

UNITED AT LAST

BY
MISS M E BRADDOON



CHAPTER XVI.
WORRY FILLS THE ROOM UP OF MY ABSENT CHILD."

Sir Cyprian had told himself that, in coming to Marchbrook, nothing was further from his thoughts than the desire to see Constance Sinclair; yet now that he was so near her, now that he was assured of her unhappiness, the yearning for one brief meeting, one look into the sweet eyes, one pressure of the gentle hand that used to lie so trustingly in his own, grew upon him hourly, until he fo that he could not leave Marchbrook without seeing her. No motive, no thought that could have shadowed the purity of Gilbert Sinclair's wife, had his soul's desire been published to the world, blended with this yearning of Sir Cyprian's. Deepest pity and compassion moved him. Such sorrow, such loneliness as Constance Sinclair's was unutterably sacred to the man who had loved and surrendered Constance Claryarde.

Sir Cyprian lingered at Marchbrook, and spent the greater part of his days in riding or walking over familiar scenes. He was too much out of house. Every night Sir Cyprian made up his mind to depart next morning, yet when morning came he still lingered.

One bright bleak day, when there were flying snowstorms and intervals of sun and blue sky, Sir Cyprian, having actually packed his portmanteau and made arrangements for being driven to the station to catch an afternoon train—took a final ramble in Marchbrook park. He had not once put his foot on the soil that had been his, but he could get a peep at the old place across the railings. There was a melancholy pleasure in looking at those wintry glades, the young fir-trees, the scudding rabbits, the screaming pheasants, the withered bracken.

The sun had been shining a few minutes ago. Down came the snow in a thick driving shower, almost blinding Sir Cyprian as he walked swiftly along the oak fence. Presently he found himself at the end of the Monks' avenue, and under the classic temple which was said to be built upon the very spot where the Benedictines once had their chapel.

Ten years ago that temple had been Cyprian Davenant's summer retreat. He had made it his smoking-room and study; had read Thucydides and the Greek dramatists there in the long vacation; had read those books of modern travel which had fired his mind with a longing for the adventures perils and triumphs of the African explorer. Twenty years ago it had been his mother's chosen resort. He had spent many a summer morning, many a pensive twilight there by his mother's side, watching her sketch or hearing her play. The old-fashioned square piano was there still, perhaps, and the wretched engravings on the walls.

"Poor old place," he thought; "I wonder if any one ever goes there now, or if it is quite given up to bats and owls, and the spirits of the dead?"

He stopped under the stone balcony which overhung Marchbrook, on a level with the eight-foot wall. In Gilbert Sinclair's—or his architect's—plan of improvements this classic summer-house, a relic of a departed taste, had been forgotten. Sir Cyprian was glad to find it unchanged, unchanged in any wise, save that it had a more forlorn and neglected air than of old. The stone-work of the balcony was green and gray with mosses and lichens. The frame-work of the window had not been painted for a quarter of a century. The ivy had wandered as it listed over brick-work and stone, darting sharp-forked tongues of green into the crevices of the decaying mortar. Sir Cyprian looked up at the well-remembered window, all of thoughts of the past.

"Does she ever come here, I wonder?" he said to himself; "or do they use the old place for a tool-house or an apple she?"

Hardly, for there fell upon his ears a few bars of plaintive symphony, played on a piano of ancient tone—the pensive Broadwood dear to his childhood—and then a voice, the pure and sweet contralto he knew well, began Lord Houghton's pathetic ballad, "Strangers Yet."

He listened as if he lived but to hear.

Oh, what pathos, what profound melancholy in that voice, pouring out its sweetnes to the silent wall! Regret, remorse, sorrow, too great for common language to express, are breathed in that flood of melody. And when the song is done the singer's hands fall on the keys in crashing chord, and a wild cry—the sudden utterance of uncontrollable despair—goes up to heaven.

She is there—so near him—alone in her anguish. She, the only woman he has ever truly loved, the woman for whom he would give his life; freely as he would spill a cup of water upon the ground, and with a little thought of the sacrifice.

The lower edge of the balcony is within reach of his hand. The century-old ivy would afford easy footing for a less skilful athlete. To climb the ascent is as simple as to mount the rigging of his yacht.

"Pepper, the gray one," cried Con-

stance, absolutely smiling; "such a dear pony! We used to feed him with bread and apples every morning. Ah, what happy days those were!"

It touched him to the core of his heart to see the old girlish look come back in all its brightness. But it was only a transient gleam of the old light which left a deeper sadness when it faded.

