

THE FAR BLUE HILLS.

Up lift my eyes, and ye are ever there,
Wrapped in the folds of the imperial air,
And crowned with the gold of morn or evening
there.
O far blue hills.

Around you break the lights of heaven all,
There rolls the Titan's splendid ball,
And there the circling suns of midnight fall,
O far blue hills.

Wild bursts the hurricane across the land,
Loud roars the cloud and smites with blazing
brand;
They pass, and silence comes, and there we
stand.
O far blue hills.

Your spirit fills the wide horizon round,
And lays on all things here its peace pro-
found.
Till I forget that I am of the ground.
O far blue hills—

Forget the earth to which I loved to cling,
And soar away as on an eagle's wing.
To be with you a calm and steadfast thing,
O far blue hills;

While small the care that seemed so great be-
fore,
Faint as the breeze that fans your ledges o'er;
You, 'tis the passing shadow, and no more,
O far blue hills.

—Critie.

THE OLD MILL MYSTERY

By Arthur W. Marchmont, B. A.

Author of "Miser Houlder's Secret," "Madeline Power," "By Whose Hand," "Isa," &c., &c.

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CHAPTER XX—CONTINUED.

"I better tell you plainly. They say you were seen getting into the mill that night at about ten o'clock; and that a handkerchief of yours—*I gave you, Tom*—was picked up inside the mill, close by the place."

"Who found it?"

"Reuben Gorringe did."

"Curse him; he's a traitor, I be-
lieve!" cried Tom, fiercely.

"Nay, Tom; he's a friend. Directly the affair at the mill had happened he came round to say that he wanted you at the mill, and that you were not to think anything more of what had hap-
pened in the afternoon between Mr. Coode and you. He's a friend."

"Does he know you've come to see
me?" asked the man, suspiciously.

"He doesn't know it; but he guessed I should come, and he advised me to tell you to come back to Walkden Bridge and face matters out, but that if he would do whatever he could to help you to wait until the explana-
tion could be given."

"Explanation," cried Tom, "what explanation? What does he say against
me?"

"He does not say anything against
you, dear; all he means is that there are matters which will need ex-
planation." She was anxious to let him know what she knew, and yet shunned the task of speaking out plainly. "It may be necessary that you should—should say why you came away; and—and what you were doing during the whole of that even-
ing, and how the handkerchief can have come to be inside the mill close
by that window."

"What do you mean by this, Mary?" he asked, "have you come here just to
try and question me as to my doings on
that night?"

"I have not come to ask any ques-
tions for my own sake," answered the
girl.

"Well, if you have come for mine you
make a great mistake. I don't care a
straw what people say. I have already
told you that I don't wish to speak of
the matter."

"It is not what ordinary people
think, dear; but what the—" she
stopped, and changed the form of
what she was saying. "It is no time
for beating about the bush. I have
been half afraid to speak out. But I
had better. I am afraid they do suspect
you, Tom, and there are one or two
reasons why. Some of these are known
to those who are making inquiries—the
police—others only to ourselves. In
the first place there is the knowl-
edge that you had words with Mr.
Coode that day, and that he told you
to leave Walkden Bridge."

"That's why I left," said her com-
panion, eagerly.

"Yes, I know, my dear, but they
know you did not leave until nearly
midnight; or at least they think it, and
they think that you were about the mill
and got into the place through the win-
dow in Watercourse-lane; then that you
dropped a handkerchief close by—and if
they think that, they ask why you
went there? Then, for some reason, I
know not what, the papers which Mr.
Coode had, and which he regarded as
the proof of what he charged you with
having done, were taken away from
the office when he was killed."

"What?" explained the man, in a
tone of profound astonishment and
alarm. "And was nothing else taken?"

"No, not that I have heard."

"I can't explain that—I don't know
what it can mean. There must be
some mistake." He spoke hurriedly
and in manifest agitation; and his
cheeks had paled. "Is there anything
else?" he asked, in a low troubled tone.

The girl, seeing his distress, had not
the courage to say anything about the
finding of the weapon—knowing that
she had destroyed all the danger of
that.

"No, I don't think there's anything
more," she answered. "But you see
now why we thought there should be
an explanation."

The man sat a long time without
saying a word in reply. His elbow was
resting on the arm of the seat and his
hand, with the fingers clenched tightly,
was held against his face, as he pressed his knuckles hard against
his teeth. When he spoke it was in a
tone of evident trouble and fear.

"I am not safe for an hour, Mary. I
spoke irritably just now; I am sorry.
Forgive me, my lass; I shan't have an-
other chance. It only means I shall
hasten my going by day or so. You
don't think me capable of doing such a
thing as this, do you?" he said, turning
to her.

"Nay, Tom, I would never believe it,
unless you yourself told me you had

done it. I trust you, lad, and love you
too well to think like that of you."

"You are better to me than I've
deserved, lass," he answered. "But I'll
try and make up for it all in time to
come."

"But you'll come back to the Bridge
and face it out, won't you?" she said.
There's no good comes in running
away, lad."

"Nay, I'll not go back till things are
plainer. I can't understand what it
means; and maybe after a bit the
truth'll come out. But I can't see how
the thing's to be put right now."

"Yes, I am sure, father—quite sure,"
answered Mary, in a tone so confident
that it comforted and reassured the
old man.

"What shall I care what they think
when I'm away? I shall go."

"Where will you go, Tom?" she asked,
her heart filling at the thought of the
long separation.

