

UNITED AT LAST

BY
MISS M. E. BRADDON



came into the room. His face was brightened by a satisfied smile as he walked slowly along the corridor leading to the billiard-room.

"Othello was a fool to him in the matter of jealousy," he said to himself. "I think I've fired the train. If the news I heard is true, and Davenant is on his way home, there'll be nice work by and by."

CHAPTER VIII.

"HAD YOU LOVED ME ONCE AS YOU HAVE NOT LOVED."

Gilbert Sinclair said very little to his wife about the fainting fit. She was perfectly candid upon the subject. Sir Cyprian was a good friend—a friend whom she had known and liked ever since childhood, and Mr. Wyatt's news had quite overcome her. She did not seem to consider it necessary to apologize for her emotion.

"I have been overexerting myself a little lately, or I should scarcely have fainted, however sorry I felt," she said, quietly and Gilbert wondered at her self-possession, but was not the less convinced that she had loved—that she still did love—Cyprian Davenant. He watched her closely after this to see if he could detect signs of hidden grief, but her manner in society had lost none of its brightness, and when the Harcourt expedition was next spoken of she bore her part in the conversation with perfect ease.

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair left Davenant early in May for a charming house in the country, situated throughout in delicate tints of white and green, like a daisy-sprinkled meadow in early spring, a style in which the upholsterer had allowed full scope to the sentimentality of his own nature, bearing in mind that the house was to be occupied by a newly married couple.

Mrs. Sinclair declared herself perfectly satisfied with the house, and Mrs. Sinclair's friends were in raptures with it. She instituted a Thursday evening supper after the opera, which was an immense success, and enjoyed a popularity that excited some envy on the part of unmarried beauties. Mrs. Walsingham heard of the Thursday evening parties, and saw her beautiful rival very often at the opera; but she heard from James Wyatt that Gilbert Sinclair spent a great deal of his time at his club, and made a point of attending all the race meetings, habits that did not augur well for his domestic happiness.

"He will grow tired of her, as he did of me," thought Clara Walsingham.

But Gilbert was in no way weary of his wife. He had loved her as passionately as he had loved her at the first; with an exacting, selfish passion, it is true, but with all the intensity with which his nature was capable.

If he had lived in the good old feudal days he would have shut her up in some lonely turret-chamber, where no one but himself could approach her. He knew that she did not love him; and with his own affection for her there was always mingled an angry sense of her coldness and ingratitude.

Gilbert turned savagely upon his wife directly the room was clear.

"So your old favorite has lost no time in renewing his intimacy with you," he said. "I came home at another moment, I fancy."

"I did not notice any particular awkwardness in your return," his wife answered coolly, "unless it was your manner to my friends, which was calculated to give them the idea that you scarcely felt at home in your own house."

"There was some one here who I seemed a little too much at home, Mrs. Sinclair—some one who will find my presence a good deal more awkward if I should happen to find him here again. In plain words, I forbid you to receive Sir Cyprian Davenant in my house."

"I can no more close my doors upon Sir Cyprian Davenant than on any other visitor," replied Constance, "and I do not choose to insult an old friend of my family for the gratification of your senseless jealousy."

"Then you mean to defy me?"

"There is no question of defiance. I shall do what I consider right, without reference to this absurd fancy of yours."

"Sir Cyprian Davenant?" cried Gilbert.

Constance looked up from her writing.

"Sir Cyprian Davenant," repeated James Wyatt.

"Has anything happened to him?"

"About the last and worst thing that can happen to any man, I fear," answered the lawyer. "For some time since there have been no reports of Captain Harcourt's expedition; and that in a negative way, was about as bad as could be. But in a letter I received this morning, from a member of the Geographical Society, there is news. My friend tells me there is a very general belief that Harcourt and his party have been made away with by the natives. Of course, this that it may turn out a false alarm."

Constance had dropped her pen, making a great blot upon the page. She was very pale, and her hands were clasped nervously upon the table before her. Gilbert watched her with eager, angry eyes. It was just such an opportunity as he had wished for. He wanted above all things to satisfy his doubts about that man.

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "I did not tell you that the parting should take place within any given time," he said; "but it shall go hard with me if I do not keep my promise sooner or later."

