

# Face to Face

OR, GERVASE RICKMAN'S  
AMBITION.

## CHAPTER VI.

The memory of that scene weighed like a lasting nightmare upon Edward Annesley's troubled heart. When he entered his aunt's presence he expected something painful, but nothing terrible; he thought to see a bereaved mother, he found a tigress robbed of her cubs. All the fierceness in her nature blazed up at the sight of him, a grim joy possessed her at the opportunity of denouncing him as the cause of her loss; for where other women grieved, this one raged.

He could only stand silent before the storm, doing mute homage to her age, her sex, and her bitter sorrow; pained by the sight of a passion so like that he had witnessed a few hours since in one whose passions were now forever stilled, and hoping that her frenzy would exhaust itself, that she might at least accept some kind words from him, if nothing more.

That which silently gnawed his heart was bad enough without spoken reproach; her words burned into him like molten metal, and laid life-long wounds. In everything, she said, he had supplanted her son; he had secretly stolen the heart of Alice from Paul while openly trifling with Sibyl, whose life he had marred. And now he had driven Paul to his death that he might snatch his inheritance. Let him take that inheritance with the curse attached to it, and a yet more withering curse on to that, the curse of a childless widow. She asked him how a strong and active man like her son could, if alone, slip and fall beyond recovery. She told him that the reproach of having survived him would cling to him and blight his happiness for life.

All this she said in the fewest, most cutting words, without agitation, with a deep, full voice, standing erect and immovable, with a hard brilliance in her cold blue eyes, and when she had finished, she bid him go and come near her no more.

He hesitated, looking silently at her stern, fearless face, in which he saw such bitter anger that he thought the shock must have made her beside herself. He hoped that what she said was half unconscious, and would be forgotten when she came to herself. Nevertheless, the barbed words struck home, and her cold, immovable calm impressed him with a horror he could not shake off, and seeing that his presence only irritated her, he withdrew with some expressions of regret for her condition, and a hope that he should find her calmer on the morrow.

Mrs. Annesley laughed a hard laugh, and said quietly that she never had been and never should be calmer than at that moment, which was perfectly true. But when the door had closed upon him, and her gaze fell upon some trifle that Paul had given her, the calm deserted her, a sense of her bitter bereavement held of her, the memory of a thousand stormy scenes in which she had wounded her only son rose up accusingly before her, and she sobbed and moaned, and felt herself to be the most miserable woman upon earth.

Edward left her, feeling as if he had just been cast naked into a pit of scorpions, scarce knowing what he did or whither he went. He and she alone knew how the scar came upon Paul's face; she had looked when that occurred as she looked now. He wondered if he could be the same man who had left the gypsy party at the river's source a few hours before and had stepped lightly along the rocky path in the sunshine, singing in the lightness of his heart.

He met Sibyl in the corridor, and she, seeing the misery in his face, gave way to one of those guileless impulses she never could resist, and laid her hand gently on his arm.

"Dear Mr. Annesley," she said, in her clear light voice, "I am so sorry for you. All this must be so painful."

He said nothing, but kissed the hand she had given him, and passed on with a full heart. Sibyl alone consoled with him on that day's work, he reflected, and then the barbed arrow of his aunt's suggestion about her rankled in his heart.

He went into the sitting-room, where his sister lay on a couch with Alice sitting by her side.

By this time it was dark night, the lonely village was asleep, only the hotel lights still burned, and even they were gradually dying out; but the Annesley party did not yet dream of going to rest, they were waiting and watching for the return of the searchers with their tragic burden.

Alice sat in the shadow; she had only seen Edward once since the meeting under the pine-trees, and she had then observed, in the brief glance she caught of him, that the edelweiss was removed from his hat.

The sight of her stirred Edward with a feeling akin to pain—a mysterious something hid him from her; for the pity and terror of Paul's untimely fate had reared a barrier between them, insurmountable for the time. It seemed an unfair advantage over the dead man, even to recall his assurance that there was no chance of his winning her, or to consider the meaning of the passion in Alice's voice, when she cried upon Paul

in her sudden remorse in the wood; "Oh, Paul, Paul! if I had but known!"

She was very calm now, though he could not see her face in the shadow; but calmness, he knew well, was no index to the depth of her sorrow; it was her nature in joy and grief to command herself. Yet he thought she wished to avoid him.

