

MIRIAM.

CHAPTER V.

The plan that Miriam formed during that long wakeful night of avoiding further intercourse with Mr. Keene on that, his last day, at Eastwick by feigning illness and keeping to her own room, was frustrated by an urgent request, received by the morning's post from Mrs. Archer, for her to go at once to the Rectory, and execute certain commissions there which were said to be important, and which must be performed without delay. The departure to Lady Hicks's brother was making, all undesired by him, a good deal of disturbance in that affectionate household, therefore it was that Miriam's heavy eyes and unusually pallid face excited little comment when she, having received her letter in her room, put in a tardy appearance at the breakfast-table.

"A drive will do you good, dear," was all her hostess said. "Since you must go to the Rectory, I will take you in Ella's pony-carriage. Sir Robert wishes himself to drive Kingston to the station."

"Imagine the mother turning whip," young Rob observed, with a laugh. "Better walk down with Ella and me, Mrs. King—safer, I assure you."

But Ella had noted the tearfulness of her mother's eyes as she spoke of her brother's departure, and she thought that the proposed drive might be beneficial to more than Mrs. King.

"Why, mother can manage the ponies beautifully!" she said. "Although one of them used to be restive in single harness, he is the very best dear when he runs with the other, Rob. Mother could manage them easily if she were twice as nervous."

"And I am thinking," Lady Hicks went on, "that, while Mrs. King is engaged at the Rectory, I can come on to the station to see the last of you, Kingston."

Kingston assented perforce to this plan, having a man's horror of tearful adieux on a public platform. He looked at his sister very kindly; the tears were running down her face.

"Why, Agatha, cheer up," he said gently; "tisn't for the first time that we are to be parted. It will be no worse for you than it has been before."

"It is your going just now—just at Christmas—that mother feels," Ella remarked. "Next week we shall be having the house full of other people who belong to us."

"All Hickeys," Agatha said, with a sob. "You are the only one of my people left to me, Kingston, and you—"

"Good Heavens! Not all Hickeys surely!" cried Rob, who had no sympathy with his mother's melting mood, and he proceeded to rattle on about the coming of some friends of his own, who at any rate were not Hickeys.

And so, when the pony carriage drew up at the door, it happened—as they were all glad to remember in the after-time—that the whole family came into the hall to see the ladies start. Miriam was already seated, the rugs wrapped by Rob carefully about her, when Mr. Keene, having said his few last words to his sister, brought her down the steps. He helped her to her seat, pulled the furs around her, gave her the reins with hands that Miriam hated to see were trembling. She gave but one glance at his pale set face, and determined to look no more.

"That is the last I shall see of my husband for ever," she told herself, and pressed her lips tightly together as she averted her eyes.

"You will not see Mrs. King at the station," Lady Hicks said, with a sudden thought. "You must say good-bye to her now, Kingston."

But the ponies were chafing to be off, and Miriam's hands were enveloped in her furs, and Mr. Keene only slightly raised his hat in farewell, and they were off; and the last look his sister sought from him was given to her companion's averted face, and it was at her lessening form he looked to yearningly, standing bare-headed on the gravel sweep, when they thought he was straining his eyes to catch the last glimpse of his sister; for a pious fraud had been practised at the instance of Rob the unsentimental.

"All that about saying 'good-bye' at the station is a nuisance, you know, sir," he said to his uncle. "A man doesn't care to have his woman weeping and wailing around him in public. That was why I gave the wrong tip about the train. When she gets to the station it will have been gone half an hour."

Mr. Keene pulled himself together as the young man addressed him.

"You be good to your mother always, my boy," he said. "There are very few such women in the world, loving and tender-hearted and—forgiving."

In a few minutes, urged on by a restlessness he could not control, Mr. Keene had set out alone to walk to the station.

"I shall meet your father," he said to Ella, as he bade her good-bye; "if not I will look in upon him at the club. You will see that my things are sent."

"You will be sure to fall in with mother and Mrs. King again," Ella replied. "They call at several places in the town before Miriam goes to the Rectory."

"That Mrs. King—you like her?" he asked gravely.

"I love her!" declared Ella, with effusion.

"Dear little Ella—good little girl! Always be true to your friends," he said, and stooped and kissed her with so much

fervour that the tears came into the girl's eyes.

