DARE HE?

OR, A SAD LIFE STORY

CHAPTER XL.—(Continued).

"Well, no—rather grudgingly. "In fact, between you and me, considering that it is they who have brought him into this plight, I think they might have shown a little more solicitude about im. In the last ten days I do not believe that they have been once to the door to inquire."

"You do not seem to be aware," says Jim, in a voice which, though quiet, is not pacific, "and that is odd, considering how often I told you, that until you came Mrs. Le Marchant nursed him like a mother; not like a mother indeed"—correcting himself, with a somewhat malicious intention—"for mothers grow flurried, and she never did."

"You mean that she nursed him better than I do," in a jealous tone. "Well"—more generously—"how shabby of me to mind, if she did! I do not mind. God bless her for it! I always thought" compunctiously—"that she looked a nice woman."

"She is nice—as nice"—descending into a slang unworthy of his ripe years—"as they make 'em."

"And the girl—I suppose one can hardly call her a girl—looks nice too."

They are pasing the Casbah, the solid Moorish fartifications, about which now hang only a few gaitered, sunburnt, baggy Zouaves.

Jim has a silly hope that, if he maintains an entire silence, the curent of his companion's ideas may drift into another channel; but he is soon undeceived.

"I suppose that she must have been quite, quite young when—when those dreadful things happened that Willy talked about in his delirium "

"Is it possible" — indignantly—"that you take the ravings of a fever-patient au pied de la lettre?"

"No, I do not; but"—with an obstinate sticking to her point"there was a substratum of truth in them; that was only too evident."

Jim shuts his teeth tight together. His vow of silence is harder to keep than he had thought.

"Since he came to himself he has never mentioned her to me," continues his companion anxiously; "has he to you?"

"No."

"I quite tremble whenever he opens his lips, lest he should be going to begin the subject, and one could not contradict him yet awhile; he is so quixotic, it is quite likely that he may have some distorted idea that her being—how shall I say?—fletrie—is an additional reason for standing by her, rehabilitating her, marrying her. He is so chivalrous."

They have left the Prison Civile and the Zouave Barracks behind them. A longer interval than that usually supposed to elapse betwen a remark and its rejoinder has passed, before Jim can bring himself to utter the following sentence with the calmness which he wishes:

"Has it never occurred to you that she may be chivalrous too?"

Perhaps Mrs. Byng does not readily find a response to this question; perhaps it sets her off upon a train of speculation which does not conduce to garrulity. Certain it is that, for the rest of the drive, she is as silent as Jim could wish her. It is a sharp surprise to him two days later to be mysteriously called outside the sick man's door by her, in order to be informed that she has invited Miss Le Marchant to accompany her on a drive.

"I went to call upon them," she says, avoiding—or so he fancies it—his eye as she speaks; "and I asked the girl to drive with me to the Mole, and get a good blowing about."

"How kind of you!" cries Jim, a flash of real pleasure in his serious look; "how like you—like your real self, that is!"

And he takes her hand to thank it by a friendly pressure. But she draws it away rather hastily.

"Oh, it was nothing so very wonderful—nothing to thank me for."

She seems confused and a little guilty, and escapes with some precipitation from his gratitude. Mrs. Byng is not a woman addicted to double-dealing, and if she ever makes any little essays in that direction, she does them, as on this present occasion, villainously.

Burgoyne is not at the hall door to help the ladies into the carriage when they set off. Perhaps this may be because he is in attendance upon the invalid. Perhaps because—glad as he had at first felt and expressed himself at their friendliness—some misgiving may, upon reflection, have beset him at so strange a conjunction. At all events, it is only Fritz who throws the light Arab rug over their knees and gives them his encouraging parting smile.

Poor Miss Le Marchant needs his encouragement, for, indeed, it is in a very frightened spirit that she sets forth on her pleasuring. But before the horse-bells have jingled to the bottom of Mustapha Superieur, her spirits are rising. The sun shines, and he has shone so seldom in Elizabeth's life that a very few of his beams, whether real or metaphorical, suffice to send up her quicksilver. She does not consciously admit for a second the hope that in the present overture on the part of her companion lies any significance. But yet a tiny trembling bliss now and then taps at her heart's door, and she pushes it away but feebly.

