

IN GOLDEN BONDS.

CHAPTER V.

The next day was Sunday, to which I had already begun to look forward eagerly, as one does in the country, as a break in the monotonous round of days. Old Mr. Reade was not at church, and his son sat in his place with his back to me. Instead of putting his elbows on his knees through the prayers as he had done on the Sunday before, he would turn right round and kneel in front of his seat, facing me—which was a little disconcerting, for, as he knelt with his chin on his hands and his head back, he seemed to be saying all the responses to me, and I could not raise my eyes for a minute from my book without having my attention distracted in spite of myself.

After service, as we stood about in the churchyard, I heard Mr. Rayner telling the doctor and two of the farmers about the races he had been to the week before, and of his having won fifteen pounds on a horse the name of which I forget; and he took out of his pocket a torn race card, seeming surprised to find it there, and said it must have been that which had caused his thoughts to wander during the sermon. He asked Mrs. Reade whether her husband was ill, and did not seem at all affected by the cool manner in which she answered his enquiries.

"I had the pleasure of luncheon with a relative of yours, Mrs. Reade, on the coast at New Newmarket last week—Lord Bramley. He is a cousin of yours, is he not?"

"Hardly a cousin; but he is connected with my family, Mr. Rayner," she answered me graciously.

"He thinks more of the connection than you seem to do, for he asked me particularly now you were, and whether you thought of going up to town this autumn. I told him I could not give him any information as to your intended movements, but that you had never looked better than when I saw you last."

And Mrs. Reade was still talking to Mr. Rayner, with more affability in her haughtiness, when Haidee and I started on our walk home.

At dinner Mr. Rayner gave us part of their conversation, with an excellent parody of the lady's manner and a funny exaggeration of the humility of his own. He was always particularly bright on Sunday at dinner, the contact with duller wits in the morning seeming to give edge to his own.

On that afternoon I was scarcely outside the gate on my way to church when he joined me.

"No, no, Miss Christie; we are not going to trust you to go to church by yourself again."

I blushed, feeling a little annoyed, though I scarcely knew why. But surely I could take care of myself, and did not want surveillance, especially Mr. Rayner's.

"Don't be angry; I spoke only in fun. I want to see Boggett about some fencing, and I know I shall catch him at church. But, if you object to my company—"

"Oh, no, Mr. Rayner, of course not!" said I, overwhelmed with terror at the thought of such impertinence being attributed to me.

The shock of this made conversation difficult to me, and I listened while Mr. Rayner talked, with even less of "Yes" and "No" and simple comment than usual. When we passed the park, I saw Mr. Laurence Reade, dressed for church, tossing a small prayer-book—men never burden themselves with the big church-service women carry—and finishing a cigar, with his back against a tree. I think he must have seen us for some time before I caught sight of him, for I was looking at an oak-leaf in my hand while Mr. Rayner explained its structure to me. I had never seen Mr. Reade look cross before, and I thought it a pity he should spoil his nice kind face by such a frown; and I wondered whether he was ill-tempered, and, if not, what had annoyed him.

When one sees people playing with prayer-books and dressed for church, one cannot help expecting to see them there; and I had an unreasonable and absurd feeling almost like disappointment as the little organ droned out a dismal voluntary and the services began, and still Mr. Laurence Reade did not appear; and I caught myself looking up whenever the door creaked and a late worshipper came in, and glancing towards the pew he had occupied on the Sunday before, which I suddenly remembered was very unbecoming in me. But he did not come.

The heat and this absurd little trifle, and my penitence for it, so distracted my attention that I scarcely heard a word of the sermon. But then it was the surate who preached on that afternoon, and his discourses were never of the exciting kind. I just heard him say that it was his intention to give a course of six sermons, of which this was to be the first; and after that I listened only now and then; and presently I noticed that Mr. Rayner, who always looked more devout than anybody else in church, was really asleep all the time. It was a heavily-built little Norman church, very old and dark, and he was sitting in a corner in such an attentive attitude that I thought at first I must be mistaken; but I looked at him twice, and then I was quite sure.

When services were over, he stayed behind to talk to Boggett, while I went on alone. He overtook me in a few minutes; but, when he said the sermon was good of its kind, I had to turn away my head that he might not see me smiling. But I was not quick enough for Mr. Rayner.