The morning was bright and frosty, and Mr. Keene, keeping pace with the tumult of thoughts whirling through his brain, walked quickly over the crisp hard roads, past the frost-bespangled hedges sparkling in the sun, past the ugly, half-completed buildings—at a stand still this morning—where the suburb approached the town, past the public house at the corner—he stood and looked at it for a moment—from which the men had reeled who had frightened Miriam on that dark evening not so long ago, passed the entrance to that gloomy slopmy lane where he and she had held their first converse after so many years. The lane was not slopmy to-day, but was beautified out of its recollection by the rime-frost and the sunshine. He turned and walked down it for a few paces. Some red berries, half eaten by the hungry birds, still hung on the straggling hedge. He broke off a couple with their stems and fastened them in the button-hole of his coat. A further walk of ten minutes brought him into the town.

He remembered what Ella had said about the chance of seeing his sister and Miriam again. Already he was feverishly anxious to do this—just to see them go by. He thought that then he would be more at rest. Making his way to the market-place, he stood at the entrance to the principal hotel. Sooner or later they must pass that way he knew.

As he waited there, there came along the broad pavement, past the hotel, a posse of men and boys. They were talking loudly together, and some portion of what they said suddenly struck upon his careless ear, and awakened him to terrified attention.

"Women ain't no business to drive," one respectable middle-aged man was saying.

"The groom, yee see," another explained, "were out—a gone in somewheres with a message, when they started off. 'Twere that origin a strikin' up as did it, and—"

The speaker stopped suddenly and turned round, feeling a hand upon his shoulder.

"Of what accident are you speaking?" Kingston asked, addressing the group. "Be quick some of you and tell me!"

"Ladies thrown out of a pheyton," the first speaker replied. "Some o' the Hicks's family, we don't know which."

"Anybody hurt?" Kingston questioned anxiously, his face, which had been a bronze not often seen in Newton, turned to a ghastly pallor.

"One on 'em," was the reply.

"Where are they?"

"I'll show ye, sir," said the middle-aged man. "Come along o' me sir."

During their five minutes' walk side by side, the man glanced often into the ashen face of his companion, and with the instinct of a gentleman remained silent. But he told afterwards to his wife, and to the knot of idlers who gathered about his door as he ate his dinner, how, when the gentleman passed through the crowd around the door of the house to which he was led, he moved his hands in front of him, as if grouping in blindness.

It was into a chemist's shop that Mr. Keene passed in that blind unconscious way, which shop was full of people.

"She is carried through there, sir, into the room," a woman said pitifully.

At the same moment the glass door at the end of the shop opened, and there stood, pale and gasping, but breathing, moving, living—his wife!

"It is not you, then," he said hoarsely; "I thank Heaven!"

Miriam came a step forward. She saw nothing of that crowd of people around her, nothing even of her husband, but only poor Agatha's brother, only the man whom that poor woman lying in the adjoining room had devotedly loved. She put her hand on his arm.

"You have come at last," she said, as though she had been confidently expecting him. "It may not be the very worst—we don't know—the doctor does not know. She is unconscious—come!" She half drew him to him to the glass door and closed it behind her.

"You are safe?" he questioned, taking her hands in his. "Not hurt at all? I thank Heaven!"

"Do not think of me," she groaned. "What do I matter? Oh, that it had been me! He, the doctor, will not say if there is hope; but I know—I know that there is none!"

A minute more and they were in the little sitting-room. Lady Hicks lay on the sofa. She was in her out-door dress, except that her bonnet was removed; she was very pale, her eyes half-closed, and she was breathing with a noise that seemed to fill the room. The doctor knelt by the side of her couch, looking, it appeared, intently into her eyes; the master of the shop stood by looking at the doctor.

"Where is she hurt?" Mr. Keene whispered, leaning over the unconscious form.

"It is her head," the doctor answered aloud. "There is no need to whisper; she will not hear," he added gravely.

"Is there nothing to be done?" Mr. Keene asked, impatiently regarding him.

"Let us have further medical aid. For Heaven's sake, set about doing something."

"All the doctors in the world could do no more," the other confidently declared.

"But have you looked to see where she is hurt? That arm, is there anything wrong with it that it lies in that position?"

"It is broken, sir," said the chemist.

"Both her arms are broken."

"Then why in Heaven's name don't you set about doing something for them?" the brother cried.

"Useless," affirmed the doctor, sadly shaking his head. "The hurt in her head will cure the hurt in her arms."

"You mean that she is in danger?" Mr. Keene demanded, almost fiercely.

"I mean that she is dying," returned the other calmly. "I mean that she may last for hours, but that she will never wake from that sleep."

