

CHAPTER XXIV.—Continued.

"Ah! it is very well for you, whose life has been so pure and free from evil, but it is different for me, with all my consciousness of sins and imperfections. For me, and thousands like me, strive as we will, immortality has terrors as well as hopes. It is, and always will be, human to fear the future, for human nature never changes. You know the lines in 'Hamlet.' It is

"that the dread of something after death—The undiscovered country from whose bourne No traveler returns—puzzles the will And makes us rather bear those ills we have, Than fly to others that we know not of, Thus conscience does make cowards of us all."

They are true, and, while men last, they will always be true."

"Oh, Arthur!" she answered, earnestly, and for the first time addressing him in conversation by his Christian name, "how limited your trust must be in the mercy of a Creator, whose mercy is as wide as the ocean, that you can talk like that! You speak of me, too, as better than yourself—how am I better? I have my bad thoughts, and do bad things as much as you, and though they may not be the same, I am sure they are quite as black as yours, since everybody must be responsible according to their characters and temptations. I try, however, to trust in God to cover my sins, and believe that, if I do my best, He will forgive me, that is all. But I have no business to preach to you, who are older and wiser than I am."

"If," he broke in, laying his hand involuntarily upon her own, "you knew—although I have never spoken of them to any one before, and could not speak of them to anybody but yourself—how these things weigh upon my mind, you would not say that, but would try to teach me your faith."

"How can I teach you, Arthur, when I have so much to learn myself?" she answered, simply, and from that moment, though she did not know it as yet, she loved him.

This conversation—a very curious one, Arthur thought, to himself afterward, for two young people on a spring morning—having come to an end, nothing more was said for some while, and they took their way down the hill, varying the route in order to pass through the little Hamlet of Bratham. Under a chestnut-tree that stood upon the village green Arthur noticed, not a village blacksmith, but a small crowd, mostly composed of children, gathered round somebody. On going to see who it was, he discovered a battered looking old man, with an intellectual face, and the remnants of a gentleman-like appearance, playing on the violin. A very few touches of his bow told Arthur, who knew something of music, that he was in the presence of a performer of no mean merit. Seeing the quality of his two auditors, and that they appreciated his performance, the player changed his music, and from a village jig, passed to one of the more difficult opera airs, which he executed in brilliant fashion.

"Bravo!" cried Arthur, as the last notes thrilled and died away; "I see you understand how to play the fiddle."

"Yes, sir, and so I should, for I have played first violin at Her Majesty's Opera before now. Name what you like, and I will play it you. Or, if you like it better, you shall hear the water running in a brook, the wind passing through the trees, or the waves falling on the beach. Only say the word."

Arthur thought for a moment. "It is a beautiful day, let us have a contrast—give us the music of a storm."

The old man considered awhile. "I understand, but you set a difficult subject even for me," and, taking up his bow made several attempts at beginning. "I can't do it," he said, "set something else."

"No, no, try again; that or nothing."

Again he started, and this time his genius took possession of him. The notes fell very softly at first, but with an ominous sound, then rose and wailed like the rising of the wind. Next the music came in gusts, the rain pattered, and the thunder roared, till at length the tempest seemed to spend its force, and passed slowly away into the distance.

"There, sir, what do you say to that—have I fulfilled your expectations?"

"Write it down, and it will be one of the finest pieces of violin music in the country."

"Write it down! The divine 'afflatus' is not to be caged, sir; it comes and goes. I could never write that music down."

Arthur felt in his pockets without answering, and found five shillings. "If you will accept this?" he said.

"Thank you, sir, very much. I am gladder of five shillings now than I once was of as many pounds," and he rose to go.

"A man of your talent should not be wandering about like this."

"I must earn a living somehow,

for all Talleyrand's witticisms to the contrary," was the curious reply.

"Have you no friends?" "No, sir; this is my only friend, all the rest have deserted me," and he tapped his violin and was gone.

