A SHADOWED PATH;

Or, The Curse Of The Family

CHAPTER XXI.

Time, which has a way of improving the fortunes of some people, and of making matters worse with others, had been kind enough to perform the latter operation for Judith Mazingford during the time which succeeded her sister's death.

When, after a year of dismal travel, however, she returned to England, with her body invigorated, and mind restored to most of its former powers, Judith put out her canvas on another tack.

It seemed as impossible for wife and husband to agree, as for a cat and dog to meet without a spar—but she usually got the best of it; for if physical strength and worldly advantages were on his side—moral courage and mental superiority were on hers.

"I do not care what you say," she once exclaimed; "I do not care what you do—you might as well talk of hurting a corpse as of touching me. You have destroyed my vulnerable point, Mr. Mazingford—find another if you can."

And he did try, but he could not—he had lost the only hold over her he ever possessed; and she laughed his threats and anger to scorn.

"I will never do anything again that you wish, if it be possible for me to avoid it," she declared—"never, so help me Heaven." And she did not.

He gave up his house in town, and shifted his head-quarters to Wales, a home which seemed to Judith a degree more unendurable than London; for, in the metropolis, there was something to distract her mind from the subject of her own misfortunes, but at Wavour Hall, the great spirit sank under the weight of its utter loneliness—her heart preyed on itself—she thought till she was weary, and she cried till she was sick.

And, besides, once arrived in Wales, her husband managed to provide a new source of irritation for her—a sight of her brother Stephen, with whom there had been no intercourse for years previously, in consequence of Mr. Mazingford's having forgotten to fulfil his promise and remove the mortgage deeed off the firs, and weeds—and brambles, and ruins, of Llandyl Hall.

Stephen never forgave the member; but he proved cleverer than Mr. Mazingford had ever given him credit for being—and as thoroughly baulked his brother-in-law of the property he wanted to secure, as though he likewise had been born and bred a pettifogging attorney.

He borrowed money, to pay Mr. Mazingford, from a capitalist, who shared the young man's belief, that if the member had not thought there were coal on the estate, he never would have advanced money on it to Mr. Renelle—employed a lawyer to take both principal and interest to the estimable proprietor of Wavour Hall—got thoroughly practical men down from London, abandoned the shafts his father had sunk at another's prompting—bored in more promising and likely situations; and finally, to his infinite triumph, came on the black diamonds, and commenced coining them into gold.

Then Mr. Mazingford made overtures of friendship to him, which Stephen accepted, to the end that he might vex his brother-in-law, by talking of the mines, and the wealth likely to accrue from them; and Judith, whom the conversation between the two made heart-sick, turned, with perfect loathing, from the memories, and the miseries her brother's presence conjured up before her.

"Stephen, I hate you," she said at last, "and I wish you would go."

"I never asked you to love me," he replied; "and I won't go till it suits my convenience;" and accordingly he remained, until he and Mr. Mazingford quarrelled again, when he went away back to his mines, leaving matters at Wavour Hall a degree worse than he had found them.

'You know I wished you joy of your bargain," were his farewell words to his brother-in-law; "and, with a "Good-bye Judith—I am glad you are so happy married!" he departed, laughing like a fiend over his sister's misfortunes.

Then came the dreary November days, with the rain streaming down, and the sky dark, and the earth damp, and the prospect gloomy—then came intense loneliness, perfect isolation and retirement—and, almost in despair, Judith flew to her pen again, and worked, for weeks and weeks together, at a novel, and out of the fulness of sorrow came the ripeness of genius—and at length, the hand felt its power, and the imagination its intensity, and the labor of composition ceased to be a toil, and the words flowed easily from the pen.

So she whiled away the dreary winter days—and at length the anniversary of Lillian's death came round.

It was a day Judith always kept sacred; when the intrusion of visitors seemed a profanation; when she shut herself up all alone with God and her own thoughts, and looked over the relics she still possessed of the dead; turned out the contents of a drawer which she never opened at any other time, and wiped the damp off the long, fair tress, and kissed the leaves of the rose she had lifted off her sister's breast, when she lay shrouded in her coffin—opened the old Bible and read all the passages marked in pencil—held the much-worn Prayer-book in her hand, and rained bitter tears over all.

