A SEVERE TRIAL;

OR, THE MEMORY OF A BOY WITH DARK EYES.

(CHAPTER III - (Cont'd)

I amuse myself by looking for my own articular friends in the crowd. Olive is in a corner firting with Jack Rolleston, Poppy is sitting calmly beside her fiance, looking as lizily handsome as ever. Kate Rolleston is luooking at me. I wonder if she would like very much to change places with me, and if half at least of Olive's suspicion about her and Gerard Baxter is true? Perhaps Katie has lost her heart to this artist-friend of her brother's, though, according to Mrs. Wauchope, Mr. Baxter does not care for young ladies. I am puzzling over Katie's steadfast look, and wondering how it has happened that, among all our common friends, nobody has ever told Gerard Baxter who I am, when Tannhauser' comes to an end, and I rise from my seat, Blumenthalu's "Bend of the River" being next on the programme.

"You practice a great deal?" Mr. Baxter observes, as he offers me his arm again.

"Yes," I answer, smiling, as I met

"Yes," I answer, smiling, as I met his splendid dark eyes. "I hope it does

nis splendid dark eyes. I hope it does not annoy you."
"No; Mrs. Wauchope will tell you that I have never been so industrious as since you came to Carlton Street."
"I am gla dto hear it," I venture, somewhat soberly. "If I had your talent, I should certainly not let it be idle."

"I mean to work very hard now," he says quickly. "Before, I did not care very much whether I made a name for myself or not. But now-I do!"

The same owner, sery hard on the street of the same for a service of the same for a service of the same for a service of the same for t

Her mother is a wretched woman, always begging—sometimes drunk. Here is her picture—yes, it is a lovely face."

He has turned a canvas which had been standing with its face to the wall, and we are looking again at the girl we meet on the stairs. There are the pure Greek outlines which Phidias might have worshipped—the tangled red-gold hair tossed back from the white forehead, glittering like a halo round the angelic head, the dark blue velvety eyes, the exquisite smiling lips. The great artist had painted her in rags, selling violets. She is holding out a bunch in one small slender hand, as she leans against the pillar of some great portico, looking out of the canvas with those innocent wistful eyes. I stand before the picture for a long time, studying that girl's face. I envy her, though she is in rags and I am wearing a dress of steel-gray velvet with a bonnet of the same, whose cost I scarcely care to remember. How happy she ought to be with a face like that? What matter about cold and hunger, and rags, if one could smile on the beholder with those ethereal eyes, with those exquisite childish lips! So I think, looking down at the lifeless canvas. And as I look a shiver runs through my veins, as though a door had opened somewhere, letting in a breath of some cold outer air. It is a curious sensation—I have heard of people feeling the like when one walked over their grave that was to be. Yet why should this girl's face make me shiver? It is as beautiful as the face of an angel, and as innocent—it is not very likely that it should ever do me any harm!

and if we choose to be poor together, it is nobody's business but our own."

Perhaps my silence says "what I would never swear," for he comes nearer to me, bending his dark head to look into my eyes, as he did once before in this very room, when we quarreled about a bunch of withered violets.

"Allie, couldn't you care for me enough to 'lay your sweet hands in mine and trust to me'?"

Could I? Can I? He takes me in his arms, he kisses me passionately, and I. Allie Scott of Woodhay, submit to it with an amazed docility which I could not have believed possible a fortnight ago. And so we stand for "one vast moment" of intolerable happiness; and then, with a laugh which ends in a sigh, I push him away from me.

"Oh, this is folly!" I exclaim, with rather tardy wisdom, it must be confessed. "We are mad to think of such a thing for a minute. You have nothing, and yet you want to burden yourself with a wife whose only mode of earning her living you condemn!"

"My wife shall never sing for her bread!" the boys says, throwing up his head.

"Then how do you propose to live?"

bread!" the boys says, throwing up his head.

"Then how do you propose to live?"

"I shall live by my art."

"But you must practice your art before you can live by it."

"And I intend to practice it."

"And if you fail?"

"I shall not fail with such an incentive to work."

"You are very confident," I say, gazing into the eyes which look dark as night under their black lashes. "But suppose you should not succeed?"

"I shall succeed."

"But you seem to me to be more anxious to bewilder by audacious originality than to conquer by sober work," I say deliberately.

"I cannot be conventional!" he exclaims, frowning a little. "I have my own ideas about choice of subject and manner of dealing with it, and I shall adopt the ideas of no other man living."

"But your idea may not please the public."

"If the public cannot understand me,

"But your idea may not please the public."