"Lord, sir," said a farmer, who was standing by, "he's gone to get drunk; he is the biggest old drunkard in the country-side, and yet they do say that he was a gentleman once, and the best fiddler in London; but he can't be depended on, so no one will hire him now."

"How sad!" said Angela, as they moved homeward.

"Yes, and what music that was; I never heard any with such imagination before. You have a turn that way, Angela; you should try to put it into words, it would make a poem."

"I complain, like the old man, that you set a difficult subject," she said; "but I will try, if you will promise not to laugh at the result."

"If you succeed on paper only half so well as he did on the violin, your verses will be worth listening to, and I certainly shall not laugh."

CHAPTER XXV.

On the day following the somewhat curious religious conversation between Arthur and Angela—a conversation which began on Arthur's part out of curiosity, and ended on both sides very much in earnest—the weather broke up and the grand old English climate reasserted its treacherous supremacy. From summer weather the inhabitants of the country of Marlshire suddenly found themselves plunged into a spell of cold that was by contrast, almost arctic. Storms of sleet drove against the window-panes, and there was even a very damaging night frost, while that dreadful scourge which nobody in his senses, except Kingsley, can ever have liked, the east wind, literally pervaded the whole place, and went whistling through the surrounding trees and ruins in a way calculated to make even a Laplander shiver.

Under these cheerless circumstances our pair of companions—for as yet they were, ostensibly at any rate, nothing more—gave up their outdoor excursions and took to rambling over the disused rooms in the old house, and hunting up many a record, some of them valuable and curious enough, of long-forgotten Caresfoots, and even of the old priors before them; a splendidly illuminated missal being among the latter prizes. When this amusement was exhausted, they sat together over the fire in the nursery, and Angela translated to him from her favorite classical authors, especially Homer, with a fluency of expression that, to Arthur, was little short of miraculous. Or, when they got tired of that, he read to her from standard writers, which, in certain respects, she had scarcely yet even opened, notably Shakespeare and Milton. Needless to say, herself imbued with a strong poetic feeling, these immortal writers were a source of intense delight to her.

"How is it that Mr. Fraser never gave you Shakespeare to read?" Arthur asked one day, as he shut up the volume, having come to the end of "Hamlet."

"He said that I should be better able to appreciate it, when my mind had been prepared to do so by the help of a classical and mathematical education, and that it would be a mistake to cloy my mental palate with sweets before I had learned to appreciate their flavors."

"There is some sense in that," remarked Arthur. "By the way, how are the verses you promised to write me getting on?" Have you done them yet?"

"I have done something," she answered modestly; "but I really do not think that they are worth producing. It is very tiresome of you to remember about them."

Arthur, however, by this time, knew enough of Angela's abilities to be sure that her "something" would be something more or less worth hearing, and mildly insisted on their production, and then, to her confusion, on her reading them aloud. They ran as follows, and whatever Angela's opinion of them may have been, the reader shall judge of them for himself.

A STORM ON THE STRINGS.

"The minstrel sat in his lonely room, Its walls were bare, and the twilight gray Fell and crept and gathered to gloom;

It came like the ghost of the dying day; And the chords fell hushed and low. Pianissimo!

"His arm was raised, and the violin Quivered and shook with the strain it bore,

While the swelling forth of the sounds within, Rose with a sweetness unknown before, And the chords fell soft and low. Piano!

"The first cold flap of the tempest's wings, Clashed with the silence before the storm, The rain-drops pattered across the strings

As the gathering thunder-clouds took form— Drip, drop, high and low. Staccato!

"Heavily rolling, the thunder roared, Sudden and jagged the lightning played,

Faster and faster, the rain-drops poured, Sobbing and surging the tree-crests awayed,

Cracking and crashing, above, below. Crescendo!

"The wind tore howling across the void, And tangled his train in the groaning trees,

Wrapped the dense clouds in his mantle cold, Then shivered and died in a wailing breeze,

Whistling and sweeping high and low. Sostenuo!