Lillian herself was never absent from her thoughts; but she did not dare to trust herself often with a sigh of these tangible mementoes of the dead.

"They would unfit me for the ordinary duties of life,' she said, mentally; and she was right.

In the morning Judith sent down a message to her guests that she should be unable to leave her own apartments during the course of the day—and in the bustle of driving, riding, laughing, and talking, her absence was little noticed, until dinner-time, when her vacant chair at the head of the table attracted Mr. Mazingford's attention, and turning to a servant he demanded where his mistress was.

"Mrs. Mazingford has not been downstairs to-day, I believe, sir," was the reply.

"Is she ill?"

"I do not know, sir," answered the man.

All at once it flashed upon the member's memory that this was a day his wife loved to set apart as a sacred and peculiar season, and indignant that she should dare to permit her own private feelings to interfere with his public interests, as he called her appearance on all possible occasions, in all possible places, he muttered a hasty apology to his friends, and leaving the dinner-table, to ascertain, so he said, if Mrs. Mazingford were ill, he hurried to her own especial sitting-room, where, finding the door locked, he demanded admittance.

"What do you want?" asked Judith, opening it for him.

"You!" he answered; "come down to dinner at once."

"Not to-day," she pleaded; 'you can do very well without me; and I like to be alone with her memory."

"Alone with the devil!" responded her husband. "Put away this trash," pointing to the relics previously referred to; "or, better still, put the whole lot in the fire, and dress as fast as you can. Don't hesitate, for I tell you I am not going to stand any more of your cursed sentimental nonsense. I am out of patience both with you and with it. I don't intend to have you sitting here for days as you have done reading and scribbling, cramming your head with poetry and a parcel of such damned folly. I swear by——"

"Lewis, I wish you would not swear so here," interposed Judith, nervously. "It makes me feel—feel——" She looked hurriedly around the room, and, by way of a finish, burst into tears.

"Come, no more of this infernal nonsense," he exclaimed. "I think no man ever was so tormented as I am. Go and dress yourself Mrs. Mazingford," he added, angrily, "and come down as quickly as possible. You had better not refuse," he said, "or I will make you repent it."

"You could not," she answered.

The words had barely passed her lips before every one of the relics were tossed relentlessly into the fire. With a shriek Judith sprang forward to rescue some one article—some single memento—and plunging her hand absolutely through the flame, she plucked out a volume, and, quick as thought, extinguished the blaze, by wrapping it in the skirt of her thick black dress.

"Give me that,' he cried.

"I will not." And as the smell of the burnt lock of hair, and faint perfume of the rose, and bright glare of the fire told her all else had perished, she grasped the book with a tighter hold, and strove to save it from him.

In vain—he wrenched it from her with his strong hand, and flung it once again into the flame, at the same time forcibly preventing her from rescuing it.

After the first struggle she remained quiet, till she saw it was all consumed Then she hissed out the words:—

"You have burned a Bible, and I am glad, for I will inform against you—I will, so sure as I am Judith Mazingford."

"For which very reason, pretty one, your testimony would be perfectly valueless. A wife cannot be a witness, false or true, against her husband. So much for that!" he finished, with a sneer. "And now dress and come down to dinner, for I won't stand any more airs or nonsense. I should advise you not to cross me again."

"Very well," she answered, sullenly. "Only rid me of your presence, and I will do as you desire;" and she walked, as she spoke, towards her dressing-room, and, ringing for her maid, went through the duties of her toilette as though nothing had happened.

He had raised a devil in her again—a devil none the less dangerous because it was a silent one; and having made up her mind to adopt a certain course ultimately, she could afford to be quiet, and obey him in the interim.

Almost before Mr. Mazingford could have imagined it possible for her to change her dress, she entered the dining-room, arrayed in a deep mourning robe, with her hair simply arranged, and only a few jet ornaments relieving her sombre costume.

He looked angrily at her style of toilette, but she sneered him down. With her pale face and commanding presence and wonderful beauty, she had the advantage over him then, and strong in herself and her determination, she took her seat with a feeling almost of joy throbbing at her heart. At last she had made up her mind—and she was free!