"Good-bye, Constance," he said, taking both her hands. "I may call you for the last time."

"Yes, and when you are in Africa—in another world, far from all the false pretences and sham pleasures that make up life in this—think of me as Constance the Constance you knew in the days that are gone—not as Gilbert Sincar's wife."

He bent his head over the unresisting hands and kissed them.

"God bless you and comfort you, my Constance, and give you as much happiness as I lost when I made up my mind to live without you!"

He opened the window, and swung himself lightly down from the balcony to the turf below.

CHAPTER XVI.

A BALCONY SCENE.

Gilbert Sinclair and his chosen set—the ha'f-dozen turf gentlemen with whom he was united by the closest bond of sympathy—had spent this December morning agreeably enough at a rustic steeple-chase nine miles from Davenant. The race was an event of the most insignificant order—unchronicled in Ruff—but there was pleasure in the drive to and fro on Mr. Sincar's drag through the keen frosty air, with an occasional diversion in the shape of a flying snow storm, which whitened the men's rough overcoats, and hung on their beards and whiskers.

Just at the hour in which Sir Cyprian and Constance were bidding each other a long good-by, Mr. Sincar was driving his sorrel team back to Davenant at a slashing pace. He and his friends had enjoyed themselves very thoroughly at the homely farmers' meeting. The sharp north wind had given a keen edge to somewhat jaded appetites, and game pie, anchovy sandwiches, cold grouse, and toad's head had been duly appreciated, with an ad libitum accompaniment of dry champagne, bitter beer, and Copenhagen kirschen wasser.

The gentlemen's spirits had been improved by the morning's sport, and taste for ladies' society. The more masculine spirits preferred to smoke their Trabuccas or Infantas by the hearth-room fire, with the chance of getting the "straight tip" out of somebody else's groom.

James Wyatt was the only member of the party whose spirits were not somewhat unduly elated, but then Mr. Wyatt was an outsider, only admitted on sufferance into that chosen band, as a fellow who might be useful on an emergency, and whom it was well to "square" by an occasional burst of civility. He was one of those dangerous men who are always sober, and find out everybody else's weak points without ever revealing his own. He was Sinclair's amanuensis, however, and one must put up with him.

Gilbert was driving, with Sir Thomas Houndslow, a gentleman of turf celebrity, and late captain of a cavalry regiment, next him, smoking furiously, while Mr. Wyatt sat behind the two, and joined freely in their conversation, which inclined to the boisterous. How calm that smooth, level voice of his sounded after the strident tones of his companions, thickened eve so slightly by champagne and kirschen wasse!

The chief talk was of horses—the sorrels Gilbert was now driving—the horses they had seen that morning—with an inexhaustible series of anecdote about horses that had been bought and sold at a great price, and exchanged, including the story of a rare-tire horse, which was a splendid gelding in his intervals of good health, and was periodically sold by his owner, and taken back again at half price when the fit came on.

James Wyatt admired the landscape, an enthusiasm which his companions looked down upon contemptuously from the serene height of stolid indifference. "There's a glade!" cried the sooty tor, pointing to an opening in the undulating woodland, where the snow-wreathed trees were like a picture of fairy-land.

"Pretty tidy timber," assented Sir Thomas Houndslow; "but for my part, I could never say anything in these to go into raptures about, except when you've sold 'em to a timber merchant. Shouldn't like to see cremation come into fashion, by the by. It would spoil the coffin trade and depreciate the value of my elms and oaks."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Circumstances Alter Cases.

"As a general thing," said a man, "it is an annoyance to have anybody sitting alongside of you or back of you look over at the paper you are reading; still, it makes a difference who it is. I have seen a man who was reading a paper, and held it carefully so that another person could read it. I saw a case of this sort the other day in a railroad car. A lady who had been sitting looking out of the window leaned forward suddenly to look at something in the newspaper, which the gentleman in the seat in front of her was reading. He had just turned a page, and something on the fresh page caught her eye. It appeared to interest her greatly. It was a long article, and she could not have read more than half of it if the gentleman had not moved the paper a little to one side, which he did apparently quite unconsciously, keeping on reading all the time himself and holding the paper very steady. At last the lady finished the article that she was reading. With a sigh she leaned back in her seat again and looked out of the window once more, all the time quite oblivious of the man. He didn't flop the paper over as though the end of an episode had come; he looked again at one or two articles on that page, and then turned to the next one, just as though nothing had happened."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

How It Was Done.