"A pale sun broke from the driving cloud, And flashed on the rain-drops serenely, cool:

At the touch of his finger the forest bowed, As it shimmered and glanced in the ruffled pool,

While the rustling leaves sougled soft and low. Gracioso!

"It was only a dream on the throbbing strings, An echo of Nature in fantasy wrought,

A breath of her breath and a touch of her wings From a kingdom outspread in the regions of thought,

Below rolled the sound of the city's din And the fading day, as the night drew in,

Showed the quaint old face and the pointed chin, And the arm that was raised o'er the violin,

As the old man whispered his hope's dead tale To the friend who could comfort, though others might fail,

And the chords stole hushed and low. Pianissimo!"

He stopped, and the sheet of paper fell from his hands. "Well," she said, with all the eagerness of a new-born writer, "tell me, do you think them very bad?"

"Well, Angela, you know—"

"Ah! go on now; I am ready to be crushed. Pray don't spare my feeling."

"I was about to say that, thanks be to Providence, I am not a critic; but I think—"

"Oh! yes, let me hear what you think. You are speaking so slowly, in order to get time to invent something extra cutting. Well, I deserve it."

"Don't interrupt; I was going to say that I think the piece above the average of second-class poetry, and that a few of the lines touch the first-class standard. You have caught something of the 'divine afflatus' that the drunken old fellow said he could not cage. But I do not think that you will ever be popular as a writer of verses if you keep to that style; I doubt if there is a magazine in the kingdom that would take those lines unless they were by a known writer. They would return them marked, 'Good, but too vague for the general public. Magazine editors don't like lines from a kingdom outspread in the regions of thought,' for, as they say, such poems are apt to excite vagueness in the brains of that dim entity, the 'general public.' What they do like are commonplace ideas, put in pretty language, and sweetened with sentimentality or emotional religious feelings, such as the thinking powers of their subscribers are competent to absorb without mental strain, and without leaving their accustomed channels. To be popular it is necessary to be commonplace or at least to describe the commonplace to work in a well-worn groove and not to startle—requirements which, unfortunately, simple as they seem very few persons possess the art of acting up to. See what happens to the unfortunate novelist, for instance, who dares to break the unwritten law, and defraud his readers of the orthodox transformation scene of the reward of virtue and discomfiture of vice; or to make his creation finish up in a way that, however well it may be suited to its tenor, or illustrate its more subtle meaning, is contrary to the 'general reader's' idea as to how it should end—badly, as it is called. He simply collapses to rise no more, if he is new at the trade, and if he is a known man, that book won't sell."

"You talk quite feelingly," said Angela who was getting rather bored, and wanted, not unnaturally to hear more about her own lines.

"Yes," replied Arthur grimly, "I do. Once I was fool enough to write a book, but I must tell you that it is a painful subject with me. It never came out. Nobody would have it."

"Oh! Arthur, I am so sorry; I should like to read your book. But as regards the verses, I am glad that you like them, and I really don't care what a hypothetical general public would say; I wrote them to please you, not the general public."

"Well, my dear, I am sure I am much obliged to you; I shall value them doubly, once for the giver's sake and once for their own."

Angela blushed, but did not reprove the term of endearment which had slipped unawares from his lips. Poetry is a dangerous subject between two young people who at heart adore one another; it is apt to excite the brain, and bring about startling revelations.

The day following the reading of Angela's piece of poetry was rendered remarkable by two events of which the first was that the weather suddenly turned a somersault, and became beautifully warm; and the second that news reached the Abbey House that, thanks chiefly to Lady Bellamy's devoted nursing—who, fearless of infection, had, to the great admiration of all her neighbors, volunteered her services when no nurse could be found to undertake the case—George was pronounced out of danger. This piece of news was peculiarly grateful to Philip for, had his cousin died, the estates must have passed away forever under the terms of his uncle's will, for he knew that George had made none. Angela, too, tried, like a good girl as she was, to lash herself into enthusiasm about it, though in her heart she went as near hating her cousin, since his attempted indignity toward herself, as her gentle nature would allow. Arthur alone was cynically indifferent;

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he hated George without any reservation whatsoever.