"I didn't say of what kind, Miss Christie. I may have meant it was good as a lullaby. One must be on one's guard with you deane people. I have never yet been to afternoon service without going to sleep, and I have never before been discovered. Now the spell is broken, and I shall feel that the eyes of the whole congregation are upon me. Are you shocked Miss Christie?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Rayner!"

"You wouldn't take such a liberty as to be shocked at anything I might do; would you, Miss Christie?"

"His tone of grave mischief woke an answering spirit in me."

"Certainly not, Mr. Rayner."

"Where did you pick up a sense of humour, most rare gift in your sex, and why do you hide it away so carefully, Miss Christie?"

"Indeed I don't know; I don't mean to hide anything," I answered rather foolishly.

"And how did you like the sermon?"

"I—I wasn't listening much, Mr. Rayner."

"Not listening! A religious little girl like you not listening! I'm surprised—I really am."

His manner grew suddenly so grave, and he really seemed so much surprised, that I felt called upon to make a sort of profession. "I'm not really religious," I said hurriedly. "I haven't meant ever to pretend to be. But I do respect religion and religious people very much, and I hope some day I shall be able to enter into their feelings better than I can now. I do pray for it," I ended, almost in a whisper.

Mr. Rayner took my hand very kindly. "It will come, child, it will come," he said gravely and quite paternally. "Go on quietly doing your duty as you do, and the blessing will come in due time."

He said it so simply, without any attempt at preaching, that I felt I looked up to him more naturally than even to a clergyman, being quite sure now that he acquitted me of any intention to be hypocritical. And when, after, he asked me to accompany his violin on the piano while he played Mozart's Twelfth Mass, the fervour which he put into the beautiful music inspired me with a corresponding exaltation of feeling, such as no sacred music had ever woken in me before. At the end of the evening Mrs. Rayner wished me good night and glided softly from the room before I had finished putting the music in order, as Mr. Rayner had asked me to do. When I rose from bending over the canterbury, still flushed with the excitement caused by the music, Mr. Rayner held out his hand with a grave smile.

"You are the best accompanist I have ever met; you catch the spirit of the sacred music perfectly. To-morrow night I shall prove whether you are as accomplished a reader of secular music. Good-night, my dear child."

And he bent down to kiss me. But I shrunk back slightly, and so evaded him, trying at the same time to make my movement seem unconscious; and, with a smiling "good night," I left the room.

As soon as I had done so, my heart sank within me. What had I done? Probably offended Mr. Rayner beyond recall by what must seem to him an absurdly strained piece of prudery. It looked as if I thought myself a person of such attractions that he wanted to kiss me to please himself, instead of an insignificant little girl whom he was going to kiss good-naturedly, as he might have done if he had been her father. But then he was not my father, and not nearly old enough to be so, however paternal and kind his manner might be; if he had been forty or fifty, I should have submitted without a moment's hesitation. But, if Sarah or Mrs. Rayner, neither of whom seemed to like me very much, had suddenly come in and found Mr. Rayner kissing me, she might have mistaken, in a way which would have been very unpleasant for me, the feeling which prompted him to do so. So I comforted myself as well as I could with the thought that, after all, I had done only what was right and prudent; and, if he was offended, well, there was no help for it.

The next morning, to my great relief, his manner was just the same as usual; of course what had caused so much thought and anxiety to the girl of eighteen had seemed but a trifle to the man of three-and-thirty. I wondered whether I should be summoned to the drawing-room to accompany him on the violin, as he spoke on the previous night of wishing me to do. But at tea he was much preoccupied, and told Sarah that a gentleman would be coming to see him presently, who was to be shown into the study.

As he turned to say this, I noticed a sudden flash of horror pass over Mrs. Rayner's pale features and disappear in a moment, before her husband could see her face again; and I thought I saw on Sarah's dark face a look of intelligence when the order was given her, as if she too knew something about the unexpected visitor. I hope I am not very inquisitive; but, in a quiet country-house to which, rightly or wrongly, some suspicion of mystery is attached, one cannot help noticing even trifles connected with unaccustomed events, and wondering whether there is some meaning in them.