"Have you been to auntie, Ned?" asked Eleanor, starting up at his step. "Yes," he answered, heavily, and he sat down and gazed blankly before him. "Nellie," said Alice, "do you think you could go to your aunt?"

"She had better not," replied Edward, quickly; "it would be too painful for her."

"But Mrs. Annesley must not be left alone," said Alice, with some reproach in her voice. "I am afraid your interview has been trying, Mr. Annesley—but how could it be otherwise? Is she no calmer?"

"I believe," returned Edward, slowly, "that she is out of her mind."

"Poor soul! Then I will go to her at once," said Alice, rising.

"She is better alone, Miss Lingard," interposed Edward, hastily; "pray don't subject yourself to anything so dreadful. She is not accountable for what she says now—no one must believe what she says—her grief must have its way. Her maid is at hand. Pray, Miss Lingard." He even barred the way when she would have left the room, and held the door shut behind him, until a pressure from without caused him to open it and disclose the figure of Gervase, who had seen his meeting with Sibyl a few moments before.

"Alice is right," Gervase said, on hearing the cause of dispute; "Mrs. Annesley is not fit to be left alone; it would be cruel. Nellie is too young, and just now too unwell, and Sibyl—well, Sibyl could not be what Alice is to her."

Alice therefore went, with every word that Edward had just uttered so hastily and brokenly sinking permanently into her memory. Mrs. Annesley roused herself at the sight of her to repeat the denunciation of Edward, in tones of sorrowful conviction this time.

Alice, inwardly trembling, did what she could to soothe the now terribly agitated woman, and bid her consider before accusing Edward in the hearing of others, thankful that, as she supposed, she alone had as yet heard anything.

"Dear Mrs. Annesley," she remonstrated, "you imply that he had a hand in your son's death when you speak so."

"Alice," replied Mrs. Annesley, quietly and coldly, "do you know where Edward was at the moment of Paul's fall?"

"No," she replied, simply; "how should I?"

"How, indeed?" repeated Mrs. Annesley, setting her lips hard; "that is what no one knows or ever will know."

"It is very simple, dear," said Alice; "we will ask him."

"Ask him!" returned Mrs. Annesley, with terrible scorn—"ask him yourself, Alice."

Then her mood changed, and she suddenly fell to weeping, staying herself upon Alice.

"Oh, Alice! Alice!" she cried, "my poor child loved you—he loved you!" and their tears mingled, and the bitterness seemed to pass away.

Paul's body was never found. They waited and watched in vain that night. Alice thought that if she could look once more upon his dead face, and press once repentant kiss upon the cold brow that could never more thrill with passion, even at the touch of her lips, she would be happier and perhaps lose the unreasoning remorse which troubled her now.

The current was strong at the spot where he fell; the bursting of an Alpine thunder-storm about an hour after the accident increased the difficulty of the search which was quickly instituted. There were good reasons why the body, if discovered by chance, should be concealed again. Paul wore a valuable watch, and had a good deal more money than prudent people care to carry about in his pocket, and, as it was ascertained that he had not given the diamonds into the jeweller's charge before leaving Nuffchattel, and they were not found among his effects, it was inferred that they, too, were upon him.

Edward passed some weary weeks in Switzerland, a time of fruitless search for the missing body, and of apparently endless formalities with regard to the death, a time which he spent entirely apart from his aunt, who refused to see him and only communicated with him through Gervase and her other lawyers. Then he returned to England, the gainer of a great inheritance that he did not want, burdened with responsibilities and rich with opportunities that he had never coveted and would gladly have renounced in exchange for the sunny peace of mind he enjoyed when travelling on the rail through the mountains only a few weeks earlier.

Mrs. Annesley stayed on some little time after his departure before she went home, a white-haired, broken-hearted woman. Alice Lingard, the only creature to whom she now showed any affection, remained with her, surrounding her with tender cares, and trying to soften the bitter blow which had fallen upon her. Sibyl and Eleanor had returned to their

respective homes immediately after the accident; the two women were thus alone with their loss, and the elder entreated the younger to make her home with her, and remain with her altogether to cheer her desolation.

But Alice, without refusing absolutely to entertain this proposal, said that it was too early yet to form any definite plans; they would wait and consider, and decide nothing till the healing hand of Time had wrought some comfort in Mrs. Annesley's stricken heart.