Before they have reached the Amiraute, where they are to get out, she has thanked Mrs. Byng with such pretty and unsuspecting gratitude for bringing her, and has made her laugh so irrepressibly by her gay and naive comments upon the motley passers-by, that the latter is filled with a compunctious regret that a person with such lovely manners, and such a sense of a joke, should have made so disastrous a fiasco of her life as renders necessary the extremely distasteful errand on whch she herself is at present bound. At the Amiraute, as I say, they get out; and, turning under a groined roof that looks as if it were the crypt of a church, find themselves presently upon the long stone breakwater that runs out into the bay. It was built, they tell us, in old days by the wretched Christian captives; but the sea has taken care that not much of the original labor of blood and tears has survived.

The wind is high, and the sunshine ardent and splendid. On their right as they walk, with the wind officiously helping them from behind, in a world of dancing sapphire, each blue billow white tipped. On their left are great blocks of masonry, built strong and square, with narrow intervals between to break the might of the water. How little their strength has availed against that of their tremendous opponent is seen at every step, since nearly half the blocks are overthrown or in semi-ruin; though the date engraved upon them shows for how few seasons they have been exposed to the ravages of the tempestuous sea. They walk on to the end, till they can go no further, since, just ahead of them, the waves are rolling in half-fierce play—though the day is all smiles—over the breakwater; and even where they stand, their footing is made unsure by lengths of slimy seaweed that set them slipping along. Elizabeth insists upon the elder woman taking her slight arm—insists upon carrying her wraps, and generally waiting upon and ministering to her. From the bottom of her heart Mrs. Byng wishes that she would not, since every instance of her soft helpfulness, so innocent and spontaneous, makes more difficult the answer to that question which she has been asking herself ever since they set foot upon the Mole:

"How shall I begin?"

It is unanswered still, when, retracing their steps a little, they sit down under the lee of one of the half-wrecked blocks to enjoy the view.

From here the sea is a lake, the distant mountains and the breakwater seeming—though in reality parted by how wide a wet waste—to join in embracing it. The mountains are dim and filmy to-day, Cape Matifou scarcely visible; but the Koubah shows white-domed on the hillside, and all the dazzling water is hot through with blinding light. The town, Arab-French, is dazzling too; the arcaded quay, the fortifications, one can scarcely look at any of them. Two or three steamers, with a little vapor issuing from their ugly black and red funnels, lie moored and other smaller craft lift their spars against the heaven. Near by a man is sitting with his legs dangling over the water, fishing with a line; and two or three Arabs, draped in the dignity of their poetic rags, lie couched round a fire that they have kindled. Beneath and around them is the banging and thundering of the sea. August noise! "A voice like the sound of many waters." Could there be a more awful comparison? Just beneath them, where the sea has made a greater breach than usual, it is boiling as in a cauldron. Looking down and in, they see the water comparatively quiet for a moment; then, with a shout of its jubilant voice, rushing and surging in, tossing its mane. Elizabeth's eyes are resting on the heavenly sapphire plain.

"How blue!" she says, under her breath; "one cannot believe that it is not really blue; one feels that if one took up a little in a spoon it would be just as blue as it is now."

"I daresay it will not feel so blue when we are on it," replies Mrs. Byng, lugging in somewhat awkwardly, as she feels, the subject which she finds it so hard to introduce, "as I suppose we shall be within a week now."

Her charity bids her not glance at her companion as she speaks, so she is not quite sure whether or not she gives a start.

"Mr. Burgoyne thinks I am sanguine; but I am all for moving him as soon as possible; it cannot be too soon."

She tries to throw as much significance as they are capable of holding into the latter words, and feels that she has succeeded.

"Of course he may refuse to go," continues she, with a rather strained laugh. "Do you remember Victor Hugo's definition of heaven as a place where children are always little and parents are always young? I am continually quoting it. But, unfortunately, one's children will not stay little; they grow big, and get wills of their own, and it is quite possible he may refuse to go."

"Yes?" inaudibly.

