

# Twixt Life and Death

BY  
FRANK BARRETT

## CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

One afternoon she came into the room where Nessa was sitting alone, in a particularly ill-humor. Nessa could get no more than a nod or a shake of the head in reply to her observations; yet it was obvious by her manner that she had brought her knitting with the set purpose of staying there.

It had occurred to Nessa on this very afternoon that she had never told her friends who she really was, and how she had come to be an equestrienne. It struck her now that she must attribute her reticence to a want of confidence in them, or to her having done something which she was ashamed to reveal. The possibility of being so misunderstood made her cheeks burn, and she resolved that, on the very first occasion, she would tell the whole truth about herself. She expected that Grace would be dreadfully shocked to hear that she had run away from school, and got into trouble with the police at St. John's Wood, and been hunted out of Brighton; but she felt sure that Dr. Meredith—that dear, generous friend—would make allowance for her ignorance and simplicity, and see that she was not really guilty of dishonesty. And in her heart of hearts she was elated with the hope that she would like her better for knowing that she was well born, and the victim of cruel persecution, and heirress to a large fortune.

This pleasant reflection was brightening her cheeks when Mrs. Blount broke silence.

"I've sent 'em out for a drive," she said.

Nessa looked up from the page on which her eyes had been resting while her thoughts wandered elsewhere, and said she was glad; it was such a lovely afternoon for a drive.

"Yes; but he'd have been sitting in this room as if it was raining cats and dogs if I hadn't spoken out," said the old lady, in a tone of vexation. "It's the first time I've ever had to tell him what he ought to do. He'd have found it out for himself a month ago."

Nessa, wondering, looked with wide, inquiring eyes at her companion.

"Oh, I suppose you have not noticed any more than he has."

"Noticed what?" inquired Nessa.

"That my dear Grace is growing quieter and quieter, more thoughtful, more gentle even than she ever was. You haven't noticed that she doesn't watch by the window for her sweetheart to come, that she slips away from the room when he is here, that she is growing old-maidish in her ways. I have. And it made my heart ache when I see 'em through the blinds as they started off in the pony chaise, for they didn't look smiling into each other's faces; but he looked up at this window, and she looked straight before her as if she had no lover in the world."

"Oh, do they not love each other now?"

Nessa asked, with a trembling voice. "What is the matter?"

"What is the matter?" echoed the old nurse, laying down her knitting. "Well, my dear, if you don't know—and I will say this, I believe you are innocent—if you don't know, it's my duty to tell you before things get past mending. You're taking Sweeney's heart away from my poor Grace! He's fallen in love with you—that's what's the matter!"

This news so shocked Nessa that even before Grace returned from her ride with Sweeney she persuaded Mrs. Blount to take her with her to Brixton, for Dr. Meredith deemed her well enough to go, and, in fact, she received this permission a few days later.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Several weeks later Nessa received a letter. It gave her quite a flutter of excitement, so monotonous and dull was her eventless life at this time; but her heart beat quicker still when she perceived by the postmark that it must be from Dr. Meredith. She opened it with a feeling of hope which it would have been impossible for her to explain, having nothing to hope for. Sweeney inclosed a letter with a couple of lines:

"The inclosed letter," he wrote, "comes to you by a roundabout route, as you will see. You have not forgotten your promise to write to me if you need your doctor and friend."

"SWEENEY MEREDITH."

The communication was studiously brief. He could scarcely have written less; yet Nessa was not disappointed, and in the pleasure of reading it over and over again forgot the inclosure. It was clear she must acknowledge the letter, and feeling that she could think of nothing else until she had written she sat down to the task at once. She wrote the first words that came from her heart:

"Dear Mr. Meredith: I thank you for the letter. I think I can never be so ungrateful as to forget your friendship and kindness."

"V. D."

She could not say less than this, and she dared not say more, and so, with a sigh of regret, she put up the sheet of paper in an envelope and addressed it to the doctor. After that she went out and posted her letter with as much care as if the happiness of her life depended on it. This mighty business, with the flood of conjectures and bitter-sweet recollection it brought upon her, so engrossed her thought that only when she got home to Myrtle Cottage and set herself resolutely to think of something else she remembered the inclosed letter.