I tried not to think any more about it, as it certainly did not concern me; but I did succeed very well in banishing it from my mind until I sat down in the empty school-room to my evening task, set by myself, of translating a page of Markham's English History into German. I was very anxious to improve myself, so that by-and-by I might be an accomplished woman and able to take an engagement as finishing governess, which at that time seemed to me quite a lofty ambition. When the translation was finished, I had still to read a chapter of Guizot's French History; but that was pleasant, easy work, and might be enjoyed in the garden. I had seen the stranger as I was crossing the hall after tea. He was a small slight man, with a fair moustache, who might be old or young; and, although he wore only a gray-travelling suit, he gave one the impression of being very well dressed indeed. I had forgotten all about him long before I made my way, with a heavy volume of history in my arms, to the pond, near the prettiest, reediest corner of which I had made myself a little nest. There was here a willow tree which had been forced by an aggressive oak to grow in a slanting position, and one of its lowest branches hung parallel to the ground. This made my seat, and a piece of cord fastened from branch to branch a foot and a half above made a rest for my back; so, with a couple of old bricks to raise my feet out of the deep grass, I could inconspicuously sit there in the summer evenings till quite late. I read my Guizot, conscientiously hunting out in the dictionary all the words I did not know, until the light began to fade, and I was thinking it was time to go in, when I heard voices that seemed to be coming towards me from the house.

I have mentioned a path which led, by a short cut through the plantation, from the house to the high-road to Beaconsburgh. The speakers, a man and a woman, as I could already make out, seemed to be coming along this path. Whoever they might be, I would wait until they had gone by before I went in. I could not see them, nor could they see me, I knew. When they came a little nearer, I recognised Sarah's voice; the other was that of a man of a class much higher than her own. Could it be the stranger? He was talking familiarly and seriously with her; I could tell that before I heard any words. Sarah was speaking in a tone of bitter complaint, and the first words I heard were hers.

"I won't stand it much longer—and so I tell you."

"Tell him, my dear Sally—if you dare. And now oblige me by speaking a little lower, for there is nothing like trees for carrying tales."

She began again in a lower voice, but in the same tone, and, from the occasional words I heard—for I could not help listening—I gathered that she was angry because some unknown "he" paid too much attention to some unknown "her." But I could guess who they were. Sarah, it was well known in the house, had an admirer, a man some years younger than herself, who lived a long way off—in London, I think I had heard it said—and who paid her visits at irregular intervals. Mr. Rayner took great interest in this love-affair, and derived much amusement from it; he had somehow discovered that the admirer, whose name was Tom Parkes, was inclined to pay more attention than was meet to the kitchen-maid, Jane; and it was Mr. Rayner's opinion that there would be very little left of Jane if she encouraged the fickle swain's attention.

So Sarah was giving vent to her jealousy in an earnest and ultimate conversation with her master's guest. It seemed a very strange proceeding. I knew that men in the position of gentlemen do not treat women of a lower class with more consideration than is necessary when they are young and pretty; but Sarah's face, which looked as if it was worn and lined before its time with hard work and strong passions, was more repellent than attractive, and I was glad I could not see it as I heard her fierce words more plainly, and knew how her great black eyes must be flashing and her mouth twitching, as they did whenever she was annoyed.

"Look what I've done for him; think how I worked for him!" she said. "He would never be where he is now if it wasn't for me. Does he think his new fancy will plan for him and plot for him, and risk—"

"Hush, hush—don't speak so loud! Where's your old discretion, Sally?"

"Let him look for discretion in Miss Deby, with her round face and her child's eyes. Does he think he can make use of her? Nonsense! It wants a woman that's strong in her head and strong in her limbs to do the work he wants done, and not a soft little chit like that!"

"Depend upon it, however useful she might be, he would never compare her services with yours, Sally. He is only amusing himself with this little simper," the man said soothingly.

But she interrupted him in a tone of half-suppressed savagery that made me shudder, out of her sight though I was.

"Amusing himself, do you say? Only amusing himself! Looking at her, talking to her, not because he wants to make use of her, but because he likes her, loves her—she hissed—"as he has never loved any of his poor tools, though they were handsomer a thousand times than this wretched girl! If I thought that, if I really believed that, he'd find me more than his match for once. I'd spoil her beauty for her, and for him, if I cared for it!"