The flute took its name from the flute, an eel caught in Italian waters, which has seven spots like finger holes on its sides.

"Yes, I have spent many an hour here, puzzling over the choruses in 'Prometheus,' and I have looked up from my book to see you scamper by on your pony."

"Pepper, the gray one," cried Con-

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

THE DIVINE DISCUSSES ANOTHER UNIQUE SUBJECT.

He says the Effect All Depends Upon When We Laugh and What We Laugh At—David's Smile and Sarah's Laughter—Five Prayerful Wishes and a Blessing.

Lessons of a Laugh.

Rev. Dr. Talmage, who is now in Australia on his round the world journey, has selected as the subject for his sermon through the press "Laughter," the text being taken from Psalm cxvi, 2, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter," and Psalm ii, 4, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh."

Thirty-eight times does the Bible

make reference to this configuration of the features and quick expulsion of breath which we call laughter. Sometimes it is born of the sunshine and sometimes the midnight. Sometimes it stirs the sympathies of angels, and sometimes the cacklings of devils. All healthy people laugh. Whether it pleases the Lord or displeases Him, that depends upon when we laugh and at what we laugh. My theme to-day is the laughter of the Bible—namely, Sarah's laugh, or that of skepticism; David's laugh, or that of spiritual elevation; the fool's laugh, or that of sinful merriment; God's laugh, or that of infinite condemnation; heaven's laugh, or that of eternal triumph.

Sarah's Mistaken Laugh.

Scene, an oriental tent: the occupants, old Abraham and Sarah, perhaps wrinkled and decrepit. Their three guests are three angels—the Lord Almighty one of them. In return for the hospitality shown by the old people God promises Sarah that she shall become the ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sarah laughs in the face of God. She does not believe it. She is affrighted at what she has done. She denies it. She says, "I didn't laugh." Then God retorted with an emphasis that silenced all disputation, "But you did laugh!" My friends, the laugh of skepticism, in all ages, is only the echo of Sarah's laughter. God says He will accomplish a thing, and men say it cannot be done. A great multitude laugh at the

miracle of the lame foot or a curved spine, or a blind eye, or a deaf ear—will be met with the judgments of God either upon you, or upon your children.

Twenty years ago I knew a man who was particularly skillful in imitating the lameness of a neighbor. Not long ago a son of the skillful mimic had his leg amputated for the very defect which his father had mimicked years before. I do not say it was a judgment of God. I leave you to make your own inference.

So all merriment born of dissipation, that which starts at the counter of the drinking restaurant or from the wineglass in the home circle, the maudlin simper, the meaningless joke, the saturnalian gibberish, the paroxysm of mirth about nothing which you sometimes see in the fashionable clubroom or the exquisite parlors at 12 o'clock at night, are the crackling of thorns under a pot. Such laughter and such sin end in death.

Laughing at Bible Truths.

That was Sarah's trick. God thunders from the heavens, "But thou didst laugh!" The garden of Eden was only a fable. There never was any ark built or if it was built it was too small to have two of every kind. The pillar of fire by night was only the northern lights, the ten plagues of Egypt only a brilliant specimen of jugglery. The sea parted because the wind blew violently a great while from one direction. The sun and moon did not put themselves out of the way, for Joshua. Jacob's ladder was only horizontal and pictures no clouds. The destroying angel smiting the firstborn in Egypt was only cholera infantum become epidemic. The gullet of the whale, by positive measurement, was too small to swallow a prophet, the story of the immaculate conception a shock to all decency. The lame, the dumb, the blind, the halt, cured by mere human surgery. The resurrection of Christ's friend only a beautiful tableau, Christ and Lazarus and Mary and Martha acting their part well.

My friends, there is not a doctrine or statement of God's holy word that has not been derided by the skepticism of the day. I take up this book of King James' translation. I consider it a perfect Bible, but here are skeptics who want it torn to pieces. And now, with this Bible in my hand, let me tear out all those portions which the skepticism of this day demands shall be torn out. What shall go first? "Well," says one in the audience, "take out all that about the creation and about the first settlement of the world." Away goes Genesis. "Now," says one, "take out all that about the sun and the moon, the miraculous guidance of the children of Israel in the wilderness." Away goes Exodus. "Now," says one in the audience, "there are things in Deuteronomy and Kings that are not fit to be read." Away goes Deuteronomy and the Kings. "Now," says one, "the book of Job is a fable that ought to come out." Away goes the book of Job. 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