It was addressed, "Miss Viola Dancaister, Arcadia, West Kensington," re-addressed, "J. Fergus, Esq., International, Paris," addressed again, "Care of Dr. Meredith, Grafton Road, Hammersmith, London," and finally re-addressed, "Leston Park, Barmston, Yorkshire."

Opening the letter, Nessa, with awakening curiosity, turned to the signature, and found with surprise that the writer was Maud Redmond. It was dated 20 Murdock Square, Euston Road, Tuesday, and ran on thus:

"My Darling Nessa! I do not know

whether you are living or dead. For the last week I have been in London, seeking you everywhere in a state of mind perfectly indescribable. I have suffered tortures since that dreadful night. I must have been mad to run away as I did; but what wonder when Fergus told me I had killed you! I own that the fear of being publicly accused of murdering my darling friend terrified me, and I ran away to save myself. Whatever faults I may have, no one can say I am a fool, and only an idiot could have attempted to injure you in my position—I had everything to lose, and nothing to gain by it. For did you not share all you had with me, and did I not give up my home, position and everything else for your sake? But why should I seek to clear myself from such a monstrous charge when I am sure that you would be the last to harbor an unjust thought or ungenerous reflection? No, darling, whether you live or whether you are in that state where all secrets are known, it is all the same; you know that I am innocent—you know that I am to be pitied.

"I shall send this letter to Arcadia in the last hope that it may be forwarded to you if you live. And, oh! for pity's sake, write to me if you receive it and put an end to my agony. Let me come and look at your sweet face once more—let me slave for you—help you in some way to show how truly I love you, and would repair the chances I have lost. It is the last kindness I ask of you, my darling. Your most unhappy

"MAUD REDMOND."

Mrs. Redmond had not yet risen from her bed in the second floor back of 29 Murdock square—it was not yet midday—when her landlady, entering the room without ceremony, jogged her shoulder and said, hurriedly:

"Here—get up! The young lady's come! Drove up in a hansom!"

"Is she alone?" asked Mrs. Redmond, springing out of bed with blinking eyes.

"Yes. You ain't goin' to have her up here, are you?"

The place was sufficiently wretched and squalid to excite compassion, but the general effect was not picturesque—the picture of distress which an experienced stage manager would set before his audience, and Mrs. Redmond knew her business and the character of the girl she had to play to as well as anyone. The crust of a pork pie, the remains of last night's supper, stood on the dressing table with a bottle of hair-wash, a saucer of violet powder, and a paper of rouge. On the table-drawn up for convenience to the side of the bed was a lamp without a shade, a tray with the remains of the morning's breakfast, a pile of hairpins and some odds and ends of finery.

"I've showed her into the front sitting room," said the landlady, "but she ain't sent away the cab, so you'd better look sharp, my dear. What are you looking for now?"

"My shoes. Look under those things on the chair. That's just the way when you want a thing—"

"You are such an untidy lady. Here, take mine, my dear; they'll do to slip down in."

"Dip the corner of the towel in the water jug. Where's that braided jacket? Never mind; give me the towel. Now look about for that waterproof."

"Here it is, my dear—all crumpled up, anyhow. You ain't going to put any stuff on your face, are you?"

"Not likely," replied Mrs. Redmond, as she stood before the glass wiping her face with the towel.

"Mind, you'll have to get some money out of her somehow. You promised me that, you know, when she came—"

"Oh, that's all right. You shall have it right enough. I tell you I can twist her round my finger, and, you see, she's come just as I said she would, and the hansom shows she has got the money. How do I look?" She turned, assuming a woe-begone expression.

"You're as good as a play," chuckled the landlady, with her hand to her mouth. "You'll do."

Entering the sitting room where Nessa was sitting by the window, Mrs. Redmond started as if she had seen a wraith, and then tottering forward a few steps she fell on her knees, and stretched out her hands with an imploring cry. Nessa went quickly to her side and put her arms round the woman's neck.

"Nessa, my darling Nessa," gasped Mrs. Redmond, taking the girl's hand and smothering it with kisses. "Oh, tell me that you forgive me. No—I will not rise till I know I am forgiven."

"There is nothing to forgive. You did not mean to hurt me. Oh, I am sure of that as you yourself must be."

"Thank heaven for this!" murmured Mrs. Redmond, devoutly, bending her head and clasping her hands. "But I forgot you when I should have stood by you—think of that."