A gentleman, on her right, hoped she was better.

"Thank you," she said, in a clear though quiet tone, "I have never been ill. The reason I absented myself from your circle was, that this is the anniversary of the death of my only sister, who died under peculiarly melancholy circumstances."

She was a model wife and a model hostess that night, until all the outside visitors had driven off, and all the inside ones retired to rest: then, closing the door of the drawing-room, containing the quaint chairs and dark tables, she said to Mr. Mazingford:

"I want to speak to you."

"And I have much to say to you, madam," he retorted—"but I am too angry to say it to-night; you had better go away, and not commence talking to me now."

"I had better not go away—and I will talk to you," she replied. "I can put what I want to say into a single sentence. We are wretched together; we shall never agree. In Heaven's name, then, let us separate."

"You have been driving at this for two years; but I will never agree to any arrangement of the kind. Make up your mind to that."

'But is not the life we are leading a sort of hell upon earth?" she asked, putting a force of constraint upon her utterance, which gave it a thrilling intensity. "Are we not more wretched than man and woman ever were before—would not anything be better than this?"

"If you like to make your own life wretched it is nothing to me," he answered. "Do what I desire, in a proper manner, and we shall get on well enough. If you would remember, once for all, that I am master, and will be obeyed, you would make yourself, and every one else, a vast deal more comfortable than is the case at present. Put the idea of separation out of your mind altogether; recollect I have said it shall never be—and, above all, never dare to cross me again as you have crossed me this day; for if you do, I will bring you to your senses by rougher means than any I have hitherto employed."

"Fool!" said Mrs. Mazingford, and she dropped the word out from between her lips with an accent of such ineffable contempt, that Mr. Mazingford's blood boiled within him. "You think I am afraid of violence—that I am afraid of you—that I am afraid of anything on earth. I showed you once before," she continued, more vehemently, "what I could do when I would. I warned you then not to refuse me the money, and I warn you now not to refuse me a separation; I want no annual allowance—I want no annuity, no sum in hand, no anything—I only want leave to go in peace. Will you grant it?"

"If you ever ask for it again——" he began—

"Well," she demanded.

"I will make you wish you had never been born," he said, fiercely.

"That would be nothing new," she retorted; then she added, as if debating the question with herself, "I wonder, Lewis Mazingford, I have never killed you."

"And I wonder I have never killed you," he returned, growing absolutely pale at the idea that possibly at some future time she might take it into her head to end matters by such a process.

"I dare say you would, long ago," was her reply—"had you not been afraid of being hung—for you are a coward as well as a tyrant. Don't strike me," she exclaimed, as he raised his hand threateningly. "Don't do it—for I will arouse the household with my shrieks—and inform society that Mr. Mazingford, of Wavour Hall, is in the habit of beating his wife."

With a coarse oath he sprang towards her; and with one hand covering her mouth he wound the other through her hair, and shook her by it till he was perfectly exhausted. When, at last, he flung her from him, his hand was full of dark hair, torn literally out by the roots—and thoroughly unnerved by the pain he had inflicted, Judith sank on a sofa, conquered, for once in her life, by bodily suffering.

"There," he said, as he rolled the trophy of his manly conquest up, and flung it on the fire—"never anger me again, for I will not be browbeaten by any woman under heaven, much less by one whom I raised from a station little better than of a beggar. Name separation again to me if you dare."

"I dare do anything, but I will never name it again," she answered, in a low husky voice. "Still, remember, Mr. Mazingford—and these are my last words on the subject to you—that any evil consequences which may ensue from your refusal will rest on yourself." And, without waiting for a reply, she picked up her comb, which had fallen on the floor, and walked out of the room, away to her own desolate chamber. That night her head never rested on a pillow.

It did not take her an hour to pull the flounces off a black dress, to put a piece of ribbon plainly across an old garden bonnet—to collect all the jewels which had been given to her by her various friends, on the occasion of her most ill-assorted marriage; to wrap herself in a thick travelling shawl, to tie up her most important manuscripts, and burn the rest. With a wild impatience she hurried on the preparations for departure—burdened by no luggage save one bundle, with curls brushed out, and hair plainly braided, she cautiously descended the back staircase, opened a glass door leading out into the garden, and unmindful of wind and rain, sallied forth in the darkness, and ran on till she was fairly out of breath.