O, what an awful woman! And all because poor little Jane was younger and prettier than herself, and had had the misfortune—for it was indeed a misfortune—to attract the attention of her unprincipled lover!

The man spoke again, this time very gravely. I had to listen with all my attention to hear him, for they had now passed the place where I sat.

"Sally, don't do anything foolish," said he. "Jim isn't a fool, and he knows how to repay services like yours, though he may be a trifle harsh sometimes. Why, he might have thrown you over with the rest when—"

I could hear no more; they had gone too far. I waited till their voices died away, and then dashed from my perch, through the plantation and the hall, up to my room, as fast as I could, locked the door, and sat down appalled.

What a terrible tragedy in the servants' hall we were likely to have if things went on like this! If Mrs. Rayner had been only a woman, not a statue, I would have confessed all to her; but, as she was, it would do no good. It was not the sort of thing I could tell Mr. Rayner, and there was no way of letting him know without telling him. There was nothing for it but to hope that little Jane would be wise and leave off provoking Sarah, and that Providence would bring Sarah herself to a better mind.

But what a dreadful woman to have in the house! And why had the stranger spoken of Tom Parkes as "Jim"?

CHAPTER VI.

The next morning I woke up with that strange feeling of oppression which is caused by something unpleasant heard the night before. I soon remembered what it was, and tried to shake off the recollection of the talk in the plantation and of Sarah's vindictive tones. I looked at her searchingly as she came in demurely to prayers with the cook and poor little Jane, and I could not help thinking that Tom Parkes, or "Jim" as the stranger had called—but then a man of such a desperate character as they had described him to be would have a dozen aliases—might be excused in preferring the simple little kitchen-maid Jane to that forbidding-looking shrew. But perhaps, when he first made love to her, she was young and comparatively fair; and, if so, he ought not to desert her just because she had grown thin and hard-looking in doing the wicked things he had made her do. What were those wicked things? I wondered. I had seen Tom Parkes, a strongly-made thick-set young man, two or three times, and he had seemed to me to have a stolid but rather good-humored expression; I should have thought him to be more stupid than wicked, and certainly not the sort of man to rule with a rod of iron the formidable Sarah.

That very day I had an opportunity of comparing my impression of Tom, when I thought him a harmless and inoffensive person, with my impression of him now that I knew him to be a rogue of the most determined kind. When Haidee and I returned from our walk, we came into the garden by a side-gate at the back of the house, and had to pass by the servants' entrance. Tom Parkes was sitting outside the door in as easy an attitude as the broken chair he sat on would permit, eating bread and cheese; while opposite to him stood Jane and Sarah, both apparently in high good humor. One held a jug, the other a glass, and they seemed united in the desire to please him by ministering to his wants, and by a rough

kind of humor to which he was not slow in replying. They were talking about kisses, and I think they were going to illustrate the subject, when Tom suddenly became aware of our presence, and, taking his arm from round Jane's waist, pulled his cap off apologetically and remained standing until we had gone by.

What a strange contradiction this scene seemed to give to what I had overheard on the night before! Sarah was scarcely the woman to exercise great self-control when among her equals; yet here she was, all laughter and rough gaiety, submitting in the best of tempers to receive a share only, and evidently the smaller share, of Tom's attention with her rival Jane! I was rather ashamed of my strong interest in the low-class love affair; but Sarah was such an exceptional woman, and her admirer, from what I had heard, such an exceptional man, that I could not help puzzling myself as to whether she had been only acting good humor, or whether the love-affairs of the uneducated were conducted on different principles from those of other people.

That evening, after tea, when my translation finished, the time came for Guizot. I remembered with a pang of conscience, that I had left that nicely-bound book out in the damp all night, forgotten in my hasty flight. I hurried through the plantation, eager to see whether it was much injured; but, when I got within a few yards of my nest, I saw Mr. Rayner there before me, standing with the unlucky volume in his hand.

If I had been conscience-stricken before, when my guilt was known only to myself, what did I feel now that it was discovered? I had not the courage to face him, but turned, and was sneaking back towards the house, when he called me—

"Miss Christie!"