"I would rather think of anything else—of how, for instance, you stood by me when I was in greater need. There, do get up. It distresses me a great deal more to see you like this than to think of your running away."

Mrs. Redmond allowed herself to be comforted, and gradually came round to a state of mind less embarrassing in its effect upon Nessa.

"You have given me strength," she said, faintly; "in a little while I shall be able to look far work." The hollows of her voice frightened Nessa.

"You were very poor when you wrote to me. Have you had anything to eat to-day?" she asked. Mrs. Redmond shook her head, with a plaintive smile.

"But I had some tea and bread last night," she murmured gratefully.

"I feared it was so," said Nessa, "and I have kept the hansom waiting. We will go out and get some dinner."

"I can't, my darling. I have nothing but the things I stand in. The clothes I brought from Brussels have been taken by the woman of this house for my rent, and I have nothing to redeem them."

"I have," said Nessa, eagerly putting her hand in her pocket. "I am quite rich

—see. Mr. Fergus paid me two hundred pounds and I have brought half of it for you."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Since her first call on Mrs. Redmond Nessa made several others, sometimes in the afternoon, but more frequently in the evenings, and, though she seemed feverishly excited when she returned to her home, she would vouchsafe no explanation to Mrs. Blount.

One afternoon, while she was thus absent, Grace called to see her, and Mrs. Blount, uneasy at Miss Dancaister's behavior, told Grace about it. The latter, scenting some grave and unknown peril to Nessa, left Mrs. Blount, almost abruptly, and from the nearest postoffice dispatched the following telegram to Sweeney: "Come at once. You are needed."

Nessa was dressing to go out the next morning, when the maid knocked at her door and said:

"Please, miss, will you come into the sitting room, Missis says, before you go out."

"Yes, I will come," Nessa answered, "almost directly."

Mrs. Blount had told her briefly, when she came in, that Grace had called in the afternoon to see her, and now she expected to be scolded for her irregularities.

She went downstairs painfully conscious of her faults, and hoping that Mrs. Blount would forgive her. The sitting room door was partly open; she entered, closed the door, and, turning to the table where Mrs. Blount invariably stationed herself on serious occasions, she started with an exclamation of astonishment. Sweeney stood before her!

For a couple of moments they stood silent, and still facing each other, and marking the change a few weeks had produced. But her wonder was greater than this, for Grace had prepared him for what he saw, while she was ignorant of the struggle which had exhausted him. The boyish gaiety was gone from his face, the carelessness from his manner; he looked quite old and severe, despite the softness in his deep eyes.

"You have come to scold me," she said, in a tone of contrition.

"Yes—partly," he answered, but there was no anger in his voice, and, taking both her hands in his, he held them as if he meant to keep them forever, looking into her eyes the while with such tender earnestness and deep solicitude that her heart fluttered with a wild, uncontrollable joy.

"Don't you think I ought to scold you?" he asked, after a moment's pause, still holding her hands in his.

"I have done wrong," she said, thinking of the pain she had given Mrs. Blount; "she has been very kind to me, and I have tried her patience shamefully; and, instead of asking her to pardon me, I have been silent and morose, not treating her as a friend at all."

"Is she the only one you have failed to treat as a friend? Have you kept your promise to me? Why didn't you write to me and say 'I want your advice'?"

"But I am quite well now. There is nothing the matter with my health."

"Ah, you will think of me only as your doctor. Well, as your doctor, let me assure myself that I can do nothing for you. Sit down—no, not there, with your back to the light; here, where I may see your face." He seated her, and, still holding her hands, stood before her, looking down.

"Your eyes are sunk, your cheek is thin; there are signs of suffering, pain, fatigue about your mouth," he said.

"It is fatigue. I went to the theater last night with a lady friend. It was very late when I came home."

"Yes. It was nearly one when you put out your light."

"You have heard all about me."

"No, not all. I know that you have been seeking happiness and found but a very poor substitute for it. I know that, poor as the substitute is, it makes you for a time forget some great trouble; but, I can only guess what that trouble is, and I must make sure of it before I dare to prescribe a remedy."

She trembled under his fixed gaze.

(To be continued.)

## VISIONS SEEN IN SLEEP.

A dream about marriage denotes poverty and other misfortunes.

A dream of a lion means you will shortly get a profitable office.

