

AT WAR WITH HERSELF.

The Story of a Woman's Atonement,
by Charlotte M. Braeme.

CHAPTER XLII—Continued.
She had not lain long before she heard the sound of footsteps; then the door of her room opened, and Ethel Dacre entered—Ethel, with a light, determined resolve. She set the lamp that she carried in her hand down on the table, and went up to Leonie. She knelt down by the bedside, and placed her hand on the hot brow.

"Leonie," she whispered, "Leonie, my darling, I could not help coming to you, as we parted to-night. We are, both of us, motherless—we have neither of us a sister—and we have been a great deal to each other. I could not retire in anger, Leonie, because I love you so dearly."

The note of face softened into unutterable tenderness as she bent over the angry girl.

"I know you are not pleased with me," she continued, in the same low voice. "If you were but an indifferent acquaintance, your right or wrong doing would not seem important to me; but you are my dearest friend, Leonie, and I cannot see you acting dishonestly without coming to plead with you."

"I hope you will spare me all preaching, Ethel. I had quite enough of that this morning."

"I want to plead with you, not to preach to you," said Ethel. "You shall not harden your heart against me, Leonie; you shall not turn coldly from me. I love you and by right of my love you must hear me."

"I cannot really see what it matters to you," said Leonie. "How does it concern you? You can have no interest in the inheritance."

"Do not speak to me so, Leonie; my interest is in you, and in your soul; it is for your soul's sake that I come to plead with you now."

"I can take care of my soul myself," said Leonie, abruptly.

"You can, but will you do so? Let me tell you, as your own sister might speak: try to think that I am your sister, Leonie, and then you will have more patience with me. My darling, right and wrong are so clearly marked out for you—do not mistake them. Believe me, unless you give up this inheritance which never was yours, you will be unhappy all your life; you will never know peace or rest again; you will even despise yourself. Honor and honesty both call upon you to give it up."

"Then they call in vain, Ethel, for I shall never do so."

"You will. I have more faith in you than you have in yourself; you will do right in the end. It is a terrible temptation—I admit that. Because you love luxury and magnificence so dearly—because you love all that wealth brings—it is a great temptation; but, Leonie, there is something far above all this."

"That is preaching, Ethel."

Miss Dacre bent over the fair face; she looked tenderly at the rare perfection of its loveliness.

"You are so beautiful, Leonie," she murmured; "your soul should match your face. See, my darling, there are two paths before you: have patience with me while I sketch them."

"I must listen, I suppose," said Leonie, resignedly.

"Yes, you must listen, Leonie. Suppose you do what is right—you give up to Paul Fleming, before your marriage, land, and title the late Earl meant to leave him. Before God and man you will then have done a just and honorable deed; and what will you be the worse for it? Your husband—who will never know of this argument—will admire you as the most loyal of women, and people will have faith in you because you have proved yourself capable of being honest at any cost to yourself. I can see naught in which you can suffer, but in every respect you will gain. You will have a fair, brave, good man and a clear, bright, brave soul before heaven. Oh, Leonie, think what that means; think what it is to have the clear light of heaven on you to live so that you may find a home in that better land. There is the other path. You may, with perhaps some show of legality on your side, keep this inheritance; you may humiliate the man you are going to marry by giving him everything, which in reality he ought to give to you; but I say to you that in doing so you imperil your own soul. Leonie, those are not light words. Suppose that half of England were yours, and that a wonderful extension of life were given to you—that you were allowed to live over a hundred years—you must die at last, when, then, would it matter to you whether you had been rich or poor? The great concern would be to have saved your soul. Leonie, can you say honestly that you are not trying to save your soul when it is weighed down by such a sin as this? Can you find with the hour of death must be for one who has lived a life of fraud? You know that if you keep this which is not your own, you can never honestly raise your head among your fellow-creatures; you will be burdened with a sin of wrong-doing and misery that can never leave you."

"Ethel, you are wasting your time," said Leonie.

"No, I do not think so. You turn from me proudly now; you refuse to listen to me; you despise all that I am saying—but you will remember my words, for all that, Leonie. You will remember that I, who love you with a deep, true, disinterested love, have knelt here to pray you for your soul's sake to act rightly and honorably. Leonie, I have another idea about you; if I am wrong forgive me. I have fainted from your manner, from your feverish restlessness, from your craving for excitement—I have fainted, Leonie, that this is not strange to you that you had perhaps found the will and had hidden it."