"But"—reddening slightly at the patently-intended application of her next sentence—"anyone that was fond of him—anyone that liked him really and—and disinterestedly, I mean, must see that the only happy course for him would be to go; that it would be his salvation to get away; they—they would not try to hinder him."

"I should think that no one would do that."

There is not a touch of asperity in the dove-soft voice; but there is a shade of dignity.

"When he was ill—while he was delirius" ("How dreadfully unpleasant it is!" in an anguished internal aside)—"I could not help hearing—gathering—drawing inferences."

The ardor of the chase has vanquished her charity, and she is looking at her victim. But, to do her justice, the success of her labors shocks her. Can this little aged, pinched face, with its dilated eyes, so full of woe and terror, be the same one that dimpled into riotous laughter half an hour ago at the sight of the two dirty old men, in Jewish gaberdines and with gingham umbrellas, kissing each other by the Mosquee de la Pecherie?

"Of course it was all incoherent," she goes on hurriedly, snatching at the first expression that occurs to her as likely to undo, or at least a little modify, her work—"nothing that one could make sense of. Only your name recurred so incessantly; it was nothing but 'Elizabeth, Elizabeth.' I am sure"—with a remorseful if clumsy attempt to be kind, and a most uneasy smile—that I do not wonder at it!"

In the narrow interspace between the blocks and the path—not more than a couple of fingers wide—how the sea forces itself! and up races its foam-fountains, throwing their spray aloft in such mighty play, as if they would hit heaven's arch. What exhilaration in its great glad noise, superb and battle-ready!

"I cannot express how distasteful a task this is to me"—in a tone that certainly gives no reason to doubt the truth of her statement; "but, after all, I am his mother; he is all I have in the world, and I am sure that you are the very last person who would wish to do him an injury."

How curiously still and slow her voice is! Mrs. Byng has resolutely averted her eyes, so that her purpose may not again be shaken by the sight of the havoc she has wrought, and has fixed them upon some seagulls that are riding up and down upon the merry waves, making them, with their buoyant motion, even more jocund than they were before.

"It seems an impossible thing to say to you—a thing too bad to apologize for—but yet I must say it"—in a tone of excessive distress, yet firmness. "Under the circumstances, it would—would throw a blight over his whole life."

"Yes, I know that it would; I have always known it; that is why we left Florence."

"And very good it was of you, too! Not that I am quite certain of the judiciousness of the way in which you did it; but, however, I am sure you meant it for the best."

"Yes, I meant it for the best."

The sea-gulls have risen from the billow, and are turning and wheeling in the air. The light is catching their wings, and making them look like whitest silver. It seems as if they were at conscious play with it, trying experiments as to how they can best catch their bright playfellow, and again shake it off, and yet again recapture it.

"What a monster you must think me!" breaks out the elder woman presently.

Now that the impression has somehow been conveyed to her mind that her mission is likely to be completely successful, the full brutality of the method by which she has accomplished it bursts upon her mind.

"How treacherous! luring you out here, under the pretence of friendliness, to say such horrible things to you!"

Elizabeth's narrow hands are clasped upon her knee, and her small heart-broken, white face is looking out straight before her.

"No, I do not think you a monster," she answers—"you are a kind-hearted woman! and it must have been very, very unpleasant to you. I am quite sorry"—with a sort of smile—"for you, having to do it; but you are his mother. If I had been his mother, I should have done the same; at least, I suppose so."

"I am sure, if things had been different, there is no one that I should have—I do not know when I ever saw anyone whom I took such a fancy to. If it had not been for the disparity—I mean, if he had been less young and unfit to take upon himself the serious responsibilities of life——"

How deplorably lame even to Mrs. Byng's ears sound her tardy efforts to place the grounds of her objection on a less cruel basis than that which she has already made so nakedly plain to be the real one! Even the sweet-mannered Elizabeth does not think it necessary to express gratitude for such insulting civilities.

"I do not quite understand what you wish me to do," she says, with quiet politeness; "if you will explain to me——"

"Oh, I do not want to dictate to you, please do not imagine I could think of being so impertinent; but, of course, he will be asking for you. Since he came to himself, he has not mentioned you as yet; but of course he will. I am expecting it every moment; probably he has not felt up to embarking upon the subject. He will ask for you—will want to see you."

