DARE HE?

OR, A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—(Continued).

The porter, having drawn the natural inference that as soon as the traveller has refreshed his body he will wish to retire to rest, has put out the lights in the smoking-room; the salle a manger is therefore the only room in the hotel where lamps still burn, and in it the two men spend the dreary remaining hours of the night, Byng walking up and down like a captive beast, frequently going to the door, opening it, putting his head out into the darkness, and listening suspiciously if, perchance, he may hear the footfall of Elizabeth fleeing away from him even through the hurricane. As the time goes on, his restlessness increases rather than diminishes. Jim has vainly tried to distract his thoughts by putting questions to him as to his pursuits and companions since their last parting—by inquiries as to the extent and direction of his travels.

Did he get as far as Palestine? How long is it since he left Cairo? etc. But to all his interrogations Byng gives brief and unsatisfactory answers, putting a final stop to them by breaking out excitedly:

"Why do you go on questioning me as to where I have been, and what I have done? I tell you I have been nowhere, and done nothing; I believe that my body has been here and there, but my soul has been nowhere; it has been lying dead! Would you expect a man who has been lying six months in his coffin to give you a catalogue of his adventures? My soul has been dead, I tell you—dead and putrescent. What is the use of putting me through a catechism about its doings?"

Before the long-delaying dawn shows its pale profile upon the deep obscurity, it seems to Jim as if six midwinter nights must have pieced themselves end to end. But it comes at last; and at last also, by dint of strenuous representations to his companion as to how unfit he is, in his present travel-stained and disordered condition, to offer himself to Elizabeth eyes, he induces him to let himself be led to the bedroom prepared over night for him, and to refresh himself with a bath and a change of clothes. Even this concession he obtains only in exchange for an exacted promise to seek out Elizabeth at the earliest possible hour at which she may be presumed accessible, and urgently to entreat of her an instant interview with his friend.

Jim feels that he is keeping his word handsomely when, not a minute later than nine o'clock, he finds himself knocking at the door of the Le Marchant's apartment—that door with which of late his knuckles have grown so pleasantly and friendly familiar. It is opened to him by Elizabeth herself, and he follows her silently through the ante-room into the little salon. Arrived there, he looks mournfully around with a sort of feeling as of taking farewell of the familiar objects.

It is impossible that Elizabeth can have spent the just past stormy night in gathering flowers, and yet the flowers have a freshened air. She must have been carefully re-arranging them. The bits of brocade, too, the Turkish embroideries, the haiks, and the praying carpets, wear a more festal appearance than usual. The little room looks decked as if for a gala. His jealous fancy cannot but admit that Elizabeth herself is dressed in her ordinary morning gown, but even over it some holiday transmutation has passed. He cannot trust himself to verify whether that holiday look is on her face too.

"He has come; you know that, I suppose?"

"Yes."

What a catch in her breath! He must steal a glance at her. She will think it unnatural if he does not; and perhaps his eye may not be offended by so much radiance as he feared. In her voice there was something not very distant from a sob. The result of his glance shows itself in what sounds like a reproach.

"I do not believe that you went to bed at all."

"Yes, I did! yes, I did!" hurrying away eagerly from the subject of herself, as from something irelevant and importunate; "and—he—how is he? How does he look? Had not he a dreadful crossing? Does he want to see me? to see me soon? to-day?"

There is such a breathless passion in her tone, coupled with something so apologetic for putting her questions to him, that his heart hitherto half touched, half angered by the pathos of her little preparations, melts wholly towards her.

"Of course he wants to see you—wants it very, very much," replies he; and, to his credit replies without any harshness marring the cordial kindness of his tone. "As much as"—with a rather melancholy smile—"you want to see him. No, do not be angry. Why should not you wish to see each other?"

"Oh, there is every reason!" cries she miserably—"the same reason that there always was. But"—with rising agitation—"where is it to be? How soon? When does he wish it?"

"He is waiting outside now."

She starts painfully.

"Now! Oh, poor fellow! we must not keep him waiting; and yet"—stretching out her hand in detention—"tell me before he comes in—tell me, is he changed? Is he? Is he the same as he was?"