A dream that you are bleeding indicates the loss of property or reputation.

To dream of being dressed in white means success in your next undertaking.

To dream of picture cards indicates that you will be married to a wealthy person.

To dream of finding a pocketbook or purse betokens unexpected success of some kind.

If you dream of a goose you may expect soon to see a friend who has been long absent.

A dream of being at a fair means you will soon be swindled by a pretended friend.

To dream of a monkey signifies that you will be deceived by the object of your affections.

To dream about a sheet of white paper means that you will marry a person you do not love.

Dreaming of an adversary signifies that you are to overcome obstacles which are in your way.

To dream of a swallow signifies that you will soon make the acquaintance of a strange young lady.

To dream that a policeman has you in charge is a sign that you will escape from some impending evil.

To dream that you are hungry means that you will rise to eminence and wealth by your own exertions.

To dream that you are kissing somebody means that an unknown friend will shortly confer upon you a great benefit.

A dream of ringing bells means either a speedy marriage among your acquaintances or some good news to yourself.

The imperial family of Russia possesses the most valuable collection of precious stones of any reigning house in the world.

## FARM AND GARDEN NOTES.

### ITEMS OF INTEREST ON AGRICULTURAL TOPICS.

Indication of Bad Management—Portable Racks—Preventing Hog Cholera—When a Horse is Worth Most—Clipping Clover Fields—Etc., Etc.

#### Indication of Bad Management.

Lice on animals indicates bad management. Horses or cattle in good condition seldom are afflicted with lice, but a low condition of the animal, the skin being hidebound, affords excellent inducements for lice. Good feed and the use of a brush will rid animals of parasites, with the aid of other remedies.

#### Portable Racks.

For cattle, a good rack may be made with common rough boards and a few pieces of scantling. Make them four or five feet wide, ten or twelve feet long, and two feet deep; have four by four inch scantling in the corners, and also in the center of the ends, running up twelve or fifteen inches above the top of the rack; to the latter nail in a center partition lengthwise; thus you have a double rack where cattle will eat contentedly.

Do not have the end boards or pieces of scantling reach down as low as the side boards and then by rounding up the ends of the side boards, after the manner of sled runners, the racks may be easily drawn from one place to another.

#### Preventing Hog Cholera.

Rules for the prevention of the fall outbreak of cholera in herds of swine may be summarized as follows:

1. Cleanliness is essential, in yards, pens, water, feed and everything.
2. Give plenty of pure water and do away with stagnant pools.
3. Use disinfectants such as ashes, lime and carbolic acid.
4. Feed a variety, especially such condiments as charcoal, ashes and salt.
5. Give as much grass range as needed.
6. Breed from hogs of strong constitution.
7. Feed new corn cautiously, if at all.
8. Allow no chance of infection from diseased herds by visitors or dogs.

#### When a Horse is Worth Most.

The age at which a horse is worth the most depends very largely upon his breeding and raising. In nearly all cases well bred and well kept horses will stand hard usage better at an early age than horses that have had a struggle for existence and have inferior quality of blood in their veins.

When a horse has been well fed and cared for from birth so as to maintain a steady growth, he ought to be well matured by the time he is five years old, and from that time till he is seven ought to be at his best. Other horses that are let run, receive but little care, are not fed as they should be, will make a slower growth and may not mature until seven years. A horse should be fully matured before he can be considered at his best, no matter what his breeding may be.

#### Clipping Clover Fields.

A writer in Ohio Farmer advocates the clipping of clover the first year after the wheat is off, and even twice if necessary to prevent it from blossoming, as that weakens the next year's growth. This year he clipped on August 1 and clipped again in September. He has done so for several years until year before last, and he said he would never omit it again. The hay last year where it was not clipped was very dirty, full of stubble and trash, while where too large a growth was made before winter, it lodged and smothered out the crop. He cuts high, removing the swath board, and likes to cut just after a rain, leaving all the growth on the ground as mulch, which protects the roots in winter and keeps the ground more moist in summer. It might be pastured off and get some growth for cattle or sheep, but they will not feed on the ranker growing places, and feed the other too closely, thus making them liable to be winter killed. He does not think this pays, and would prefer to grow green crops to help out the pasture than to use the newly seeded fields. He wants to leave clover about six inches high when winter comes.