"And you wish me not to see him?"

(To be continued).

The Austrian birth-raite is 7 per cent. below that of England.

ON THE FARM.

ABOUT THE HOGS.

Years ago, before we read farm papers very much, we made the mistake of allowing the pigs to depend too much on grass alone during the summer season, writes a correspondent.

Grass and exercise gave them plenty of frame, but not much fat. Our pigs went to market after two months' feeding in cold weather, when they should have gone earlier in the season.

Then we thought that we were growing pork cheaply. Now we feed a part ration of grain while the pigs are on grass; not enough grain to make the pigs lazy, but enough to keep them growing faster than they ever did on grass alone, and they wind up their career before the weather gets very cold.

It is the sow that is five or six years old that makes the best mother. Those that are too young are not the best ones.

Sometimes the boys and girls like to get over into the pen and chase the pigs to see them run. Fun for the children, but not so much for the pigs.

It runs the flesh off faster than you can put it on. Better not do it, boys. All right to run, but do it somewhere else than in the pig pen.

Cleanliness is next to good porkism. In most pens the one is just as uncommon as the other.

"Nothing but a pig," therefore anything is good enough for him. Is this the way your folks look at it? If so, no wonder that you have never "done well" with pigs. We must never speak or think slightingly of anything, if we expect to succeed. Same with pigs as with anything else.

It takes ten to thirty per cent. more feed for 100 pounds of gain on a scrub or no purpose hog, than it does to make an equal gain on a hog of the desirable form and bred for the purpose.

A good hog man will not try to proselyte a Berkshire or Duroc Jersey devotee into a Chester or Essex breeder.

He will rather admire the special breeders's favorites, and be glad that he is urging improvements in stock, although they are not quite his own style of swine.

Even a careful breeder and improver of common hogs is worthy of praise. Such men are frequently led to try one step further in advancement.

Sows should be weeded out as well as cows. Keep only good milkers.

Clean out the swill barrel. Rotten swill is unfit for hogs.

Do not let your field work interfere with the pigs.

A hog can be reared in the pasture with the cattle, almost without cost. It will learn to love and to follow the cows as will a pet sheep. Free range hogs are healthy.

If penned out of doors be sure to have a shelter from rain, and an awning of trees to shade from the sun. Hogs easily blister and suffer. Give them good water.

SHEEP NOTES.

The breeding buck should be well fed and kept away from the flock so that he will be ready for service by the first of September. Give him some bran, oats and good bright hay. Keep him in a cool pen with a yard attached, if convenient; or, if it can be so arranged, give him a bit of grass and some exercise.

Lambs should be weaned at about three months and put on fresh clover pasture. Each day some grain should be given in the trough to make growth and overcome the check that might be caused by weaning.

They will also be more likely to remain quiet than if poorly fed. One or two good quiet ewes left with the flock will keep the lambs quiet.

The fence should be looked after and put in order at any places where the lambs might break through.

If the lambs are put out of the hearing of the ewes, there is less danger of their breaking out or becoming unruly. Give them salt, and look after the water supply.

Hungry sheep see weeds in fence corners quicker than farmers do.

It's in the corners of old fences that are not often seen or thought of, that weeds thrive, and a small band of inoffensive sheep will do a good work, to say nothing of the returns which they freely give in mutton and wool.

If you can fence a bit of shady woods into the sheep pasture, do it. It will afford the sheep a place of retreat from the torment of flies and bring many dollars into your pocket.

It will do at any time to change sheep from a dry to a watered range; but the reverse of this has been always found injurious, particularly to nursing ewes and their lambs.

Never allow strangers to intrude into the sheep pasture. Of all animals, sheep are most sensitive to fright. The sight of a dog will often worry the flock for weeks.

To be chased by dogs means the ruin of the herd. We have known more than one fine flock to be spoiled by having been chased by dogs. The sheep never do well afterward.

ABOUT CREAM SEPARATORS.

It is just as easy to handle the separator right as it is the plow, or any other implement. Prof. Erf lays down these four important points.

1. The speed of the bowl has an influence on the cream. A change in speed from one separation to another, changes the per cent. of the fat of the cream.