A low moan answered her. When she looked at the white face, she saw that Leonie lay in a dead swoon.

"Was I too hard upon her?" murmured Ethel. "Oh, no! Heaven knows that I have only told her the truth."

CHAPTER XLII.

"You are not angry with me, Leonie?" said Ethel Dacre, when the violet eyes unclosed at last, and Leonie looked round with a half-wondered air.

"No, I am not angry—leave me, Ethel. I cannot hear any more; you try me beyond my strength."

Nor would she listen to another word. In sheer despair Miss Dacre went away at last; there was nothing now to trust to save time and prayer. If prayer would save the unhappy girl, then Ethel Dacre would pray earnestly. Meanwhile Leonie—sick, shuddering, her heart full of dread and fear—lay watching for the dawn.

"She will betray me—she will tell every one what she suspects. Is it possible that I shall ever be found out?" The very thought made her whole soul grow sick with fear. "Found out"—she whispered the words to herself—"found out to be a thief!"

She would fain have annihilated time and space, so eager was her desire to take hold of the will and destroy it. Nothing could affect her if that

were once destroyed; no human being could give evidence against her, and she should live and die Countess of Charlleigh. Ethel Dacre might betray her—she might tell the story of the letter—she might even whisper her suspicions about the will; what mattered it all when nothing—absolutely nothing—could be proved against her?

She laughed aloud—a harsh, discordant laugh—terrible to hear from the lips of one so young and fair.

"I have imperiled my soul," she said, "I have sacrificed my love, and have saved the man I love to exile and death; surely the small matter of losing the esteem of my fellow-creatures cannot hurt me after all that. It is the last sacrifice I have to make. Goodness, love, honor, honesty—all are gone; self-respect may follow them, the esteem and good opinion of my kind go with it, but I shall live and die Countess of Charlleigh."

Suddenly across the dull gray of the morning sky she saw a gleam of gold, and then she sprang up, knowing that the morning had dawned. She changed the white muslin wrapper that she wore for dark traveling dress, and then she did so. Florette gently opened the door. She brought a cup of tea and a fresh roll to her lady. Leonie eagerly drank the tea, but did not touch the roll.

"Try to eat something, my lady," said the girl, "you will faint."

Then came to Leonie a dull wonder as to whether she should ever eat again; her heart was like lead within her, her face pale, her hands trembled so that she could not fasten her cloak.

"We will walk to the nearest cabin," she said. "Open the door quietly, Leonie; I do not want to disturb anyone."

So in the early dawn of the summer morning, Leonie left a magnificent home, where she had lived so brilliantly, to commit one of the most treacherous of crimes.

Florette asked no question; yet she wondered what this sudden journey meant—she wondered why her lady's face was so sternly set and white—why the pale lips were so rigid and compressed.

Crown Leighton was reached at last. Great were the surprise and bewilderment of the whole household at seeing their lady. No one could understand it. Leonie asked at once for Mrs. Fearon, and, more than half bewildered, the housekeeper entered her presence.

"You are surprised to see me here so early," she said. "We cannot spare many hours from London now, so I came by first train, and shall return perhaps this evening."

"I will do my best to carry out your wishes, my lady," said the woman; "and you will not find the house in bad order. Shall I prepare some breakfast for you?"

"No." Leonie could neither eat or drink again until that will was destroyed.

She went to the room, almost dreading to look in the hiding place lost the will should be gone. She locked the door, and then went with trembling, faltering steps to the place where she had hidden the document.

It was safe; a little cry escaped her when she saw it again. She took the cause of all her misery in her hands.

"You have cost me my love, and you may cost me heaven," she said; "I will destroy you. You shall cost me no more."

But how was she to destroy it?

"If I were to tie it up with a stone, and throw it into the sea," she said to herself, "it might rise again. I will burn it—I will watch the smoke from its ashes curl in the air—I will watch the ashes disperse in the wind; then, in my own right, I shall know that I am Countess Charlleigh of Crown Leighton."

How dared she to burn it? If she carried it down into the servants' quarters, and threw it into the sea, she said to herself, "it might rise again. I will burn it—I will watch the smoke from its ashes curl in the air—I will watch the ashes disperse in the wind; then, in my own right, I shall know that I am Countess Charlleigh of Crown Leighton."