Jim hesitates, and the painful perplexity written on his brow is misread by her.

"You are vexed with me for teasing you with so many tiresome questions. Oh, forgive me! I ought not to take advantage of your kindness; but we have grown to depend upon you so; and I will promise not to worry you with any other, if you will answer me this one. Is he changed—much changed?"

"I am afraid," replies Jim, with the slowness of one who is trying to convey unpleasant tidings in the least unpleasant terms, "that you must be prepared to find him a good deal altered."

"Altered! How?"

"I do not quite know how to describe it"—uneasily—"but you must not be shocked if you find him a good deal changed in looks; and he is—he seems, in a very excited state."

She makes a clutch at his hand.

"Do you mean"—her voice has sunk to a horror-struck whisper—"that he is—mad?"

"Mad! Oh, of course not," with a strained laugh; "you must not jump to such conclusions. But I do not think he is quite himself, that is all. He looks as if he had not eaten or slept for a fortnight; and if you play such tricks as that with yourself, you must expect to get a little off your balance."

She is still terrifiedly clutching his hand, though with no consciousness of doing so, nor that the fingers so tightly gripped by her are not made of dry stick.

"You must not look so frightened," he says, soothingly.

"I would not have said anything to you, only that I thought it better you should be prepared—that it should not take you quite by surprise; and also because I wanted to give you a hint, that you might be a little careful what you say to him, or, at all events, how you say it."

Still she does not speak, and there is scarcely any diminution of the horror of her look.

"If you do not mind, I think it would be as well to have someone within call, if he—he—became—unreasonable."

"Do you think," she asks, with a sort of scorn, "that I am afraid of him?—afraid for myself?"

"No, that I am sure you are not; but I cannot shake off the idea that—poor fellow!—he may be on the verge of some grave illness; and in that sort of case one never knows what may happen. So, if you do not mind——"

"As you please," she answers, docile even now. "Do as you think best; and will you tell him that I am ready to see him?"

The misgivings with which Jim complies with this request are not much allayed by the manner and voice of him who receives it, and who has been raging up and down the narrow corridor.

"She will not see me, I suppose?"

"On the contrary, she will see you now. But stay!" catching him by the arm as he springs past him. "One moment! For God's sake control yourself! Behave like a gentleman. Do not make her a scene; she is not up to it."

Byng's answer is to fling resentfully away the detaining hand of his mentor, while he says, with a furious look coming into his bloodshot eyes:

"What do you mean by keeping me here, preaching to me, while she is waiting for me?"

The rudeness of both words and actions is so unlike the real Byng, that it is with an even more sinking spirit than before that Jim follows him with his eyes as he passes out of sight into the salon. As soon as the door is shut behind him, he himself takes up the position he had suggested in the ante-room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

There are few things more trying to an active-minded person than to sit occupationless, vaguely waiting. At first, it is true, the keenness of Jim's alarm prevents his feeling the ennui which would be the natural result of his situation. Poignantly anxious questions succeed each other in his mind. Has he had any right to permit the interview at all? How far is Byng accountable for his actions? What chance is there that his already rocking reason will stand the shock of a meeting which, even in his sanest moments, would have so wildly excited him? And if not, what may be the consequences? Grisly headings of newspaper paragraphs write themselves in the air before him—"Homicidal Mania," "Murder and Suicide."

The details of a tragic story which, illustrated by sensational woodcuts, he had idly read a day or two ago in a venerable Police News, left lying on the smoking-room table, recur to his memory. It was a tale of a groom who, in an excess of jealous madness, had shot a scullion sweetheart through the head, and then blown his own brains out. The tale had made but little impression on him at the time—unhappily, it is scarcely possible to take up a journal without the eye alighting upon some such—but it comes back to him now with terrifying vividness. What security is there that such tragedies may be confined to grooms and kitchen-maids? How does he know that Byng has not a revolver hidden in his breast-pocket? How can he tell that he is not at this very moment drawing it out? He (Jim) ought to have made sure, before exposing her to such a peril, that the danger was minimized by Byng's being weaponless. Is it too late to make sure of that even now?