He had indeed not been idle. The wicked work which he had set himself to had progressed considerably. It was he who always contrived, in a subtle manner, to remind Gilbert Sinclair of his wife's coldness toward himself and to hint at her affection for another, while seeming to praise and defend her.

Throughout their acquaintance he had been a master of his wife, with a selfish indifference and a cool, unconscious insolence, that had galvanized him to the quick, and he took a malicious pleasure in the discomfiture which Sinclair had brought upon him by his marriage.

When the Sinclairs returned to London, some months after the birth of the child, James Wyatt contrived to make himself more than ever necessary to Gilbert, who had taken to play higher than old, and who now spent four evenings out of the six lawful days at a notorious whisky club, sitting at the card table till the morning sun shone through the chinks in the shutters. Mr. Wyatt was a member of the same club, but too cautious a player for the set which Gilbert now affected.

"That fellow is going to the bad in every way," the lawyer said to himself.

"If Clara Walsingham wants to see him run wild she is likely to have her wish without any direct interference of mine."

The state of affairs in Park Lane was indeed far from satisfactory. Gilbert had grown tired of playing the indulgent husband, and the inherent brutality of his nature had compelled one occasion to display itself in angry disputes with his wife, whose will he now seemed to take a pleasure in thwarting, even in trifles. He complained of her present extravagance, with insolent reference to the poverty of her girlhood, and asked savagely if she thought his fortune could stand forever against her expensive follies.

"I don't think my follies are so likely to exhaust your income as your increasing taste for horse-racing, Gilbert," she answered coolly. "What is to be the cost of these racing stables you are building near Newmarket? I heard you say, and that dreadful man, your trainer, talking of the tan gallop the other day, and it seemed to me altogether an expensive affair, es-

CALIFORNIA HARVEST SCENE.

A Machine That Cuts, threshes, and Sacks the Grain.

pecially as your horse has such a knack of getting baited. It is most gentleman-like of you to remind me of my poverty. Yes, I was very poor in my girl-hood—and very happy."

"And since you've married me you've been miserable. Pleasant, upon my soul! You'd have married that fellow Cyprian Davenant and lived in a ten-roomed house in the suburbs, with a maid of all work, and called that happiness, I suppose."

"If I had married Sir Cyprian Davenant I should at least have been a wife of a gentleman," replied Constance.

This was not the first time that Gilbert had mentioned Cyprian Davenant of late. A report of the missing travelers had appeared in one of the newspapers, and their friends began to hope for their safe return. Gilbert Sinclair brooded over this probable return in a state of frantic anxiety, but did not communicate his thoughts upon the subject to his usual confidant, Mr. Wyatt, who thereupon opined that those thoughts were more than ordinarily bitter.

Before the London season was over, Gilbert had occasion to attend a rather insignificant meeting in Yorkshire where a 2-year-old filly, from which he expected great things in the future, was to try her strength in a handicap race. He came home by way of Newmarket, where he spent a few days pleasantly enough in the supervision of his new buildings, and he had been absent altogether a week when he returned to Park Lane.

It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon when he drove up to his own house in a hansom. He found his wife in the drawing-room occupied with several visitors, among whom appeared a tall figure which he remembered too well, Sir Cyprian Davenant, accompanied with travel and looking handsomer than when he left London.

Gilbert stood at gaze for a moment, confounded by surprise, and then went through the ceremony of hand-shaking with his wife's guests in an awkward, embarrassed manner.

Constance received him with her usual coldness, and he felt himself altogether at a disadvantage in the presence of the man he feared and hated. He seated himself, however, determined to see the end of this obnoxious visit, and remained moodily silent until the callers had dropped off one by one, Sir Cyprian among the earliest departures.

Gilbert turned savagely upon his wife directly the room was clear.

"So your old favorite has lost no time in renewing his intimacy with you," he said. "I came home at another moment, I fancy."

"I did not notice any particular awkwardness in your return," his wife answered coolly, "unless it was your manner to my friends, which was calculated to give them the idea that you scarcely felt at home in your own house."

"There was some one here who I seemed a little too much at home, Mrs. Sinclair—some one who will find my presence a good deal more awkward if I should happen to find him here again. In plain words, I forbid you to receive Sir Cyprian Davenant in my house."

