and get it balanced. I am very careful never to overfeed and to feed the same amount each day. Cows keep so much better that way and will give you an even flow of milk all the time with a good per cent. of butter fat. I weigh my milk of every milking and test once a month. A good feeder must put his brains to work if he makes a success of it.

I have not many cattle, but the few I have are especially good at the pail, and test well, so I am pretty proud of them.

COWS THAT PAY VS. COWS THAT LOSE.

Is it not strange that in this enlightened age we find so many farmers who are keeping cows that are not paying the cost of their feed and care? Not long ago in talking with a farmer who complained that he did not get enough for his milk to pay for the keeping of the cows, I said to him, "Mr. Blank, you ought to keep better cows. You can keep very good ones for from $75 to $90 each." He replied, "Huh! I can buy two cows for that money and then if one of them dies I don't lose so much!" He thought he had me floored completely writes Mr. J. B. Chapin. And indeed he had by one way of looking at it, and he had used better logic than he knew, for his two cows would pay him a loss every day and the sooner they died the better for him; unless, as he probably would, he should buy more poor cows and continue to lose money. Perhaps some of your readers may be interested by some of our experiments in this institution. In February, 1903, we lost our entire herd of cows, about 80 head, by the foot and mouth disease. In replacing the herd the next fall we were somewhat limited in funds and did not buy as good cows as were desirable, though of course we aimed to get those that would be profitable to keep. In the summer of 1905 a new wing was added to our barn with stalls for 64 cows. In buying cows to put in this stable we paid higher prices, used greater care in selecting and obtained better cows. After about two months we made an experimental test, taking 50 cows that cost less than said price, feeding and caring for all as nearly alike as possible, and compared the yield of milk for a certain number of days. We found that the higher cost cows yielded on the average six pounds (three quarts) more per cow per day than the lower cost cows. The difference in yield, at the market price of milk, would pay more than half the cost of keeping. And if we had taken the extremes and compared, say, 20 of our best cows with the same number of our poorest, the difference would surely have been twice as much.

Our herd is composed entirely of either pure bred or high bred grade Holstein-Friesian cattle. It is easy to get together a herd of cows that will make a continual loss to the owner. It is also not difficult to get cows that will pay a profit of 20 to 50 cents per cow. What kind are you keeping?

One seldom sees a woman on the street without a shopping bag. That ought to be sufficient warning to bache-