I might have known I should not escape his sharp eyes and ears. I went back slowly, murmuring, "Yes, Mr. Rayner," and blushing with mortification. It was only a trifle, after all, but it was a most vexatious one. To Mr. Rayner, to whom I could not explain that I was too much occupied in listening to a strictly private *tele-a-tele* to think of his book, it must seem a most reprehensible piece of carelessness on the part of a responsible member of his household; it would serve me right if he requested me not to touch any of his books in future. He was turning over the leaves with his eyes bent on the book as I came up; but I have since thought that he took a mischievous pleasure in my discomfort.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Rayner," I began, in a low voice which almost threatened tears; "I brought that book out here to read yesterday evening, and I—I forgot to take it with me when I went in. I knew it was most inexcusable carelessness—indeed I will never bring one of the library-books out again."

"And why not, Miss Christie?" said he suddenly dispelling my anxiety by looking up with his usual kindly smile. "I am sure Guizot is dry enough to stand a little moisture, and, if you were to throw him into the pond, you would be his only mourner, for nobody takes him off his shelf but you. But what makes you spoil your young eyes by plodding through such heavy stuff as this! It is very laudable of you, I know; but, if you were to bring out a volume of poetry or a novel, that would run no risk of being forgotten."

"I am so ignorant," said I humbly, "and I want some day to be able to teach girls much older than Haidee, so that I have to read to improve myself. And I don't only read dry things. This morning I found time to read nearly the whole of yesterday's paper."

"Well, that was dry enough; there was nothing in it, was there?"

"Yes, there was an account of another murder in Ireland, and a long article on the present position of the Eastern difficulty, and the latest details about that big burglary."

"What burglary?"

"Haven't you read about it? A large house in Derbyshire, belonging to Lord Dilston, was broken into last Wednesday, and a quantity of valuable things stolen. They say they've got a clue, but they haven't been able to find any of the thieves yet."

"And they won't either. They never do, except by a fluke."

"They say the robbery must have been most carefully planned, and that it was most skillfully carried out."

"They always say that. That is to excuse the utter incompetency of the police in face of daring and dexterity."

"And they say it looks like the work of the same hand that committed several large jewel robberies some years ago."

"Whose hand was that?"

"Ah, they don't know! The man was never discovered."

"That is another newspaper commonplace. To say that the way one ladder was placed against a window, the window opened and entered, and the diamonds taken away, looks very like the way another ladder was placed against another window, and another set of diamonds taken away, sounds very cute indeed; and to imply that there is only one thief in England with skill enough to baffle them raises that uncaught thief into a half divinity whom it is quite excusable in mere human policemen to fail to catch."

"Well, I hope they will catch this one, whether he is half divinity or not."

"Why, what harm has the poor thief done you? You have nothing to fear from diamond-robbers, because you have no diamonds."

"I believe you have more sympathy with the thieves than with the policemen," said I, laughing.

"I have, infinitely more. I have just the same admiration for the successful diamond-robber that you have for Robin Hood and Jack Sheppard, and just the same contempt for the policemen that you have for the Sheriff of Nottingham and Jack's broker."

"Oh, but that is different!" I broke in hotly—for I always put down "Robin Hood" in confession books as "my favorite hero," and I was not without a weakness for Jack.

"Oh, yes, it is very different, I know!" said Mr. Rayner maliciously. "Robin Hood wore Lincoln green and carried a picturesque bow and arrow, while Sheppard's costume, in colored prints, is enough of itself to win any woman's heart. And then the pretty story about Maid Marian! Jack Sheppard had a sweetheart too, hadn't he? Some dainty little lady whose mild reproaches for his crime proved gentle incentives to more, and who was never really

sorry for her lover's sins until he was hanged for them."

"Well, Mr. Rayner their very appearance, which you laugh at, shows them to be superior to the modern burglar."

"I have you ever seen a modern burglar?" "No; but I know what they look like. They have fustian caps and long protruding upper lips, and their eyes are quite close together, and their lady-loves are like Nancy Sikes."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Scientific Notes.