"I can no more close my doors upon Sir Cyprian Davenant than on any other visitor," replied Constance, "and I do not choose to insult an old friend of my family for the gratification of your senseless jealousy."

"Then you mean to defy me?"

"There is no question of defiance. I shall do what I consider right, without reference to this absurd fancy of yours."

"Sir Cyprian Davenant?" cried Gilbert.

Constance looked up from her writing.

"Sir Cyprian Davenant," repeated James Wyatt.

"Has anything happened to him?"

"About the last and worst thing that can happen to any man, I fear," answered the lawyer. "For some time since there have been no reports of Captain Harcourt's expedition; and that in a negative way, was about as bad as could be. But in a letter I received this morning, from a member of the Geographical Society, there is news. My friend tells me there is a very general belief that Harcourt and his party have been made away with by the natives. Of course, this that it may turn out a false alarm."

Constance had dropped her pen, making a great blot upon the page. She was very pale, and her hands were clasped nervously upon the table before her. Gilbert watched her with eager, angry eyes. It was just such an opportunity as he had wished for. He wanted above all things to satisfy his doubts about that man.

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "I did not tell you that the parting should take place within any given time," he said; "but it shall go hard with me if I do not keep my promise sooner or later."

He had indeed not been idle. The wicked work which he had set himself to had progressed considerably. It was he who always contrived, in a subtle manner, to remind Gilbert Sinclair of his wife's coldness toward himself and to hint at her affection for another, while seeming to praise and defend her.

Throughout their acquaintance he had been a master of his wife, with a selfish indifference and a cool, unconscious insolence, that had galvanized him to the quick, and he took a malicious pleasure in the discomfiture which Sinclair had brought upon him by his marriage.

When the Sinclairs returned to London, some months after the birth of the child, James Wyatt contrived to make himself more than ever necessary to Gilbert, who had taken to play higher than old, and who now spent four evenings out of the six lawful days at a notorious whisky club, sitting at the card table till the morning sun shone through the chinks in the shutters. Mr. Wyatt was a member of the same club, but too cautious a player for the set which Gilbert now affected.

"That fellow is going to the bad in every way," the lawyer said to himself.

"If Clara Walsingham wants to see him run wild she is likely to have her wish without any direct interference of mine."

The state of affairs in Park Lane was indeed far from satisfactory. Gilbert had grown tired of playing the indulgent husband, and the inherent brutality of his nature had compelled one occasion to display itself in angry disputes with his wife, whose will he now seemed to take a pleasure in thwarting, even in trifles. He complained of her present extravagance, with insolent reference to the poverty of her girlhood, and asked savagely if she thought his fortune could stand forever against her expensive follies.

"I don't think my follies are so likely to exhaust your income as your increasing taste for horse-racing, Gilbert," she answered coolly. "What is to be the cost of these racing stables you are building near Newmarket? I heard you say, and that dreadful man, your trainer, talking of the tan gallop the other day, and it seemed to me altogether an expensive affair, es-

pecially as your horse has such a knack of getting baited. It is most gentleman-like of you to remind me of my poverty. Yes, I was very poor in my girl-hood—and very happy."

"And since you've married me you've been miserable. Pleasant, upon my soul! You'd have married that fellow Cyprian Davenant and lived in a ten-roomed house in the suburbs, with a maid of all work, and called that happiness, I suppose."

"If I had married Sir Cyprian Davenant I should at least have been a wife of a gentleman," replied Constance.

This was not the first time that Gilbert had mentioned Cyprian Davenant of late. A report of the missing travelers had appeared in one of the newspapers, and their friends began to hope for their safe return. Gilbert Sinclair brooded over this probable return in a state of frantic anxiety, but did not communicate his thoughts upon the subject to his usual confidant, Mr. Wyatt, who thereupon opined that those thoughts were more than ordinarily bitter.

Before the London season was over, Gilbert had occasion to attend a rather insignificant meeting in Yorkshire where a 2-year-old filly, from which he expected great things in the future, was to try her strength in a handicap race. He came home by way of Newmarket, where he spent a few days pleasantly enough in the supervision of his new buildings, and he had been absent altogether a week when he returned to Park Lane.