He takes one step toward the salon-door, then hastily retraces it. Pooh! he is growing as mad as Byng. They will come out and find him eavesdropping.

He retreats to the table, which is at the greatest distance allowed by the room's narrow enceinte from the scene of the drama whose denoument he is expecting, and, sitting down, takes up a book. It happens to be Elizabeth's Italian exercise-book, and the sight of it conjures up before his memory her forlorn figure stooping disconsolately over the page, wrapped in her brown furs, as he had seen it on that rainy night that seems now so distant. He had pitied her for being lonely then. Well, whatever else she may be, she is not lonely now.

He catches his breath. It is quite a quarter of an hour since he began his watch. How quiet they are! There is a murmur of voices, but there is nothing that in the least indicates violence. Before his eyes there flashes in grotesque recollection the hideous picture in the Police News which illustrates the high words with which the catastrophe of the groom and kitchen-maid had been heralded. He has been making a mountain out of a mole-hill; has been exaggerating his friend's emotional temperament, naturally further heightened by sleeplessness and want of food, into incipient insanity. If he were mad, or at all tending that way, would he be talking in the low rational key which he obviously must be? It is evident that her presence, her eye, her—yes, what more likely?—her touch, have soothed and conjured away what of excessive or perilous there was in his emotion.

They have been together half an hour now. All danger is certainly over. Why should he any longer continue his officious and needless watch?—superfluously spying upon them?

Relieved as to what he had thought his worst fear, and yet with an uncommon bitterness about his heart, he turns to withdraw, and his hand is already on the lock of the door which leads into the corridor, when suddenly, without any warning, there reaches his ear the noise of a loud, crashing fall, followed—accompanied, rather—by a piercing scream.

In infinitely less than a second he finds himself on his knees beside the prostrate body of Byng, who, with blood pouring from his forehead, is stretched upon the floor of the salon. Even at this second there flashes upon him, ludicrous and dreadful, the memory of the Police News. This scene has a grotesque likeness to the final one of the groom and kitchen-maid series, only that in the present case the heroine, instead of staggering backward with the top of her head flying up to the ceiling, is hanging unharmed over her fallen lover.

"Are you hurt?" cries Jim in frantic anxiety, looking at her across the prostrate figure, and unable to eradicate from his mind the revolver idea. "Did he hit you? I did not hear a shot."

"Oh, no, no! but he," fetching her breath in terrible gasps, and hanging over the bleeding man with that utter abandonment of all disguise, in which a great naked grief sweeps away our sophistications—"he is dead!"

"Oh, no, he is not," answers Jim hastily, tearing open Byng's waistcoat and laying his hand upon his heart. "He has only fainted. Get some water! Have you got any salts? No; do not lift his head"—seeing that she is agonizedly trying to raise his prone head and rest it upon her knees—"he had better be as flat as he can. Quick, some water!"

She does not need to be twice told. In an instant she has sprung to the table, and brought thence the china jug out of which she is wont to water her flowers, and also the big cut-glass bottle of smelling-salts with which Jim has often seen poor Mrs. Le Marchant solacing herself when racked with that neuralgic headache which means worry. He splashes water out of the one upon Byng's ashy face, and holds the other to his pale nostrils; while Elizabeth, once more flinging herself upon her knees, wipes the blood from his temples with her little useless gossamer inch of handkerchief.

"How did it happen?" asks Jim, rapidly. "What did he do to himself?"

The heads of the two ministrants are very close to each other as they bend together over the swooned youth. Jim can see a little smear of Byng's blood upon one of her white cheeks. The sight gives him a shudder. Byng seems to have made her more his own by that gory baptism than by all his frenzied vows and tears.

"Oh, I do not know," she answers, still fetching both breath and words with difficulty. "He was standing up, and he seemed quite right; and then, all of a sudden, in a minute, he went down like a log, and hit his forehead against he sharp corner of the table"—with a convulsive shiver at the recollection. "I ought to have saved him! I ought; but I was not quick enough. I stood stock-still, and now he is dead! You say that he is not; but I am sure he is dead!"