"I don't know. I shall get off to
Liverpool to-day; and whatever vessel's
going, I shall sail at the earliest pos-
sible moment."

"May I go to Liverpool with you?"
she asked.

"Better not, lass, better not. You
shall know where I am settling as soon
as I know myself. You can wait that
while—can't you, my dear?"

"Yes, Tom," she said, simply, slip-
ping her hand into his. "You may
trust that I'll be as true as the light.
But it'll be a sad time for me, I
reckon;" and she laid her head on his
shoulder and clung to him. "I shall
be woeful without my lad," she said,
smiling up to him through her tears.

"Don't cry, Mary. We shall be hap-
pier away out of it all in new home,
with a new start. I shall send for you
soon. Will you keep yourself ready to
come to me?"

"She's been away; went Friday, and
only came back yesterday. I saw her
last night."

"I wish she'd come in for a bit. Tell
her, if you see her, it's lonesome lying
here by oneself, now, without the lad's
home coming to look forward to," said
the old man, with a sigh.

"I'll come back myself as soon as I
can," said Mary, touched by the words.
"But I must go home for awhile."

Close by her cottage she met Gibeon
Prawle.

Since the time of the explosion he
had remained in the village, but had
avoided Mary. Now, contrary to his
custom, he crossed the street and
came up to her.

"This'll trouble you, Mary, I've heard
the news," he said, without any other
greeting. "I'm sorry."

"What news do you mean, Gibeon?"
she asked, as if in ignorance of his
meaning.

"About Tom," replied the other. "I
should like to help you if you'll let me."

"I want no help of yours. I have
not yet forgotten what I heard that
night," replied Mary, looking mean-
ingly at him.

"You mean you'll have no dealings
with me, because I had a hand in that
plant?"

"I don't trust you, Gibeon; and I
want no help from them I can't trust."

"Well, you can do as you like, with
your beastly pride," he answered,
somewhat angrily. "And if you hadn't
saved my life you might go to the
deuce. But I'm not so bad as you
seem inclined to think, and I might
be able to do you a good turn over this
job."

"I don't want your help, I tell you,"
repeated the girl. "I don't want any-
body's help. And you couldn't help me
if I did."

"You don't know that, Mary," said
the man.

"I know that I wouldn't have your
help, even if I did want it;" and with
that she walked on.

At the cottage she found a note from
Reuben Gorringe.

"This is terrible news. I had better
see you at once. Either come to me at
the mill or let me know of your return
that I may come to you."

Mary went up at once to the mill,
and not finding the manager there left
word that she had been seeking him.
She had been at home some little time,
and had made a meal—the first she
had had that day—before Gorringe
came.

He took the hand she held, and kept
it a long time, as if in friendly sympa-
thy, while he looked pityingly into her
face.

"You are suffering cruelly," he said.
"This is terrible news."

"It is disgraceful that such blunders
should be made," answered Mary, her
face lighting momentarily with indigna-
tion.

"If it is a blunder, yes. Were you
followed from here?"

The girl winced at the cruel sugges-
tion that it was owing to her that
Tom had been arrested.

"Can that have been the cause of his
being taken?" she asked.

"I should think not. There must
have been some other clew. He must
have been recognized," he said; but
there was not enough conviction in his
words to soothe the girl.

"Oh, Tom, Tom! What have I done?"
she wailed, and bent her face on her
arms on the table. Suddenly she raised
her head and looked searching at her
companion. "Why did you not warn
me when you were here last night?"

"I did not think there was
more than the merest shadow of
suspicion in the minds of the police,"
was the ready answer. "Do you think
I could have such a thought and not
tell you? If you do I had better go. If
there is no trust between us we can do
nothing to save Tom from the trouble."

"Forgive me," cried Mary, anxious
not to offend one whose help and
friendship meant so much to her lover.

"I do trust you," and she put out her
hand as if to detain him.

"It is more valuable now to ask you
what was the result of the interview.

What was Tom's decision? Had he
meant to come back and face all, or to
wait until the truth could be made
clear?"

"It's not anything really wrong with
me. Tell truth, lass."

"No, father, nothing," answered
Mary, understanding him, and speak-
ing in strong, clear tones, while she
turned his look steadily and fixedly.

"Our lad couldn't do what these fools
say. I know it. I've seen him to-day."

"What have the fools taken him for,
then?"

"Because they've been blundering,
that's all."

"Shut the door, lass. See that there's
no one about," said the old man mysteri-
ously, loosening his hold and pushing
the girl toward the door. "I've some-
thing to say to you."

"At that instant as he asked the
question the suspicion of Gorringe which

had prompted her question a minute
before flashed into the girl's mind and

into the parlor, and locking the front
door went back to him somewhat puz-
zled.

He took hold again of her dress and
drew her close to him.

"I've been fearing this," he said, in a
voice in which eagerness and terror
were struggling. "He was mad against
Coode; and that night—he was awful wild
in his manner. Do you think he may
have quarreled with you and have
given him a crack in his rage? Do you
feel sure yourself, lass, that nothing
happened between them?"

"But you told him what I had said;
didn't you, and that at the earliest
moment possible I went to his cottage to
assure him that all that affair was over
and done for?"

"Yes, I told him what you had said;
but he felt angry and bitter that such
a threat should ever have been used."

"I see. He wanted something more
than a mere promise of that kind
to bring him back, I suppose. But
now that affairs have taken this
disastrous turn it is most important
to learn what he told you as to his
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