"If the public cannot understand me, it is their own loss."

"And, meanwhile, you and those belonging to you may starve."

He is silent, looking down at me—at the girl in the long pale gown who dares to stand there and call not only his own steadfastness of purpose in question, but the principles of his art.

"Truth must conquer in the end," he says at last.

"If it is backed up by deliberate, mechanical, matter-of-fact toil."

"I will work for you, Allie, if you will only give me the chance!"

"Will you work for me, Gerard?"

He bends down and kisses my hair—a quick passionate kiss.

"As long as there is breath in my body, darling."

"Then I will tell you what I will do," I say gravely and deliberately. "On the day that you sell a picture for one hundred pounds if you come and ask me to marry you. Gerard Baxter, I will say "For the sake of the hundred pounds, Allie?"—smiling a little.

Yes."

"For the sake of the hundred pounds, Allie?"—smiling a little.

"No," I answer, smiling back again; "but because it will prove to me that you have begun to work."

"You will marry me then, Allie?"

"Yes."

"I won't be long painting that picture!" he exclaims boyishly. "My darling, do you know how happy you have made me?"

He is standing close to me his arms round me, his dark head lowered against

ling, do you know how happy you have made me?"

He is standing close to me his arms round me, his dark head lowered against uy fair one, our two foolish hearts full of a foolish dream never to be fulfilled. "Allie!" they call to me from the other end of the room, turning their dazzled eyes from the piano and Crauford's long-haired friend to peer into our shadowy space of twilight. "Allie, come and sing 'Galla Water."

I move down the room in my long dress, a faint white presence with no spot of darker color about it than the bunch of heliotrope fastened into the coil of filmy lace about the throat, and followed by a darker figure which looks like its shadow in the faint perspective of the long shadowy room.

"We want you to sing 'Galla Water,' Allie, and 'Logie o' Buchan."

And I sit down and sing them with the carcless gayety, the dash and insouciance without which, Olive Deane tells me, I should not be Allie Scott. But all the time I am thinking of two shadowy figures outlined against a faint gold-green sky, of a star that "fickered into red and emerald," of a voice that had said "And you will marry me, Allie?" and of another voice that had answered "Yes."

"Your aunt has come."

another voice that had answered "Yes."

"Your aunt has come."
Such is Mary Anne's greeting to me in the hall of No. 33 Carleton Street.

"My aunt! What aunt?"

"Your aunt from the antry. She came about an hour ago, and was that surprised to find you had gone out."

"But what has she come for? Is anything wrong at home?"

"Not a thing in the world. She says she wrote to tell you she was coming, and to have a room ready, because she meant to stay."

"Meant to stay."

"Meant to stay!" I repeat, thinking of the unopened letters of the morning.

"So she says. She's in the drawingroom now, giving it to the mistress."

"Giving her what?" I ask stupidly.

"A piece of her mind, she says; but I think it's the whole of it!" the maid-of-all-work says, grinning. "It's all along of the Count she be come, I expect. She says Mrs. Wauchope deceived her about having no lodgers but the Misses Pryce."

Who can have told Aunt Rosa anything about him? And what a state of mind she must have been in before she would decide to come up to town in such a hurry!

"Aunt Rosa!" I exclaim, in a tone of the most innocent astonishment. "My

hurry!
"Aunt Rosa!" I exclaim, in a tone of
the most innocent astonishment. "My
dear Aunt Rosa, I am so sorry you arrived while I was out."

CHAPTER V.

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The seutence may be ambiguous; but Aunt Rosa does not perceive it.

"So am I," she says, when she has planted a cold kiss upon my nose. "I did not think you came up to London to go to evening-parties."

"But I was with the Rollestons, auntperfectly respectable people."

"Humph! And how did you come home?"

"They sent me home in their carriage—they always do."

"I wrote to you yesterday. Is there anything the matter with the postal arrangements?"

"Not that I know of, Aunt Rosa.

"Then I am to conclude that you never open my letters?"

"I was in a hurry this morning—break fast was late, and I was afraid of being late at Madame Cronhelm's. I did glance through your letter; but I must have overlooked anything you said about coming up to town."

She says nothing to me about Mrs. Wauchope's contraband lodger; but I know, as well as if she had told me, that somebody has been officious enough to write and tell her all about him. I suspect Mrs. Deane; but I ask Aunt Rosa no questions, nor does she volunteer any information to night.