2. The temperature of the milk affects the cream. If the milk is warm the cream will be thicker than if cold.

3 The amount separated per hour is another factor. This is especially important. For, if the milk is unevenly fed into the bowl, the thickness of the cream is vastly influenced.

4. The amount of water or skim milk used to flush the bowl will affect the quality of the cream.

All these tend to show that the separator must be handled with care and good judgment. It is difficult to observe all the points mentioned, but they are so simple and apparent that it would be very easy for the heedless operator to pass over them.

IN MERRY OLD ENGLAND

NEWS BY MAIL ABOUT JOHN BULL AND HIS PEOPLE.

Occurrences in the Land That Reigns Supreme in the Commercial World.

The dripping of rain through the roof of Ascot church led to the discovery of the theft of several hundredweight of lead from the flat which covers part of the building.

Owing to a water main bursting at Brighton, a great volume of water was sent up to a height of 40 feet, drenching the roofs and pouring down the chimneys of the neighboring houses.

The holding of an hour's prayer-meeting was suggested at a meeting of the governors of the Oldham Infirmary when it was pointed out that the arrears for the past six months amounted to £500.

Seeing an otter in the water, a young man named Barker, who was boating recently in the River Eden at Kirkby Stephen, struck it with his oar. The otter jumped into the boat and attacked him, but after an exciting tussle Barker killed it.

On a charge of breaking the largest sheet of plate glass in the world, which was stated to have cost £100 and to have taken forty men to place in the window of Messrs. Smith & Sons, Gracechurch street, England, William Wolfe was committed for trial at the Mansion House.

Before shooting himself at St. Brelade's Bay Hotel, Jersey, a Frenchman named Dubois, wrote a letter bequeathing his body to the hospital for experiments.

Great difficulty is being experienced in collecting rates, said the clerk to the Ellesmere Guardians, owing to the late rate collector having spent over £2,000 out of his own pocket in paying rates for people.

According to the agricultural returns on pig rearing and feeding, the year ended June, 1905, showed a decrease of 590,030 in the United Kingdom, and the year ended 1906 showed a further decrease of 99,624 in England alone.

Professor Jules Gautier, who, swam from Richmond to Putney with his feet and hands tied, has decided to attempt the cross-Channel swim.

A tree planted some time ago at Trewidden, Penzance, having borne a crop of bananas, a second tree has now been planted in the Morrab Gardens of that town.

During an action at Wandsworth it was stated that every brewers' drayman is allowed half a gallon of beer a day, which he can either drink on the spot or carry home.

Land in Lincolnshire has depreciated to such an extent that Thetford House Farm, near Market Deeping, of 500 acres, which cost £32,000 in 1862, has just been sold for £14,000.

Blackheath residents are indignant at the proposal of the Metropolitan Water Board to erect a water tower on the crest of Shooters-hill, and are calling on the board to find some other site for the "monstrosity."

"I know of one case where an overcoat made for 6s. was sold for £20," said Herbert Evans, factory inspector, who stated at the Home Work Commission that an all round price of 6s. was paid for making.

NEW ENOCH ARDEN CASE.

Husband Went to South African War Eight Years Ago.

An extraordinary story of a modern Enoch Arden is reported from Gravesend, England.

Among those who went out to the South African War was a local resident named Motley. During the conflict it was thought he was killed; in fact, his name was included in the list of those who lost their lives.

Naturally enough, his friends mourned for him, and the "widow" a short time ago remarried. To her amazement her husband turned up at Gravesend last Thursday evening.

He appears, on his arrival, to have walked unconsciously into the shop of a butcher named Uutred, who had been one of his closest friends. Outred gazed at him in bewilderment. "What are you doing here?" he gasped. "Where have you come from?"

The "dead-alive" briefly explained matters, and to celebrate his return he enjoyed some refreshment with his friend. Then Motley called on some other acquaintances, and, as may be imagined, they also were dumfounded.

Very soon the strange tidings came to the knowledge of Motley's wife, and although naturally she at first refused to believe them, she yielded at length to the evidence.

Her second husband is a steward on an ocean liner, and is at present at sea—in ignorance of the fact that his wife's first husband has "come to life."