And after this there came for our pair of embryo lovers some ten or twelve such happy days, for there was no talk of Arthur's departure, Philip having on several occasions pointedly told him that the house was at his disposal for as long as he chose to remain in it. The sky was blue in those days, or only flecked with summer clouds, just as Arthur and Angela's perfect companionship was flecked and shaded with the deeper hues of dawning passion. Alas, the sky in this terrestrial clime is never quite blue!

But as yet nothing of love had passed between them, no kiss or word of endearment; only when hand touched hand a strange thrill had moved them both, and sent the warm blood to stain Angela's clear brow, like a wavering tint of sunlight thrown upon the marble features of some white Venus; only in each other's eyes they found a holy mystery. The spell was not yet fully at work, but the wand of earth's great enchanter had touched them, and they were changed. Angela is hardly the same girl she was when we met her a little more than a fortnight back. A nameless change has come over her face and manner; the merry smile, once so bright, has grown softer and more sweet, and the laughing light of her gray eyes has given place to a look of some such gratitude and wonder, as that with which the traveler in lonely deserts gazes on the oasis of his perfect rest.

Many times Arthur had almost blurted out the truth to the woman he passionately adored, and every day so added to the suppressed fire of his love that at length he felt that he could not keep his secret to himself much longer. And yet he feared to tell it; better, he thought, to live happy, if in doubt, than to risk all his fortune on a single throw, for before his eyes there lay the black dread of failure; and then what would life be worth? Here with Angela he lived in a Garden of Eden that no forebodings no anxieties, no fear of that partially scorched serpent George, could render wretched, so long as it was gladdened by the presence of her whom he hoped to make his Eve. But without, and around where she could not be, there was nothing but clouds and thistles and a black desolation that, even in imagination, he dared not face.

And Angela, gazing on veiled mysteries with wondering eyes, was happy during those spring-tide days! Almost; but still there was in her heart a consciousness of effort, a sense of transformation and knowledge of the growth of hidden things. The bud bursting into the glory of the rose must, if there be feeling in a rose, undergo some such effort before it can make its beauty known; the butterfly, but newly freed from the dull husk that hid its splendors at first must feel the imperfect wings it stretches in the sun to be irksome to its unaccustomed sense. And so it was with Angela; she spread her half-grown wings in the sun of her new existence, and found them strange, not knowing as yet that they were shaped to bear her to the flower-crowned heights of love.

Here was one of those rare natures in which the passion that we know by the generic term of love approached, as near perfection, as is possible in our human hearts. For there are many sorts and divisions of love ranging from the affection, pure, steady, and divine, that is showered upon us from above, to the degrading madness of such a one as George Caresfoot. It is surely one of the saddest evidences of our poor humanity that, even among the purest of us, there are none who can altogether rid the whiteness of the love they have to offer of its earthly stain. Indeed, if we could so far conquer the promptings of our nature as to love with perfect purity, we should become like angels. But, just as white flowers are sometimes to be found on the blackest peak, so there do bloom in the world spirits as pure as they are rare—so free from evil, so closely shadowed by the Almighty wing, that they can almost reach to this perfect-

tion. Then the love they have to give is too refined, too holy and strong, to be understood of the mass of men; often it is squandered on some unequal and unanswering nature; sometimes it is wisely offered up to Him from whom it came.

We gaze upon an ice-bound river, and there is nothing to tell us that beneath that white cloak its current rushes to the ocean. But presently the spring comes, the prisoned waters burst their fetters, and we see a glad torrent sparkling in the sunlight. And so it was with our heroine's heart; the breath of Arthur's passion and the light of Arthur's eyes had beat upon it, and almost freed the river of its love. Already the listener might hear the ice-sheets crack and start; soon they will be gone, and her deep devotion will set as strong toward him as the tide of the torrent towards its receiving sea.