## CHAPTER VII.

A short time before they left the village in the Jura, Alice one day gathered some late autumn flowers and bound them together, and Gervase Rickman, who had remained with Mrs. Annesley, journeying backward and forward on business connected with Paul's death, asked her for what purpose she had gathered them.

"I am going for a long walk," she replied, evasively, and she did not ask him to accompany her; but he saw her go in the direction of the path which wound along the river's rocky bank toward its source, and presently he went the same way with a view to meeting her, as if by accident.

"That old woman will be the death of her if this goes on much longer," he said to himself, glad that he had urged his father and mother to call her back to Arden.

It was now October; the hush of the solemn autumn lay upon the mountain pastures and the fading, dreaming woods, and although, lower down in the warm valleys and sheltered folds of the mountain, some grapes still remained glowing in the hot sunshine in the vineyards, and the country was alive with the songs and shouts of the vintage, and full of the mellow, intoxicating odor of crushed grapes, up there on the green Jura slopes the frosts had been keen and the winds chill. But on this afternoon all was peace; the sun shone warmly with a last, relenting glow before the unchaining of the winter tempests, and Alice was glad to lose herself in the beauty of the quiet season.

She made her way through the wood in which she had rested shortly before she had heard the heavy tidings of Paul's death a month since, and, though the way was long, did not pause until she reached the spot upon the cliff's edge where he slipped and fell on that unfortunate day. There she rested, looking down into the green waters, now turbid from the heavy equinoctial rains, and thought it all over. Then she took the flowers, and threw them carefully down the cliff, so that they might clear the trees and bushes which grew here and there in the unevenness and clefts in the rocky wall, and fall into the river, where she watched them swerve with the current and float down the stream, till a jutting buttress of rock hid them from her gaze. Just so Paul's lifeless body must have borne away. It seemed as if her heart went with the flowers and sunk in the waters forever with the body of her ill-starred lover.

Her face was worn with care, there were dark hollows beneath her eyes; the shadow of Mrs. Annesley's grief lay heavily upon her youth; it was crushing all the brightness out of her, and besides that, she carried the heavy burden of an unspoken fear within her, and waged a daily, wasting warfare with a suspicion that grew stronger from the combat. She had ceased openly to rebut Mrs. Annesley's accusations of her nephew, but nevertheless the continual allusions made by the latter told upon her. She learned now of the long rivalry between the cousins, dangerous half truths; she heard of a quarrel at Medington, though not of the agreement in which it terminated.

Paul had himself betrayed his jealousy of Edward in that unfortunate boat scene; the distant and almost hostile terms on which the cousins were, had been evident to the whole party. Alice knew something of Paul's temper; she knew well what maddening things he could say when his blood was stirred to white heat; she could well imagine that Edward's temper, though sweet enough, would give way before Paul's cutting sarcasms, and betray him into what was foreign to his nature at calmer times. But why had he chosen the tortuous course of concealment, which the words she overheard him say by the river implied?

She could not forgive him that; a man capable of that was not to be trusted, nor was one stained with so dark a thing as homicide worth the thought she was wasting on him. The reproach was already beginning to work upon Annesley.

When Alice had been sitting thus, brooding on these disquieting thoughts a good twenty minutes, during which some of the autumn peace had stolen into her heart, her mournful reverie was broken by the appearance of Gervase Rickman.

"This is not a good place for you," he said, with gentle rebuke; "I am glad you will soon be far away."

"It is a farewell visit," she replied, looking up, her eyes bright with rising tears. "Come and sit on this rock, and tell me exactly what you saw on that day. When I have seen it all in imagination clearly before me, I shall brood less upon it, perhaps."

He sat down at her bidding, and looked wistfully at her, wishing she would ask him anything else, meaning to ask her to spare him the pain of the narration, reflecting that she would think such shrinking on his part unmanly, longing vainly to be saved from a temptation he knew to be beyond his strength.

"Tell me all," she repeated, seeing that he hesitated; "it will do me good."

So he took up his tale, and said that he had followed the two cousins from the river's source on the day of Paul's death, partly to see what had become of Paul, who had left them for no apparent purpose, partly to help Edward to

find some means of carrying Nellie down to Bourget; that, as he approached the spot in which they were now sitting, where the ground was broken, and sloped suddenly down to the cliff's edge, he heard a cry, and running up, saw Paul clinging to the birch-tree beneath them, the snapped trunk of which showed that it had given way beneath his weight. He saw the tree bound and rebound, before it finally snapped, and Paul fell into the water, and was seen no more. It was his opinion at the time that Paul, who could not swim, had been killed or disabled by striking on the rocky bed of the stream. He called and ran for help, which he found in the shape of some men at work higher up. Edward Annesley then appeared upon the scene. That was the whole story.