#### Winter Preservation of Squashes.

My method has been to place the squashes upon shelves in a well-ventilated cellar. The shelves are four feet next to the sides of the cellar. The remaining ones are six feet wide, with alley on each side. The first shelf is six inches from the floor and then they are two feet apart until the ceiling is reached. I use two by four inch studding for uprights and crosspieces and one by six inch strips for bottom of shelves. One of these strips is sufficient for the side. The uprights should be placed four feet apart, as the load they have to sustain is considerable. The temperature should be as high as possible without using artificial heat and interfering with good ventilation. This is best accomplished by keeping the cellar closed on very cold days and particularly during periods of foggy and rainy weather.

Choose the bright days for opening during the middle of the day.

With the best of conditions and best of care there is quite a loss and more depends upon time and manner of gathering crop than all else. Because the squash has a hard shell and does not show the effects of a slight frost, it is often left too long on the vine. I plan to gather them just before the first frost. This can usually be accomplished if I am ready to put all my help to work as soon as I think a frost is on the way. I pick them and place in piles about six rods apart, covering them with their own vines. As the weather becomes colder I draw them on truck wagon with springs and hay rack with about six inches of marsh hay on that. I handle them as carefully as possible, loading only three or four deep on the wagon and carrying them into the cellar in baskets and placing on shelves two deep. I am careful to sort them, using the soft and bruised ones for feed or sell them for immediate consumption.—Delbert Otter, in New England Homestead.

#### The Cucumber's Foes.

Professor Charles D. Woods, director of the Maine Experiment Station, has issued a valuable leaflet dealing with cucumber enemies. The essay takes up the striped beetle as follows:

This well-known insect, with its yellow coat and black stripes on the wing covers, feeds on all kinds of cucurbitaceous plants—cucumber, melon, squash, pumpkin, etc., and often appears in such numbers as to ruin the entire growing crop.

Remedies: 1. Plow out and destroy all cucumber and squash vines as soon as the crop is off to destroy any larvae that may then be in the roots.

2. Planting an excess of seed, to distribute the injury, is a common practice, as is also the system of starting the seed in pots, boxes or sods, and transferring the plants to the field after they are well established.

3. A free use of tobacco dust, lime or land plaster about the bases of the young plants is often recommended.

4. In large fields "driving" is sometimes practiced. Before the middle of the day the farmers sow air slaked lime with the wind, and this seems sufficient to drive most of the insects to the leeward.

5. The planting of a few large hills of squash among the cucumbers, as traps, is sometimes recommended since the insects seem specially partial to the squash.

6. Spray the plants with Bordeaux mixture and paris-green (formula 2), being careful to reach the under sides of the leaves.

7. One of the surest preventives is to cover the hill at the time of planting with a box over which is placed mosquito netting.

#### Artificial Broilers.

A flock of four or five hundred broilers pays a handsome profit if one raises them in time for the best markets, and then gets his price. Broilers sell from \$1.50 to \$2 per pair in the best season, but the one who raises them rarely averages more than 75 cents to 80 per pair. There are those who get the latter on the average right along. That is, they receive more than this in the best season, and less during the season of plenty, but they average the sales of \$1 per pair.

But on the other hand there are some who find broiler raising a total failure, and they do not get their money back from the investment. Some reasons for this success or failure should be apparent. To start a good colony of broilers for the early markets the incubators should be started to work early in November, and then the broilers will be ready for market early in March, the season when the highest prices are paid. For 400 broilers one needs at least 800 eggs, for one cannot depend on more than 50 per cent. hatching. These eggs should cost all the way from \$10 to \$15, according to the price of fresh eggs in the locality. The cost for time, labor and similar items cannot be taken into account, for these represent the working capital of the farmer, and must be given in return for a living and anything over. Careful attention to business details is necessary for success with the broilers from the time the eggs are purchased until they are sold. The chickens cannot be fed for nothing, and the question of profits will largely depend upon how this work is done. It is here that profits are cut down and actually turned into losses at times. One must study the economy of winter feeding more than anything else. Granted that the whole expense of winter feeding and raising should amount to \$100, we then have a profit of \$100 to show for 120 days or three months. This is not great, and would be very unsatisfactory if one had to depend upon it alone for a living. But added to the other profits from eggs, and the farm crops in summer, it will do to encourage us to make more of our winters. Usually this seems to be a season of idleness on the farm, and if we can convert it into a season when we can make \$100 there is no reason to complain.—Annie C. Webster, in American Cultivator.