Since the days of the Stuarts the increase of wealth in England has been more rapid than the increase of population. In 1860 the wealth of England and Wales was equal to £45 per head; in 1872 it was £127, and last year £249. Public wealth has quadrupled since the accession of Queen Victoria. Since 1849 wealth has increased four times more rapidly than population, which led Prof. Levi to remark that they disprove the Malthusian theory, so far as England was concerned.

A new company claims to reproduce in the most perfect manner the Vassamurhina glass made by the ancient Egyptians more than three thousand years ago, but lost to the modern world. The art of making this glass is a secret form of blending in with the glass, in an artistic manner, all kinds of metal, such as gold, silver, brass, iron, copper, and steel, also all kinds of jewels and gems, so as to produce any combination of color, direct or reflex, from the most brilliant sky or sea of fire to the sombre clouds of northern skies, and is also the secret of imitating the gold, jewels, diamonds, and gems themselves.

The car which is to convey Patti around the country on her operatic tour is to be a marvel in the way of luxuriousness; it will, indeed, be the most convenient and magnificent drawing-room car ever put on any road. It will have one novelty which ought to be imitated in summer time on ordinary cars. A refrigerating apparatus will be employed similar to that used in Madison Square Theatre in New York, by which the temperature can be reduced 100°. Summer travelling is sometimes intolerable because of the heat, which can be mitigated by this device.

In the International Exhibition at Nice, M. Faselli exhibited what he called "The observatory under the sea." This is a name given to a sort of submarine balloon made of steel and bronze to resist the pressure of water at about 100 fathoms. It is forty feet in height and is divided into three compartments. On the top sits the commander, the second is a saloon for eight passengers, and on the bottom a machine constructed on the principle of a fish's bladder, by which the balloon is raised or lowered. A powerful electric light illumines the sea to a great distance, enabling the passengers to study through the glass flooring, the rocks, plants, and the fishes of these aqueous depths. A telephone communicates with the attending vessel upon the surface of the water. This machine is almost an exact reproduction of Jules Verne's submarine steamer in his "80,000 leagues under the sea."

In view of the danger which attends the gatherings of the Mohammedans in their pilgrimages to Mecca, a French savant suggests that foreign nations should intervene and jointly occupy that sacred but now very dirty city. It is beyond dispute that cholera and other infectious diseases are spread by the pilgrims, who return to their various homes after kissing the holy stone. Should the several nations occupy Mecca, they need not put a stop to the pilgrimages, but they can make such sanitary regulations as would insure against the danger of starting the cholera on its voyage around the world. The possession of Mecca by the Christian powers might also serve to discredit Mohammedanism in the minds of its votaries, and the enforced washing and cleansing of the myriads of pilgrims might do something toward renovating their whole natures.

A government laboratory for the analysis of chemicals and patent medicines is one of the means resorted to in Japan for protecting the public health. The makers of such medicines are required to tell of what they are made, and the proportions of the ingredients. Would not such an institution be of great value in this country? Vast quantities of patent medicines are sold in the United States and Canada, and none but the proprietors know of what they are made. We are very careless about such matters. No one should be allowed to practice as a doctor, unless he can show a state or government diploma, certifying to his knowledge of medicine and surgery; but we allow medical schools and colleges to give authority to their own graduates to practice, when it is notorious that not one in three who receive a diploma is properly qualified to practice either by training or experience.

Rules for the Journey of Life.

Never ridicule sacred things or what others may esteem as such, however absurd they may appear to you.

Never show levity when people are engaged in worship.

Never resent a supposed injury till you know the view and motives of the author of it, and on no occasion relate it.

Always take the part of an absent person, who is consigned in company, so far as truth and propriety will allow.

Never to think worse of another on account of his differing from you in political and religious subjects.

Not to dispute with a man who is more than seventy years of age, nor with a woman, nor with any sort of an enthusiast.

Not to affect to be witty, or to jest so as to hurt the feelings of another.

To say as little as possible of yourself and those who are near you.

To aim at cheerfulness without levity.

Never to court the favor of the rich by flatterings their vanities or their riches.

To speak with calmness and deliberation on all occasions, especially of circumstances which tend to irritate.

Frequently to review your conduct and note your feelings.