How dared she to burn it? If she carried it down into the servants' quarters, and was seen to do it into the fire, rumour might rise and tell against her. She must destroy it here in her own room, unknown by all.

"One more falsehood and I shall be free," she said to herself, as she rang the bell.

Mrs. Fearon answered it—the maid was resting after her journey—and looked somewhat aghast when her lady asked for a fire.

"A fire?" repeated the housekeeper, as she looked from the beautiful, restless, feverish face to the glowing sun outside. "If you do not think it too warm—" she said to herself, as she rang the bell.

"I have taken cold—I am cold," said Leonie, and the shudder with which she uttered these words gave them the semblance of truth.

"Early rising is not good for you, my lady," decided the woman; "I will light the fire for you myself."

A few more minutes and a bright fire was blazing in the grate, contrasting oddly with the glowing sun and sultry warmth of the June day.

"I will ring if I want you," said Leonie to the housekeeper, and then she locked the door and went to the hiding-place where lay the will. As she passed the great mirror she started in, so aghast. Surely those pale, wild eyes so full of fear, those pale trembling lips—surely they did not belong to the beautiful, radiant girl whom people called Countess of Charlleigh.

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Good and bad angels had fought for her; good and evil spirits had waged fierce battle for her. Her own self had been at war with her own self. She had sent into sorrow and exile the man she loved; she had listened while honored lips told her she was imperiling her health.

Leonie, that girl, was beyond her. Why did she pause over this crowning act of her sin?

She had said to herself that she would keep what she had at all risks.

She knew that she could lose her fair name before men—that she would be forever estranged from the man she loved; yet she had weighed all that in her mind, and it seemed to her nothing in comparison with what she gained by her sin. Why did she hesitate? The red blaze seemed to laugh as it roared away. She raised her hand to thrust the will far into the soft glow and then paused.

She could not do it—she had tried, and failed; she could not, she dared not do it. Perhaps the good angels had won the battle—perhaps the evil spirits had. She could not do it—that crowning act of her sin was beyond her.

Slowly the arm that held the will dropped; and presently the roll fell from the nervous hand to the floor and the girl dropped on her knees with a passionate cry and passionate tears.

"Merciful heaven," she called, "help me to do right!"

The trial and struggle were over—she was no longer at war with her self; the better nature conquered the lower one, loyalty had beaten down false-

hood, honor had shamed dishonor. She who had boasted so proudly that she would risk all for Crown Leighton lay weeping a helpless, humble child.

The temptation had been a terrible one—it was trampled under foot now. Look back, Leonie! She had tried to be brave and hardy in her wrongs; but she had a nobler nature than she herself knew of. When it came to the last act in the drama, her noble heart, her natural goodness, and her early sense of right, were all stronger than temptation, and they beat it down.

The relief was as cooling dew-drops to thirsty flowers; what soft, sweet showers are to parched trees and arid grass such as her soul were the tears that she shed—they seemed to bring grace and healing with them.

"How could I dream of this wicked deed?" she sobbed aloud. "Never again shall such an evil spirit hold me in chains. I will live and die loyal and true, even though I may not be Countess of Charlleigh."

She remembered the old saying: "The woman who hates is lost." She had tried to be brave and hardy in her wrongs; but she had a nobler nature than she herself knew of. When it came to the last act in the drama, her noble heart, her natural goodness, and her early sense of right, were all stronger than temptation, and they beat it down.

LEONARD BROTHERS' steam brick mill at Hammond, begins operations April 2. Between 400 and 500 men and boys will be employed.

PHILIP ANTHONY, Chicago capitalist, while crossing Cedar Lake on the ice near Knox, fell in an air hole and was drowned. Body recovered.

A NEWSPAPER man near Fortville named Camp has named his first baby Helen and there is Helen Camp every time the baby opens its mouth.

It is the fashion among Madison girls to wear each other's cloaks and hats for afternoon promenades. Makes young men think they have quite a variety.

AN artificial ice company, consisting of Philip Hamm, R. A. Aigner, and Daniel Benedict, with capital stock of \$50,000, has been organized at Elwood.