#### Short and Useful Pointers.

A farmer can always profit by observation as well as experience.

It does not take long for the reckless farmer to realize his foolishness.

Some farmers feed celery to their hens to improve the flavor of the meat.

Office First State Bank, Philadelphia, Pa.

Charcoal cannot be used as a grit for poultry; it is too soft for that purpose.

When handled rightly turkeys are among the most profitable products of the farm.

During the last 100 years dairying has made more progress than any other branch of farming.

Burnt corn with the cob makes the best charcoal for hens. Twice a week is often enough to feed it.

Farmers should keep themselves informed as to the markets, as they are constantly changing year by year.

Don't imagine that poultry do not require any care. It is only those flocks that receive every attention that pay big profits.

A point in favor of bees is that they insure the fertilization of fruit, which is an important matter that the American farmer has only lately begun to realize.

The care of poultry is not "women's work." There is too much money in it for the men to slight it. Nobody, male or female, can afford to slight the hens.

It's a good plan to assist the young pigs to make hogs of themselves, and after they have reached the hog stage assist them off to market. "Haste makes waste" doesn't apply to marketing stock when they are once in marketable condition.

It is said that an excellent way to deal with mice in an orchard is to procure small blocks of wood and bore one and one-fourth inch holes in them, placing some meal mixed with tallow and rat poison in the bottom of each hole and leave these about the orchard. No other animal can reach the bait.

## CHINESE NEWSPAPERS.

Cheapest in the World and Dear at the Price, Except as Curios.

The lot of the Chinese editor is not one to be envied by those who follow the calling of literature in this country; indeed, it is said to be little short of martyrdom, says a writer in the London Express. He has a very remote chance of living a long life unless the organ he conducts is a powerful one, and an equally remote chance of dying a natural death.

If a newspaper run by a Chinaman returns a profit equivalent to £100 per annum the proprietor must think himself an exceedingly lucky man, but not 10 per cent. are so successful as this.

The price of these news sheets, as they might be more aptly termed, is absurdly low, owing to the small wages asked by native workmen. A Chinese compositor is perfectly satisfied with 2 taels (two ounces of silver) a month, and, failing that, a small quantity of rice. Again, paper can be purchased for next to nothing, being made from the refuse collected in the rice and cotton mills. Knowing this, no person would think of paying more than 4 cash (the tenth of a penny) for a current copy of a paper.

The advantages of the free press are, of course, unknown, and the editor who attacks the government or any officials of high degree in his column may find himself in prison at any moment, with a warrant issued for his decapitation without a trial in a few days' time. In the large towns these measures are to a certain extent modified, for the authorities are perfectly aware that to behead an editor unless his offense is a very grave one would be to incur the anger of his comrades, who would promptly revenge his death by stirring up an insurrection at the risk of being tortured to death for doing so. But they can and do imprison an obnoxious editor whenever they think fit, and in order that such a calamity should not affect a journal a man is always employed at a small salary who is willing to take the blame upon himself and go to prison in the editor's stead. Thus, the literary lights in China continue to flourish while their substitutes frequently spend half their lives in confinement.

War news seldom finds its way into these obscure papers, and when it does it is based on rumor solely, for no war correspondents are employed, and such institutions as press agencies are altogether unknown. There is not the slightest doubt therefore that thousands of people in the remote parts of China will read their paper regularly during the present trouble, and yet be unaware that their country is at war. Of course, several of the largest papers are conducted by Europeans upon modern lines, but they are allowed more freedom and do not come under this category.

## Night Life Active in Mindanao.

Surgeon McKenna, who has passed the last six months on the island of Mindanao, does not hesitate to maintain that the number of quadrupeds and insects enjoying existence in the moon light of the tropics exceeds that of their daylight rivals; so much, so indeed, that whole species and groups of species are represented only by nocturnal creatures. Forests that remained as still as the grave under the glare of the vertical sun are all in an uproar within an hour after sunset.—Indianapolis Press.

The Mikado of Japan has under his subjection a population of over 46,000,000 people, and they are about as happy as the average people in any part of the world.