It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon when he drove up to his own house in a hansom. He found his wife in the drawing-room occupied with several visitors, among whom appeared a tall figure which he remembered too well, Sir Cyprian Davenant, accompanied with travel and looking handsomer than when he left London.

Gilbert stood at gaze for a moment, confounded by surprise, and then went through the ceremony of hand-shaking with his wife's guests in an awkward, embarrassed manner.

Constance received him with her usual coldness, and he felt himself altogether at a disadvantage in the presence of the man he feared and hated. He seated himself, however, determined to see the end of this obnoxious visit, and remained moodily silent until the callers had dropped off one by one, Sir Cyprian among the earliest departures.

Gilbert turned savagely upon his wife directly the room was clear.

"So your old favorite has lost no time in renewing his intimacy with you," he said. "I came home at another moment, I fancy."

"I did not notice any particular awkwardness in your return," his wife answered coolly, "unless it was your manner to my friends, which was calculated to give them the idea that you scarcely felt at home in your own house."

"There was some one here who I seemed a little too much at home, Mrs. Sinclair—some one who will find my presence a good deal more awkward if I should happen to find him here again. In plain words, I forbid you to receive Sir Cyprian Davenant in my house."

"I can no more close my doors upon Sir Cyprian Davenant than on any other visitor," replied Constance, "and I do not choose to insult an old friend of my family for the gratification of your senseless jealousy."

"Then you mean to defy me?"

"There is no question of defiance. I shall do what I consider right, without reference to this absurd fancy of yours."

"Sir Cyprian Davenant?" cried Gilbert.

Constance looked up from her writing.

"Sir Cyprian Davenant," repeated James Wyatt.

"Has anything happened to him?"

"About the last and worst thing that can happen to any man, I fear," answered the lawyer. "For some time since there have been no reports of Captain Harcourt's expedition; and that in a negative way, was about as bad as could be. But in a letter I received this morning, from a member of the Geographical Society, there is news. My friend tells me there is a very general belief that Harcourt and his party have been made away with by the natives. Of course, this that it may turn out a false alarm."

Constance had dropped her pen, making a great blot upon the page. She was very pale, and her hands were clasped nervously upon the table before her. Gilbert watched her with eager, angry eyes. It was just such an opportunity as he had wished for. He wanted above all things to satisfy his doubts about that man.

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "I did not tell you that the parting should take place within any given time," he said; "but it shall go hard with me if I do not keep my promise sooner or later."

He had indeed not been idle. The wicked work which he had set himself to had progressed considerably. It was he who always contrived, in a subtle manner, to remind Gilbert Sinclair of his wife's coldness toward himself and to hint at her affection for another, while seeming to praise and defend her.

Throughout their acquaintance he had been a master of his wife, with a selfish indifference and a cool, unconscious insolence, that had galvanized him to the quick, and he took a malicious pleasure in the discomfiture which Sinclair had brought upon him by his marriage.

When the Sinclairs returned to London, some months after the birth of the child, James Wyatt contrived to make himself more than ever necessary to Gilbert, who had taken to play higher than old, and who now spent four evenings out of the six lawful days at a notorious whisky club, sitting at the card table till the morning sun shone through the chinks in the shutters. Mr. Wyatt was a member of the same club, but too cautious a player for the set which Gilbert now affected.

"That fellow is going to the bad in every way," the lawyer said to himself.

"If Clara Walsingham wants to see him run wild she is likely to have her wish without any direct interference of mine."

The state of affairs in Park Lane was indeed far from satisfactory. Gilbert had grown tired of playing the indulgent husband, and the inherent brutality of his nature had compelled one occasion to display itself in angry disputes with his wife, whose will he now seemed to take a pleasure in thwarting, even in trifles. He complained of her present extravagance, with insolent reference to the poverty of her girlhood, and asked savagely if she thought his fortune could stand forever against her expensive follies.

"I don't think my follies are so likely to exhaust your income as your increasing taste for horse-racing, Gilbert," she answered coolly. "What is to be the cost of these racing stables you are building near Newmarket? I heard you say, and that dreadful man, your trainer, talking of the tan gallop the other day, and it seemed to me altogether an expensive affair."

"It is not so bad as you think," he said. "I heard a little story about a lost pocketbook:

LOST AND FOUND.

A Little Story About a Pocketbook That Was Told in the Cars.