"Oh no, nonsense! he is not," replies Jim, brusquely, thinking a certain harshness of manner the best recipe for her. "He is alive sure enough; and as for the cut on hs forehead, now that you have wiped his blood away, you can see for yourself that it is not at all a deep one. It is merely a big scratch. I have often had a worse out hunting from a bramble, in jumping through a hedge. Oh, Mrs. Le Marchant, here you are! That is all right. We have had an accident, you see. He has fallen down in a faint and given himself a bit of a knock. That is all; do not be frightened. It looks worse than it is—Oh, M. Cipriani, vous voila! Envoyez chercher un medecin tout de suite! Ily a un M. Crump," catching in his destitution at the thought of even Sybilla's objectionable friend.

But hereupon half a dozen voices—for by this time even more than that number of inmates of the hotel have thronged into the little room—raise themselves to pronounce another name—the name of one who both stands higher in medical fame and is more quickly procurable. In search of him Zameth, the porter, is instantly despatched, and meanwhile about the inanimate body sympathizers stand three deep, until reluctantly dispersed by a hint of a nature so broad as not to be misunderstood from Jim, to the effect that the patient would have a better chance of coming to himself if he were allowed to have a breath of air. By the time the doctor arrives—there is some small delay before he appears—all are got rid of, and, Mrs. Le Marchant having gone to give directions for having Jim's room arranged for the sick man, both because it is on the ground-floor and also of a better size than that allotted to him, Jim and Elizabeth are once again left tete-a-tete.

(To be continued).

ON THE FARM

A FIRST-CLASS MAN AND FARMER.

A wise as well as witty old Irishman once gave us the following description of a farmer:—

"He's a first class man and farmer, sor. Faith, he's all that wherever you put him. His word and everything among his neighbor's is first class; his live stock is first class. If he sells you a bit of butter or a load of wood it's sure to be up to the mark. His farming is first class and so he goes, sor, in the first class all around. Troth he's worth a dozen of common men for the example he sets."

We have thought of that "first class man and a farmer" and the first class tribute the kindly old Irishman paid him many times since. This man occupies a large place in the esteem of the community in which he lived. He came from common stock, and when a young man he was given a book which contained the mixims of Benjamin Franklin, in his Poor Richard's Almanac. These maxims full of splendid advice to do everything in a thorough business way, made a strong impression on his mind. He was a hired man for ten years; then he commenced farming for himself. Every year he laid aside a small sum of money, $25, for good books and papers. He saw the value of such feeding of the mind and what effect it had on other first-class men. These things gave him constantly, as he once said to us, "a high standard to work to;" there was the secret. He would not turn off a poor animal, or poor butter, or anything that was not first class. He was vigilant all the time in everything he did to secure high quality. What effect did the policy have on his financial condition? When he died at the age of seventy-six his estate was valued at $120,000, and yet he had been a generous man to the poor and to the community all his life.

As an old Irishman said, the example he set was worth that of a dozen men. We need lots more of these "first class men and farmers" who set up a high standard of quality in all the things they do. Farming has been run too long on the low grade. There is neither profit or reputation in it. Too many men have lived and died without profit or reputation. What a blessing it was to that first class man that he fell in with the good book in early life. Let us remember these things.

POINTS IN DAIRY MANAGEMENT.

There are seasons of the year when the management of the dairy herd is reduced to a minimum. Especially is this true in June, when the cows are turned out to pasture with plenty of sweet, nutritious grass, a running stream of pure water in the field. They are bathed in sunshine, have plenty of fresh air, and an opportunity of pawing the soil over their backs, which rids them of vermin. Then, too, the whole body is washed occasionally with warm showers of rain that clean the old hair off and leave the skin healthy. Under these conditions there is very little labor required. But such favorable conditions do not last long—about one month or six weeks in the year is all that we have.

The first difficulty which presents itself is how to deal with the flies which are such a nuisance. We have found a spray of crude petroleum the best because it is the cheapest. It is applied as a spray with a spraymotor oil pump. One man works the handle and the other the hose. The treatment is found to be very effective.

The next difficulty is the shortage of the pastures. This should be met by having some soiling crop near the stables that can be cut and fed. Lucerne clover, mixed oats and peas that have been sown at different dates make good soiling crops, but perhaps the cheapest and most convenient of all is corn silage grown the previous year, with the addition of a couple of pounds of bran.