"Why did Mr. Annesley not appear sooner, when Paul cried for help?" asked Alice, quietly.

"That I am unable to explain," Gervase returned, dryly; "perhaps he did not hear."

"Then why did he come at all?"

"Perhaps he heard, but was too far off to arrive sooner."

"Gervase," said Alice, turning and looking him full in the face; "you are not telling me the whole truth."

He was obliged to meet her gaze for a moment; but immediately averted his gaze and breathed quickly, not knowing what to say.

"You are concealing something," she repeated.

"There are occasions, Alice," he replied, "on which one is bound in honor to be silent."

Then she remembered the promise she had overheard, and her heart grew faint.

"It may be right for you to be silent," she returned, "but only if you have promised."

"Alice," continued Gervase, earnestly, "unless you wish to do Edward Annesley harm, you had better not enter too closely into details."

"I don't believe it," she replied, vehemently; "truth will not harm him, but concealment may."

"Well! I can only repeat what I say: if you wish to injure him, the means are at hand."

Alice plucked a spray of juniper which grew near, and tore it to pieces in agitated silence.

"It is curious," reflected Gervase, "that reigning princes are always at war with their apparent. The Annesleys were the best of friends till this ill-fated inheritance fell to Paul."

"Do you think that set them at variance?"

"Undoubtedly. But Paul had another cause of strife; he was jealous, you know how causelessly, of Edward. Paul never could understand how meaningless are half a dozen sugar-coated words from a military man, accustomed to two flirtations a week on an average. He could still less understand that a man who means nothing can be jealous from vanity. He was thoroughly loyal, poor fellow!"

"He was, indeed," Alice replied, absently. She was thinking, with a sinking heart, that she must forget Edward, since he had never cared for her, as Gervase, so good a reader of character, plainly saw, and with brotherly affection and delicate tact pointed out to her. She was thinking, with still deeper pain, that silence with regard to that fatal hour upon the banks of the Doubs was the greatest kindness Edward's friends could show him; his own words on that afternoon as well as Gervase's present hints were witnesses to that. How blinded she had been to his true character by the glamor of her unasked love! How little she had dreamed that the very failing she censured so severely in Paul, want of self-control, was that of the man she preferred before him; the evil heritage of the Annesleys showing itself, not, as in the slain man, in an unbridled surrender of himself to his loves and likings, but in an inability to master the anger Paul's sarcasm and unwarrantable jealousy must have kindled in him. Paul was headlong and uncurbed in love, and thus lost her; Edward was evidently headlong and uncurbed in wrath. She repudiated a yet darker motive on the part of the heir to so rich a property, a motive urged by Mrs. Annesley in moments of confidence; the worst thing to be attributed to Edward probably, was yielding to a passionate impulse that circumstances made criminal. She looked at Gervase, and realized that, slight as her strength was comparatively, a vigorous push on her part would send him beyond recovery over the verge, on that broken and mossy ground; she pictured two men walking or standing there, and saw that only blind passion or criminal inattention could ignore the fatal issue of a blow in such a spot. And passion so blind, so reckless of consequence, amounted to crime. What an inheritance this man had gained! his heart must indeed be hard if he ever derived any satisfaction from a thing won at so terrible a cost. Her heart went out in pity to him, but she hoped that she was incapable of any warmer feeling for such a man. Yet the pity was so strong that it blanched her face, and set her lip quivering in spite of herself.

"Leave me," she said, turning to Gervase, with dimmed eyes; "let me be a few minutes. If you like to wait in the wood, I can overtake you."