Miriam, with a low cry of terror and grief, flung herself into the arm-chair by the fire—there she lay and sobbed convulsively. Mr. Keene uttered no further sound, but stood and looked with apparent calm at the still form on the couch, listening to the painful breathing. The chemist wheeled forward a chair to where he stood. Mechanically he dropped into it, looking and listening still.

"Sir Robert!" he said presently. "Some one should go to him."

"A messenger has been sent, sir. The young lady thought of everything before she broke down."

Mr. Keene turned and looked at "the young lady," who was sobbing passionately.

"How did it happen; do you know?" he queried, turning back to the chemist.

"Some music—a brass band or something—struck up suddenly and frightened the ponies. The groom was in a shop; Lady Hicks appears to have lost her nerve, and, although the young lady implored her to keep quiet, she threw herself out. The young lady caught at the reins, but she had no control over the ponies, and the carriage turned over at the first corner. 'Tis wonderful how she herself escaped with so little hurt."

"Is she hurt at all?" Mr. Keene asked quickly. "Are you sure that she is not hurt?"

The doctor was standing over Miriam, holding a glass with some sal-volatile. She sat up after a minute and took it from him into her shaking hand. One of them noticed that it was her left hand, and the other hung helpless at her side. The doctor lifted it, and she gave a little cry of pain.

"Does that hurt you?" he asked quietly.

"Let me look, please."

"It is nothing," Miriam answered; "it is my wrist—oh, what does it matter?"

"Are you sure that is all?" her husband asked, getting up from his chair and crossing over to her, while the doctor, having removed her jacket and cut open her dress sleeve, quickly bound her arm. "You feel no other pain, Miriam?"

"No—oh, no!"

"Then what is this?" Mr. Keene asked, touching with his fingers a drop of blood oozing from under the dark hair on her temples. He gently lifted the loose hair at her forehead and exposed a sufficiently ugly cut.

"A nasty flesh cut, no more," the doctor said, having examined it; then, while he pulled a bit of lint to pieces to staunch the blood, he continued, "You have been saved from serious injury almost by a miracle. You have very much to be grateful for."

Miriam took no heed of his words, but looked appealingly at Mr. Keene.

"I tried to save her," she said. "Even in that awful moment I thought of her husband and children—and you, who all loved her. I begged, I implored her to sit still; I could not hold her, because it took both my hands for the reins. Oh, do you think if I had let them go and held her—held her with all my force—oh, do you think she might have been saved? Hark!"—shrinking back in her chair, and hiding her face on its cushions. "There is Sir Robert!"

All this was at noon-time. At eventfall Lady Hicks still lay unconscious on that unfamiliar couch. There was hardly a sound to be heard but that painful breathing in the room. Now and then a half-stilled sob would come from Ella as she lay with her face buried in Miriam's lap, or Kingston Keene would leave his place by his sister's side and silently pace the room, or Sir Robert, almost stupefied with grief, holding his wife's hand in one of his, would with the other take out his watch, the seals jingling noisily as he did so. Poor Rob, all unused to grief, and ashamed of the emotion he could not control, would not stay in the room, but miserably paced the pavement in front of the shop.

At midnight one of them noticed a change. Mr. Keene bent over to the girls huddled together by the fire.

"You and Ella go to bed," he said to Miriam, "you can do no good, you are both worn out. Go at once."

"I cannot, I cannot," Ella moaned.

Her uncle stooped and lifted her in his arms.

"You must think of Miriam," he said, pronouncing his wife's name unnoticed in the general excitement. "Remember that she has had much to bear and is tired. Look at her, dear, and you will see."

Ella looked into her friend's face as bidden.

"I am selfish to keep you. You go Miriam," she said.

But Miriam would not leave her, and presently putting her arm about the girl's waist she led her from the room.

On the strange bed of the chemist's spare room the two girls lay down, dressed as they were, in each other's arms, and there in a little time Ella had cried herself to sleep. Miriam could not close her eyes; she lived over again those terrible minutes in the morning; she experienced with all their original pain and intensity the sensations of the day; her thoughts dwelt with sleepless persistency on the woman dying in the room below

—the wife, mother, sister, friend; they lingered with sick reluctance over the image of her own husband. The contrast of his strength of form with the helplessness of the figure on the couch beside him had impressed itself vividly on her memory—Sir Robert and Rob, his son, being slight and somewhat insignificant-looking men. His tenderness to Ella and thoughtfulness for herself troubled her in spite of herself; nor could she forget that word of thanksgiving which had burst from his white lips when he had first become certain of the safety of his wife.