She felt no fear of night—she did not care for the pitiless pelting of the storm that wet her through and through; she was leaving all she hated and dreaded on earth behind her, and in the wild delirious joy of escape, forgot every danger, every risk. Crossing the drive she entered the plantations, and pursuing a narrow path, with the windings of which she was well acquainted, she at last reached a stile that conducted her into the churchyard of Wavour.

There, among the long wet grass and mouldering headstones, she stopped for an instant to think, and, as she did so, the rumbling of distant wheels indistinctly heard during the pauses of the tempest, reached her ear.

"That's the night mail," she muttered; "I will go in it," and groping her way over the graves and mounds to the churchyard gate, she took her stand by the roadside, and as the lights came blinking up close to the spot she occupied, called out for the coachman to stop.

"Where do you want to go to?" he demanded, pulling up.

"London,'" 'was the reply.

"All right," said the guard. "Now, ma'm!"

"Hang it!" exclaimed the coachman, "don't bring a woman outside a night like this."

(To be Continued.)

About the Farm

EFFECT OF SPRAYING POTATOES.

Professor Winter of the University College of North Wales has been conducting a number of experiments for the past four years to determine, if possible, the effect of spraying potatoes. Last year's results clearly indicated that considerable benefit has been derived by spraying with sulphate of copper solution. The dressing used consisted of 24 pounds sulphate of copper, 30 pound of pure washing soda, 120 gallons of water.

Summarizing the results, it is seen that the average weight per acre from marketing potatoes sprayed on both sides of the leaf was 8 tons 3 cwts. 60 pounds; sprayed on the upper side only, 7 tons 15 cwts. 2 pounds, and unsprayed, 5 tons 16 cwts. 104 pounds. There is thus an average increase favorable to spraying on both sides of the leaf over the unsprayed plots of 2 tons 6 cwts. 68 pounds. Contrasting the figures over the last three years this favorable result is still further emphasized on each occasion there being an increase varying from 16 cwts. 96 pounds to 2 tons 6 cwts, 68 pounds, that is to say, in favor of spraying on both sides of the leaf. In small potatoes there is rather more weight on the unsprayed plots than on the sprayed, while the number of disease tubers is rather less than after the sulphate of copper solution has been used. If we take the average over the last seven years of the increase due to spraying it is evident that this operation has a very beneficial effect upon the growth. Indeed that seems to be quite as marked a feature of the result of using the solution as the decrease in the number of disease tubers. No doubt this suggested a comparison with sprayed old home-grown tubers used for seed with the tubers drawn from another locality. The old seed, however, although showing an increase on all the sprayed plots over the unsprayed was much more uneffective in the production of heavy crops than new seed, either sprayed or unsprayed, to the extent in some cases of rather over a half to about three-quarters the weight of crop. The weight of disease tubers was in all cases much less where the spraying was carried through. It is concluded, therefore, that the best results are to be obtained by growing a crop from new seed and afterwards spraying it. Below we give directions for spraying:—

The following dressing is sufficient for one acre.

24 pounds sulphate of copper (98 per cent. pure).

30 pounds washing soda.

120 gallons of water.

Washing soda is recommended in preference to lime.

As in practice it will usually be difficult to dissolve the above quantity at one operation, we would suggest that the mixture should be prepared in a wooden vessel which will hold 25 gallons of water.

First wash out this vessel thoroughly and pour into it 15 gallons of clean water; then take 4 pounds of sluphate of copper broken to a fine powder; place it in a canvas box and stir it about in the water until the sulphate of copper is dissolved. Next dissolve 5 pounds of washing soda in five gallons of water in a separate tub, then pour the washing soda solution into the sulphate of copper solution and stir well.

The mixture should then be tested with blue litmus paper; if the litmus is turned red more washing soda should be dissolved and steadily added until fresh litmus paper put into the solution remains blue.

The quantity of material thus prepared is sufficient for one-sixth of an acre.

As the nossles of spraying machines are easily choked, the mixture should be poured into the machine through a canvas cloth.

Spraying should be done about the end of June or beginning of July, and again in about three weeks.

OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS.

Deal sparingly with condition powders. They will not help a hen to make something out of nothing.

Better pay five dollars for one hen that will lay eggs than one dollar for five that do nothing but eat their heads off.

Lice breed fast in hot weather. Spray the houses every few days with something that will settle with the pest. If you have nothing better, kerosene oil will do it. Dose it right on, and don't forget the under sides of the roosts.

If you have a man to do the work for you, see to it that that man does his work to watch the man than it is to do work to watch the man than it is to do every stroke of work yourself.

A hen that is in poor flesh cannot do much for you. She is too busy doing business for herself; you will have to wait till she gets up in good flesh. Then she can afford to think of you.

Bright red combs are a sure sign of health in fowls. Shun a hen with a pale, drooping comb.

Do not let any one fool you into buying a hen that is old just by saying: "But she lays all right." She may do that a few weeks and then some morning you will find her "laying under the roost.

Keep hens that lay and those that do not in separate houses as far as possible. They need different feeding, and this you cannot give them if they are running in the same house.

There is not much fat in roots, and still they form an important part of a well-balanced ration. They help to keep the hens healthy. So plan to have some for use next winter.

Have you skimmed milk for your hens? If not perhaps you can buy some. It will pay you well to do it if you can.

OLD AGE AND THE ARTERIES.

French Physician Seeks to Upset a Theory Commonly Held.

For a long time now the books have put down arterio-sclerosis, or hardening of the walls of the arteries, as a malady of old age, indeed the malady of old age. A book published only the other day by a physician of long standing on how to attain old age contained the same familiar declarations. It has even been said that hardening of the arteries is what causes old age, and that if the arteries could be prevented from hardening, old age could be baffled, deferred, put off indefinitely.

Now M. Lancereaux has told the French Academy of Medicine that this is not so. He finds arterio-sclerosis rather in the young than in the old, and says that it is less harmful in the old than in the younger, and that the way to cure it is to begin early with young persons predisposed to it through heredity, much as one should do to cure young girls inclined to hysteria.

"Arterio-sclerosis is not a disease of old age," said M. Lancereaux, "but of middle age. It does not appear after the sixtieth or sixty-fifth year, or at any rate undergoes a period of abatement then which renders it less dangerous.

"The disease is not rare among adults, even between 20 and 30. It is more frequent among those between 30 and 40 But it is between 50 and 60 that it is most prevalent, and in such cases most often brings death between 50 and 65.

"Its development is more rapid among young persons than in the aged, and when occurring in the aged it is the less formidable."

M. Lancereaux attacked another theory when he declared that, contrary to the general belief among the doctors, arteriosclerosis was not commonly due to prolonged indulgence in alcoholic drinks, no more was it due to abuse of tobacco. The proofs offered that it came from those causes, he said, were wholly insufficient. It either was poisoning through too much meat in the diet accountable for the affection, nor was alimentary excess.

According to M. Lancereaux gouty inflammation is most often the cause of the malady. In treatment it was necessary to attack the initial phenomena as shown in nervous disorder.

THE LARGEST RESTAURANT.

New York is to have the largest restaurant in the world, seating 8,000 people. It is to be built on Broadway, and $1,000,000 has already been subscribed by the syndicate. The roof garden, with real trees and turf, a fountain, and a 50-foot lake, will be a reproduction in miniature of the famous gardens of the Trianon at Versailles. The restaurant proper will occupy the entire ground floor of the building. It will be 200 feet long, and will seat comfortably 4,000 people, while the roof garden is to accommodate a similar number.

ONE ON THE DENTIST.

"Ouch!" blurted the busy dentist, as he injured his hand with one of his instruments.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the old farmer in the chair. "That's good!"

The dentist was furious.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," he snapped. "I am in pain."

"And that's why I am laughing. Thought you was one of these here 'painless dentists,' mister."

MODESTY.

"Ah! my love," sighed the ardent lover, "if you only knew how beautiful you are!"

"You mustn't speak of it," protested the modest girl; "I don't want to know."

"Why not?"

"Because," she said, "it would make me too conceited."

It takes a lawyer to draw a will so that he can get something out of the fight over it later.