He rose at once and left her, with that quiet air of sympathetic tact which was so distinctive of him, and Alice shaded her face with her hand and watched the turbid waters flowing past. She knew that there could be no more happiness for Edward Annesley in this world unless his heart were quite hard and bad, as few human hearts are; and she could not think him very bad, hardly as others might judge the man she had been upon the verge of loving. She sat gazing on the river till the hot tears quite blinded her, seeing all her youth and hope borne away upon the green waters which had engulfed Paul Annesley. She wondered how people managed to live whose hopes were broken; she had heard of

named lives dragging themselves painfully along through weary, sunless years; she tried to summon her courage to meet such a fate, but it seemed all too soon yet to piece the broken fragments of her life together. She wept on till she almost wept her heart out. Then she grew calm, the mighty peace which brooded over the sunny afternoon, with its careless midges fated to die in an hour, its humming-bees busy in the ivy blossom, and its pigeons fluttering out from the great sombre silent pines, once more touched her heart, and a still mightier peace than even that of Nature sunk into it. She felt that a life so broken as hers might be put to some nobler, more unselfish purpose than one in which the music had never been marred. To blend those broken chords into some diviner harmony would henceforth give her soul courage and purpose.

And Edward? She could only pray for him. Perhaps that strong feeling so near akin to love had been given her that sacrificial incense might not be wanting on his behalf, though he should fail to offer it himself, as was just and due.

She rose and rejoined Gervase in the wood below with a serene face and eyes full of spiritual exaltation. He looked at her for a moment and saw that she had been crying; then he averted his glance and offered her a bunch of late-blooming heather he had found in a sheltered crevice. She fixed it in the black dress she wore in memory of Paul, scarcely acknowledging an attention that was so usual with him, and they went tranquilly down the hill-side through the wood and over the marshy waste where the cotton-rush grew, in the lengthening ruddy sunshine, among the gradually hushing sounds of the evening. Alice little dreaming of the passion which enveloped the purple heath-flowers as with burning flame. She clung in spirit to Gervase, leaning all the more upon his quiet brotherly friendship because of the bitterness which had resulted from the love of others. Gervase had loved her, too, but he had known how to conquer a feeling which gave her pain, and she was grateful to him.

When, nearly an hour later, they entered the bleak village street, they saw Edward Annesley leaning over the low stone garden wall of the house in which he lodged, with his face turned toward the setting sun. With a pipe in his mouth and his hands clasped together at the back of his head, which was slightly thrown back to command a better view of the splendid cloud-pageant in the west, the glory of which was reflected on his face, he looked the picture of tranquil enjoyment, and the sight of him grated painfully on Alice's feelings, wound up, as they were, to such a pitch. His heart must indeed be hard, she thought, her own recoiling from the pity she had been lavishing upon him.

(To be continued.)

## APPLYING FARM MANURE NOW.

The making of farm manure begins when the live stock go into winter quarters. Every intelligent farmer believes in hauling this manure to the field and spreading it just as soon as possible, after it has accumulated in the shed or lot. In the fall and early winter the fall wheat is a favorite place to spread this manure, especially where the spreader is used. The effect upon the growing wheat and upon the timothy and clover sown with the wheat fully warranted its use on this winter crop.

But, the greater part of the manure making period comes in the last half of winter, and during many days of early spring. What shall we do with the manure to get the most from it? If placed on the sod intended for corn too late in the spring, there is serious danger of diminishing the moisture supply for the growing of the future crop, should the growing season lack in its usual rainfall. The growing wheat is too large for the application of a top dressing of manure. A new field may be found that can use it to better advantage.

The field that has matured a grain crop and is now struggling to grow a crop of timothy or clover next summer would certainly appreciate at least a light top dressing of good barnyard manure. The plants are young; the additional plant food thus given greatly increases their power to produce profitable crops. The rotten material placed upon the surface will act as a mulch to hold moisture. The hide bound pasture welcomes a top dressing with manure in late winter and early spring. It is only when there is a lack of food supply or a lack of moisture that we find the wild grasses and weeds taking the place once occupied by our pasture grasses.

Top dressing with manure the pasture field or the unprofitable meadows may encourage the lame grasses present that their larger growth may crowd out the red sorrel and other objectionable weeds that too often come in just to fill vacant places. The chief points to be kept in mind are that the manure is best utilized when spread as soon as possible after it has been made, and that its best service comes from its use as a top dressing upon a growing crop.

The new clover field, the meadow and the old pasture field would be greatly benefited by a top dressing in the late winter or early spring, when the clover and grass plants are making their new start for their summer crops.

## A NATURAL MISTAKE.

"And you really allowed that young man to kiss you?" reproached the stern parent.

"—I couldn't help it, mamma," laughed the blushing girl.

"But when he asked you for a kiss why didn't you pucker?"

"I did, and the goose thought it was a pucker."