"I thank Heaven that it is not you," he had said, and yet the alternative he had known must be so terrible—his sister, his only sister, the only person on earth perhaps who really loved him. Miriam's heart almost stood still at the shock of a sudden recollection which struck her with peculiar force.

"He will be alone," she thought—"as much alone as I!"

In an hour's time, unable to find sleep, she gently disengaged herself from Ella's arms and stole down-stairs to the door of the sick-room. Instead of the heavy breathing, a sound of painful sobbing broke upon her ear. With trembling hand she pushed the door farther open. Rob had come in; he was standing in the farthest corner of the room, his poor young grief-stricken face hidden against the wall; his father was on his knees by the side of the couch on which that solemn form, now for ever silent, lay, and it was from him that the sobs and the broken wailing words came.

Miriam leant against the door-post, trembling and heart-sick with grief and pity. She did not see her husband at first, but presently he came forward and put a hand on Sir Robert's shoulder.

"Be a man, Robert," he said, in a voice broken and husky and all unlike his own. "You—you have your children, remember, and others left to comfort and care for you, while I—she was the only one—I am quite alone."

Then Miriam could bear no more; but, stifling the sob that rose in her throat, she turned and fled up-stairs and took poor unconscious Ella in her pitying arms—poor motherless Ella, who would learn when she awoke what an empty, sorrowful place was the world which for her had been so complete and joyful.

Mr. Keene again deferred his departure from Eastwick, spending the best part of a week there, awaiting his sister's funeral. His companionship, although often a silent one, was of great benefit to Sir Robert—a common loss, a common grief for one both had loved bringing them into greater sympathy than one of them at least had deemed possible. Rob too, tired, boy-like, of grief, was glad to try to forget it in the presence of the only person about him who seemed anxious to dispel instead of to encourage the general mournfulness. Miriam, worn out with grief and excitement of various kinds, was too languid to persist in her antagonism, and seemed to take Mr. Keene's constant kindness and attention as Ella too accepted it, as something of her due, and as a matter of course. To the latter, indeed, during the eternity of that dark week of gloom and silence, he was an angel of light. Miriam was a consolation, she was something to cling to, to cry against, to trust in; but her uncle was the person who really helped her to live through and to rise above her childish unreasoning grief. She would lie for hours, her head in Miriam's lap, and their hands locked together, listening to his pleasant voice as he talked or read. It seemed a relief to her to talk of her mother, and she questioned Mr. Keene minutely about their early life together. Perhaps not without pain to himself he would talk to her of that distant time when life had been all before him, when he had been full of hope and faith in himself, and his sister had been more than happy in her perfect confidence in and dependence on him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Cure for Drunkenness.

There is a prescription in use in England for the cure of drunkenness, by which thousands are said to have been enabled to recover themselves. The recipe came into notoriety by the efforts of Mr. John Vine Hall, commander of the Great Eastern steamship. He had fallen into such habitual drunkenness that his most earnest efforts to reclaim himself proved unavailing; at last he sought the advice of an eminent physician, which he followed faithfully for several months, and at the end of that time he had lost all desire for liquor—although he had been for many years led captive by a most debasing appetite. The recipe, which he afterwards published, and by which so many other drunkards have been assisted to reform, is as follows: Sulphate of iron, twenty grains; magnesia, forty grains; peppermint, forty-four drachms; spirits of nutmeg, four drachms. Dose, one tablespoonful twice a day.

The Sugar Beet in Egypt.

There is much discussion at present in England as to the use to which the Sudan can be put after Khartoum is relieved. It is said the country is pre-eminently suitable for the cultivation of the sugar beet. These learned men are now attempting to teach the British farmer how to profitably cultivate the sugar beet. It is easier to grow, they say than wheat, and more profitable to sell; and, if Gordon manages to turn over a lease of Khartoum to England, that is the country to emigrate to, because sugar beets can be cultivated there better and with greater profit than anywhere else in the world.

In one of our Indian languages "woman" is rendered "kew-kew jaw-jaw." Either the Indian stuttered—or the translator.

Wilkins' Star Proverbs.