In the autumn, when the weather becomes cold, the cows should be kept in the stable over night. The winter care of the cows requires the greatest skill to get the best results from the animal from the amount of food consumed. June being the ideal month of the year for the production of milk, we should get as near those conditions as possible. Warm, comfortable, well-ventilated stables with plenty of light and a constant supply of pure water, with a daily application of curry combs and brush are necessary to keep the animals in the best of health. The hair should be clipped from the tail, hips, udder and along the abdomen. This will prevent straw and other refuse from sticking to the body and will make it easy for the milker to clean off before milking. The stable for the winter should be warm and comfortable, well lighted, the whole whitewashed, which will add very much to the light and sanitary condition.

KEEPING CREAM WITHOUT ICE.

"For two years," says a practical dairyman in an exchange. "I have kept the cream from ten cows in first-class condition without ice. In the corner of my house cellar, near the drain outlet I built a platform about three feet high and three feet square. I nailed to the sides burlap sacks so as to hang to the ground. On the platform I placed a half barrel with both heads in. In the top head I bored a hole to take in a hose pipe, which I ran to a pail in the sink where we pump water from the well, and fill the half barrel with water. I placed the cream cans under the platform, and by several large gimlet holes let the water onto the top of the cans. This forms a cold-storage chamber and I think it is equal to the tank of water with ice in it to keep the cream. The cream-gatherers say my cream has been in as good order as the best."

QUEER HINDOO CEREMONY.

How an Aged Woman Climbed to Immortality.

A picturesque ceremony marked the advent of the fifth generation of Shrimati Jwaladevi, a Hindu lady of noble family, at Amritsar, writes an Indian correspondent of the Civil and Military Gazette.

According to Hindu scriptures, the old lady by the birth of a son to her great-grandson attained salvation, and on death will go to the region of the gods and dwell among them.

The event was celebrated by a ceremony called Svarga Sopanorchanam, which means rising to heaven by means of a ladder. After a bath in the Ganges the old lady took her seat on a platform arranged by the family priest, while a thanksgiving service was held.

Then a heap of rice, on which was placed a small ladder of gold, was laid before her, and as the new-born child was placed in her lap, she put her right foot on the first rung of the ladder.

The assembled party thereupon cheered her and showered rice and flowers about her, while brass instruments were played and hymns were sung.

SENTENCE SERMONS.

Love is heaven's light.

Hating reproof is loving ruin.

Sacrifice demonstrates sincerity.

There is no achieving without believing.

The Word of life is a lot more than words.

The smooth man has a hard road ahead of him.

No soul was ever yet caught by a steel trap smile.

No one needs to sit still while waiting on the Lord.

The martyr's crown was never found by looking for it.

The people will go to the church that gives itself to them.

The greatest miracle is the casting out of the devil of self.

Love may be misunderstood but it never misunderstands.

The love of the Lord never yet led men to hate one another.

A man may be solid on the time card and still miss the train.

Many a sister spoils her testimony in the church by her tongue in the kitchen.

There is something wrong with the home that is not the happiest place on earth.

It is the giving in his name that turns the cup of cold water into the wine of love.

Some people never enjoy themselves unless they are getting out an injunction on another's happiness.

Many an average man has been spoiled by having to live with a man who thought he was way above the average.

This is not the only world that is callous to the man who goes around looking for a chance to put his feelings under the other fellow's feet.

WORK OF SKIN MUSCLES.

Protect Body from Cold and Sudden Changes.

"The muscles of the skin need training to educate them to contract vigorously on the slightest cold," says a medical writer, "to shut the blood out of the skin so quickly that the precious body heat will not be lost. You notice that when the skin is cold there is a 'goose skin' appearance. This is due to the contraction of the little muscles of the skin. The contraction of the muscles compresses the external blood vessels and drives away the blood from the surface, hardening and thickening the skin, which thereby becomes a better non-conductor. Thus the body temperature is maintained.

"It is because of the constant exposure to cold that the Indian's body is 'all face.' The skin of his whole body, not only that of the face, has learned to take care of itself."