DIXON WALKER, aged 72, residing near Petersburg, was arrested and jailed for attempting to burn the house occupied by Martin Mathenie, his son-in-law.

TO BE CONTINUED!

SCRUB LANDS OF AUSTRALIA.

Chinese as Self-Acting Machines for Opening the Country.

The "lawyer vine" is the worst obstacle to the clearing of lands in Australia. It is a kind of palm that grows in feathered tufts along a pliant stalk and festoons itself as a creeper upon trees. From beneath the tufts of leaves the vine throws down trailing suckers as thick as stout cords, armed with sets of sharp red barbs. These suckers sometimes throw themselves from tree to tree across a road that has not been lately used, and make it as impassable to horses as so many strands of barbed wire. When the vines escape from the undergrowth of wild ginger and become the dangerous traps for man and horse. In the jungle, where the vines grow in great tufts, they form a net that at times defies every means of destruction but fire. The work of clearing ground incumbered is not light. In some districts it is done by Chinamen. They are not allowed to own freehold land in the colony, but scrub land is often leased to them for a certain number of years. The ground, when it is cleared, is extra-ordinarily rich, and they appear to recoup themselves for their labor with the first crops they grow upon their leaseholds.

THIEVES broke into T. B. Parkison's hardware store at Yorktown and stole one hundred dollars' worth of revolvers, razors, and knives, and thirty dollars' worth of wines, liquors, and cigars from Sol Donovan's saloon.

A 3-year-old daughter of Pat Morgan, 6, fell against a red hot stove. Her clothes ignited, burning the child almost to a crisp before the fire could be extinguished. Though yet alive its recovery is considered impossible.

JOHN CEDAR, a wealthy farmer, aged 74 years, living near Waynesboro, committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. His wife has been very low with the grip for several weeks, and it is supposed that this preyed on the old man's mind.

SAMUEL BLAIR, a young farmer residing near Kentland, committed suicide by plowing his mouth over a shotgun and pulling the trigger with a forged stick. This was his second attempt within a week. Deceased was a member of the A. O. U. W.

MRS. ANNIE, residing a few miles from Madison, was horribly burned by her clothing taking fire from a cook stove. Before assistance reached her she was seriously if not fatally burned, and now lies in a critical condition. In her efforts to extinguish the flames the house was set on fire and entirely consumed.

AT Seymour, Harry Francisco, aged 16, attempted to jump on a Baltimore and Ohio freight engine but fell on the rails and two cars passed over him, amputating both legs. The back of his head was also crushed in, and death was instantaneous. The boy's father was a switchman in the yard there years ago and was killed in a similar manner.

A MYSTERIOUS explosion occurred at the Court House at Marion, shaking the building perceptibly, shattering the glass in one of the doors, sending flames forth from the grates and chimneys, and otherwise alarming the occupants. Similar manifestations occurred at the furnace from which the Court House is heated. It is supposed that in some way natural gas had accumulated in the tunnel leading from the heater.

AT the Liberty street crossing of the Big Four at Muncie, a switch engine backed a box car into a buggy owned by John W. Wilson and occupied by Mr. Wilson and Frank Eiler and his small son. The horse got across the track, but the buggy was smashed to pieces and all the occupants injured. Mr. Wilson was badly cut about the head, and all were much bruised. There is no target or other danger signal at the crossing.

PATENTS have been granted Indiana inventors to-day as follows: Albert R. Baker, deceased, Indianapolis, M. C. Baker, administrator, label for file binders; James Buchanan, deceased, Indianapolis, W. W. Buchanan, administrator, steam boiler; William L. Butts, Evansville, stove or range; Daniel Curran, Indianapolis, candle extinguisher; Jeffrey T. Ferren, Anderson, bottle packing wrapper; Ferdinand Grote, Evansville, sectional boiler; William O. Harland, Monon, mop and wringer; George B. Maron, Indianapolis, spoons, wrench for vehicles; Thomas McDonald, Indianapolis, oil burner; Martin D. Smalley, Plymouth, friction clutch; William L. Sonntag and R. A. Sonntag, Evansville, display counter; Frederick Waidner, Mishawaka, hinge for wind mill rudders; Jesse Warrington, assignor of one-half to Nordyke & Marmon Company, Indianapolis, cloth fastening device for bolting reels; John Wisner, Bluffton, laundry frame.