- *Writing a wrong does not right it.
- *He that borrows trouble hath sigh-lent grief.
- *The man "happy as a king" is no aching.
- *An umbrella in hand is worth two in a church porch.
- *The plant of happiness cannot thrive without the air of cheerfulness.
- *It destroys the thread of life if wild oats are sowed with it.
- *It is a long road paved with hope, between what you expect and what you get.
- *"The silence of the wise is golden," but the utterances of a fool is brass.
- *One little trouble, like an only son, will soon rule the man who nurses it.
- *There should be harmony in all trades—even the barber desires his money.
- *The cup of life is filled with punch. Youth furnishes the spirits, middle age the sugar, and old age the acid. Ice is furnished by the men who endorse notes.
- *Pleasure is a silken cord, composed of exquisite cobwebs, and floods of rich sunlight give it a beautiful hue. Duty is a golden rope, which once thrown over our necks, leads us, unwillingly, where pleasure is obliged to follow.

A Printer's Error.

Sweet are the uses of adversity, the printer's copy said, but he set it up, sweet are the uses of advertising. Sweet, indeed, to those who in sickness and suffering have seen the advertisement of some sovereign remedy, which upon trial has brought them from death's door. "The best thing I ever saw in my paper was the advertisement of Dr. Pierce's 'Golden Medical Discovery,'" is again and again the testimony of those who have been healed by it of lung disease, bronchial affections, tumors, ulcers, liver complaints and the ills to which flesh is heir.

A hatter sees one of his debtors pass him by in the street without any recognition of his existence and straightway becomes as mad as—as a hatter. "Curse the fellow!" he says, "he might, when I bowed to him, have at least had the decency to lift my hat."

Loss of power in either sex, however induced, speedily, thoroughly and permanently cured. Address, with three letter stamps for reply and book of particulars, World's Dispensary Medical Association, 663 Main Street, Buffalo, N.Y.

It is said that bleeding a partially-blind horse at the nose will restore him to sight. So much for the horse. To open a man's eyes you must bleed him in the pocket.

"Nip it in the Bud!"

Sad to say, many a good thing attains to nothing more than a fair beginning. On the other hand it is a matter for congratulation that the growth of some evil things may be also promptly frustrated. A large proportion of the cases of the most wide-spread and fatal of diseases—consumption have their inception in nasal catarrh. Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy is pleasant, soothing and effectual. Try it. It has cured thousands. All druggists.

It is true that bonnets do not cost very much at wholesale, but milliners are obliged to buy boxes to put them in and paper on which to make out the bills.

The Testimony

Of hundreds of druggists bear here witness to the efficacy of Polson's NERVINE as the most potent pain remedy in the world for all kinds of pains. Nerville is composed of newly discovered ingredients, and is equally good for internal or external use. Purchase a ten cent sample bottle, and test it once. T. R. Melville, Prescott, writes: "My customers who have used Nerville speak highly of it, and I am satisfied it will take a leading place in the market before long." Try Polson's Nerville for pains. Sold by druggists and country dealers everywhere.

"There are good and bad points about this coffee," said the boarder in a judicial tone. "The good point is that there is no chicory in it; the bad that there is no coffee in it."

Dr. Carson's Pulmonary Cough Drops should be used in almost every family in Canada; it is one of the best and safest cough remedies known. In large bottles at 50 cents.

"Are you turning over a new leaf?" asked Jingle of Billsbee last Thursday. "Oh, no!" was the reply, "it's the old one that contains your unpaid account." Jingle is sorry now that he tried to be funny.

The room in which a number of friends pass the evening smoking either cigars or inferior tobacco will have an unpleasant odor next morning. Let the same friends smoke only the "Myrtle Navy" and they will find quite a difference in the room next morning. If it is reasonably well ventilated, as with a fire-place, for instance, no unpleasantness whatever will be found. The purity and fine quality of the leaf used is the reason of this.

French maidens: the subject had fallen on wedding tours. "I'd go to Switzerland." "I'd go to Italy." "For my part," said Mlle. Tata, "I shouldn't mind where we went so long as there were plenty of tunnels."

Important.

When you visit or leave New York City, save baggage Expressage and Carriage Hire, and stop at the GRAND UNION HOTEL, opposite Grand Central Depot. 600 elegant rooms fitted up at a cost of one million dollars, \$1 and upwards per day. European plan. Elevator Restaurant supplied with the best. Horse cars, stages and elevated railroads to all depots. Families can live better for less money at the Grand Union Hotel than at any other first-class hotel in the City.

"Well," said Mr. Smith, "I've made one good resolution this New Year." "Indeed," said Mrs. Smith. "Yes, I've sworn off using tobacco; I shall smoke nothing but five cent cigars in the future."

Cold feet and hands are certain indications of liver, fed circulation of the blood. Dr. Carson's Stomach Bitters promotes the circulation keeps the bowels regular and induces good health. Large bottles at 50c.