"Fine writing!" perhaps the reader will say; but surely none too fine to describe the most beautiful thing in this strange world, the irrevocable gift of a good woman's love!

However that may be, it will have served its purpose if it makes it clear that a crisis is at hand in the affairs of the heart of two of the central actors on this mimic stage.

(To Be Continued.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

A Few Paragraphs Which May Prove Worth Reading.

Knives, when intended for sale in India, are usually made with rings in the handles. The natives carry them tied to their girdles.

The salary of Postmaster E. T. Page, of Redwater, Texas, does not keep pace with the increase of his family. On two occasions his wife presented him with twins and once with quadruplets.

The Shah of Persia's horses are made unusually conspicuous by having their tails dyed crimson at the tips, for a length of six inches. Only he and his sons are permitted to thus ornament their horses.

Stiles McMellan, of St. Albans, Vt., is 101 years old, and has never been sick a day in his life. He began to smoke in his 41st year, and has continued the habit ever since. He is now cutting his third set of teeth.

The postal savings banks of Great Britain had on deposit at the close of last year, £108,049,642. The depositors numbered 6,862,035, and over one-half of them were maids, married women, widows and children.

The Speaker of the House of Commons recently declined to receive a typewritten communication, on the ground that it was an infringement of the rules, as all communications to Parliament must be pen-written or lithographed.

Sealskin garments are likely to advance in price, in Behring Sea, this season, only 16,650 seals were caught, which number is 12,850 less than were captured last year. British vessels caught 15,600 this year, and American vessels only 1,050.

An underground tank, for the storage of wine, has been cut in the side of a rocky mountain at Asti, California. The bottom and sides are cemented and glazed. It is 104 feet long, 34 feet wide, and 24 feet high, and has a capacity of 500,000 gallons.

A shocking death was met by D. R. Fleming, an employe in the Union Iron Works at Youngstown, O. A rod of red-hot iron was in some unexplained manner released from his tongs, and penetrated his breast, passing out between his shoulders.

A tidy railroad brakeman in Rutland, Vt., after cleaning his vest with gasoline, struck a match to light his pipe. A spark set the vest ablaze, and even his whiskers took fire. A comrade extinguished the flame by throwing in a coat about the blazing man.

Charles Richmond fell asleep in a paper mill at Neenah, Wis., and some tricksters painted his face with red and blue aniline. When he awoke his visage was like that of an Indian in war paint. The doctors say that it will be many months before the dye will wear off.

Fifty years ago, Mrs. Lucretia M. Judson was a favorite vocalist in Portland, Me. She lost her voice soon after her marriage, and for forty years was unable to sing. While visiting a friend in North Castine, a few weeks since, she unwittingly sang a song when asleep, and has frequently done so during subsequent slumbers. In her waking hours she cannot warble a dozen notes.

England has just shuffled about a large number of her colonial Governors. Sir Harry Blake, for nine years Captain-General and Governor of Jamaica, is sent to Hong Kong, and is succeeded by Sir Augustus Hemming, the Colonial Office permanent official, sent to govern British Guiana on account of his knowledge of the Venezuelan difficulty. Sir Walter Sendaull goes from Cyprus to Guiana. Sir W. Haynes Smith from the Bahamas to Cyprus and Sir Gilbert Carter from Lagos, in West Africa, becomes the new Governor of the Bahama Islands.

A HUSTLING WOMAN.

Mrs. Watts—That Simonstee woman is a perfect fiend!

Mr. Watts—I always thought her so gentle and refined.

Mrs. Watts—Oh, she is among your men, but what do you think of a woman who will wear her little boy's baseball shoes to a bargain rush and spike every woman who gets in her way?

High for... Wis... All a H... per We... Tra... Big... Fro... Fa... all... Hors... Cutt... Grain... We... Sewi... and... Also... Woods... Insu... rate... and... Show R... Joh... Lower T... CHRI... FRES... Variet... includ... TEAS... RAISI... NUTS... In Cl... We... made... class st... tweeds... lar, an... Price... Insp... S. SC