"It seems Mrs. Wauchope has no spare room for me. In those circumstances—"

"My dear Aunt Rosa, you can have my room. I will sleep here on the sofa, and just run in there to dress. There is a dressing-room— Indeed, perhaps I had better have a shake-down in the dressing-room— Indeed, perhaps I had better have a shake-down in the dressing-room— Indeed, perhaps I had better have a shake-down in the dressing-room. If Mrs. Wauchope can manage it."

"She is managing it now. I don't like

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that woman, Rosalic. She has a most virulent tongue."

"She has always been civil to me, Aunt

"Oh, because you just let her do as she pleases! Have you been burning no-thing but Scotch coal since you came up

"I have had very good fires, auntie."
"I am surprised at it, then. That coal in the grate is nothing but rubbish, though I dare say you are paying the very highest price for it. And the tea she gave me was execrable—perfectly execable!"

she gave me was execrable—perfectly execrable!"

"I'm not much judge of tea, Aunt Rosa,"
I say, yawning. "I hope you've brought
me up some jam from Woodhay, though,
and some of our own butter."

"I've done no such thing. You're coming home with me to-morrow—there's
been enough and too much of this folly,
and your uncle is very sorry he was ever
foolishly persuaded into giving his consent to it."

"Not a day later than to-morrow."

"But don't you want to see something
of London, auntie?"

"I want to see the last of it. I'm only
sorry I didn't know what I know now
three weeks ago, and your ridiculous
freak would have come to an end a great
deal sooner. How your Uncle Todhunter
could ever have agreed to such an egregious piece of folly passes my comprehension!"

Poor Aunt Rosa! If she only knew that
the steed were stelen how my mych less elect

Poor Aunt Rosa! If she only knew that the steed was stolen, how much less clatter she would have made in locking the door! In my heart I confess that she is right. I have got into mischief here in London, or into what she would consider mischief. If I had never come up to Mrs. Wauchope's furnished lodgings, I should probably never have met

"That landscape-painter Which did win my heart from me."

"I cannot possibly go home to-morrow, Aunt Rosa," I say, laying aside my squirrel-lined cloak and the fan which I had been holding in my hand since I came into the room. "I must tell Madame Cronhelm that I am leaving rown, and I must say good-bye to the Rollestons." *

"You can write to them both A

stons."

"You can write to them both. A note will do just as well."

"I shall not write. You can go home to-morrow, and I will follow the next day, if you do not care to stay in London."

"I shall not leave you behind me, Rosalie."

"But your uncle sent word by me that you were to come home at once."
"I shall not go to-morrow." I repeat obstinately; and Aunt Rosa, knowing me of old, thinks it better not to press the

of old, thinks it better not to press the point.

I must see my boy again. This is the idea which is uppermost in my mind. I cannot go away without seeing him; but how shall I manage it? I may not chance to meet him at the Rollestons' to-morrow; and, if not, shall I be forced to go away, without bidding him good-bye? I knew this evening that our time together would not be long, but I did not dream that it would be so short as this.

"I hope you won't be very uncomfortable, Aunt Rosa. You won't find the hair mattress as soft as your featherbed at home."

"I don't expect to be comfortable. The whole place appears to me wretched and shabby to a degree."

"It is not at all wretched, I assure you. And I have improved greatly since I went to Madame Cronhelm's."

Aunt Rosa suiffs, sitting bolt upright in the most uncomfortable chair in the room.

"I think I will go to bed." she says. point.

in the most uncomfortable chair in the room.

"I think I will go to bed," she says.
"That woman has quite tired me out."

I light her bedroom candle with alacrity, and precede her into the inner room. A little camp-bed has been put up for me in the dressing-room; but, before I go to bed, and after I have helped Aunt Rosa to unpack her night-garments, I creep back to the dying fire in the drawing-room, and, sitting on the rug, lean my chin on my palms, and think of those two figures in that twilight window, and of a foolish promise made only to be broken. But if he comes to me, shall I not say "Yes"? If he keeps his share of the agreement, shall I not keep mine A foolish happy smile curves my lips in the dying firelight—the lips that he has kissed by the light of that great solitary evening-star. Yes, I will keep my promise, Gerard. But will you keep yours?

I go to Madame Cronhelm's in the morning, and after that to the Rollestons' The Rollestons are sorry I am going away—Ada especially. Mr. Baxter is not at Berkeley Street, nor does any one mention his name. I come back to luncheon at Carleton Street, though the Rollestons try hard to keep me, and have just finished that long delayed meal when Mary Anne comes in with a card in her grimy hand, which she proffers to me.

(To be continued.) (To be continued.)

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