

AIKENSIDE

BY
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CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

He was very pale, and the great sweat drops stood on his forehead and under his white hair, but Maddy wiped them away and listened with a breaking heart while the aged disciple almost home told her of the peace, the joy, that shone around his pathway to the tomb, and of the everlasting arm bearing him so gently over Jordan. Then he talked of herself, blessing her for all she had been to him, telling her how happy she had made his life since she came home to stay, and how for a time he had ached so with fear lest she should choose to go back and leave him to a stranger. "But my darling stayed with her old grandpa. She'll never be sorry for it, never. I've tried you sometimes, I know, for old folks ain't like young; but I'm sorry, Maddy, and you'll forget it when I'm gone, darling Maddy, precious child"; and the trembling hand rested caressingly on her bowed head as grandpa went on to speak of his affairs, his little property which was hers after the mortgage to Mr. Guy was paid. "I've kept up the interest," he said, "but I could never get him to take any of the principal. I don't know why he is so good to me. Tell him, Maddy, how I thanked and blessed him just before I died; tell him how I used to pray for him every day that he might choose the better part. And he will—I'm sure he will, some day. He hasn't been here of late, and though my old eyes are dim, I can see that your step has got slow, and your face whiter by many shades, since he stayed away. Maddy, child, the dead tell no secrets, and I shall soon be dead. Tell me, then, what it is between you two. Does my girl love Mr. Guy?"

"Oh, grandpa! grandpa!" Maddy moaned, laying her head beside his own on the pillow.

It would be a relief to talk with someone of that terrible pain, which grew worse every day; of that intense longing just for one sight of the beloved one; of Guy, still absent from Aikenside, wandering nobody knew where; and so Maddy told the whole story, while the dying man listened to her, and smoothing her silken hair, tried to comfort her.

"The worst is not over yet," he said. "Guy will offer to make you his wife, sacrificing Lucy for you, and if he does, what will you do?"

Maddy's heart leaped up into her throat and for a moment prevented her from answering, for the thought of Guy's really offering to make her his wife, to shield her from evil, to enfold her in his tender love, made her giddy with joy. But it could not be; she answered through her tears:

"I shall tell him no."
"God bless my Maddy! She will tell him no for Lucy's sake, and God will bring it right at last," the old man whispered, his voice growing very faint and tremulous. "She will tell him no," he kept repeating, until, rousing up to greater consciousness, he spoke of Uncle Joseph, and asked what Maddy would do with him; would she send him back to the asylum, or care for him there? "He will be happier here," he said, "but it is asking too much of a young girl like you. He may live for years."

"I do not know, grandpa. I hope I may do right. I think I shall keep Uncle Joseph with me," Maddy replied, a shudder creeping over her as she thought of living out all her youth and possibly middle age with a lunatic.

But her grandfather's whispered blessings brought comfort with them, and a calm quiet fell upon her as she sat there listening to the words of prayer, and catching now and then her own name and that of Guy's.

"I am drowsy, Maddy. Watch while I sleep. Perhaps I'll never wake again," grandpa said, and clasping Maddy's hands he fell away to sleep, while Maddy kept her watch beside him, herself falling into a troubled sleep, from which she was aroused by a clammy hand pressing on her forehead, and Uncle Joseph's voice, which said: "Wake, my child. There's been a guest here while you slumbered," and he pointed to the rigid features of the newly dead.

CHAPTER XX.

Of the days which followed, Maddy had no distinct consciousness. She only knew that other hands than hers cared for the dead, that in the little parlor a stiff, white figure lay, that neighboring women stole in, treading on tiptoe, and speaking in hushed voices as they consulted, not her, but Mrs. Noah, who had come at once, and cared for her and hers so kindly. That she lay all day in her own room, where the summer breeze blew softly through the window, bringing the perfume of summer flowers, the sound of a tolling bell, of grinding wheels, the notes of a low, sad hymn, sung in faltering tones and of many feet moving from the door. Then friendly faces looked in upon her, asking how she felt, and whispering ominously to each other as she answered:

"Very well; is grandpa getting better?"
Then Mrs. Noah sat with her for a time, fanning her with a palm-leaf fan and brushing the flies away. Then Flora came up with a man whom they called "Doctor," and who gave her sundry little pills and powders dissolved in water, after which they all went out and left her there with Jessie, who had been crying, and whose soft little hands felt so cool on her hot head, and whose kisses on her

lips made the tears start, and brought a thought of Guy, making her ask, "if he was at the funeral?"
"No," Jessie said; "mother wanted to write and tell him, but we don't know where he is."

And this was all Maddy could recall of the days succeeding the night of her last watch at her grandfather's side, until one balmy August afternoon, when on the Honedale hills there lay that smoky haze so like the autumn time hurrying on apace, and when through her open window stole the fragrance of the later summer flowers. Then, as if waking from an ordinary sleep, she woke suddenly to consciousness, and staring about the room, wondered if it were as late as the western sun would indicate, and how she came to sleep so long. For a while she lay thinking, and as she thought, a sad scene came back to her, a night when her hot hands had been enfolded in those of the dead, and that dead her grandfather. Maddy sank upon the bed, moaning to herself, "Yes, grandpa is dead. I remember now. But Uncle Joseph, where is he? Can he, too, have died without my knowledge?" and she looked around in vain for the lunatic, not a trace of whom was to be found. His room was in perfect order, as was everything about the house, showing that Flora was still the domestic goddess, while Maddy also detected various things which she recognized as having come from Aikenside. Who sent them? Did Guy, and had he been there, too, while she was sick? The thought brought a throb of joy to Maddy's heart, but it soon passed away as she began again to wonder if Uncle Joseph, too, had died, and where Flora was. It was not far to the Honedale burying ground, Maddy could see the headstones from where she sat gleaming through the August sunlight; could discern her mother's, and knew that two fresh mounds at least were made beside it. But were there three? Was Uncle Joseph there? By stealing across the meadow in the rear of the house the distance to the graveyard was shortened more than half, and could not be more than the eighth part of a mile. She could walk so far, she knew. The fresh air would do her good, and hunting up her long unused hat, the impatient girl started, stopping once or twice to rest as a dizzy faintness came over her, and then continued on until the spot she sought was reached. Three graves, one old and sunken, one made when last winter's snow was on the hills, the other fresh and new. That was all; Uncle Joseph was not there, and vague terror entered Maddy's heart lest he had been taken back to the asylum.

"I will get him out," she said; "I will take care of him. I should die with nothing to do; and I promised grandpa—"

She could get no farther, for the rush of memories which came over her, and seating herself upon the ground close to the new grave, she laid her face upon it, and sobbed piteously:
"Oh, grandpa, I'm so lonely without you all; I almost wish I was lying here in the quiet yard."

Then a storm of tears ensued, after which Maddy grew calm, and with her head still bent down, did not hear the rapid step approaching, the manly step coming down the grassy road, coming past the marble tombstones, on to where that wasted figure was crouching upon the ground. There it stopped, and in a half-whisper called, "Maddy! Maddy!"

Then, indeed, she started, and lifting up her head, saw before her Guy Remington. For a moment she regarded him intently, while he said to her, oh, so kindly, so pityingly:
"Poor child, you have suffered so much, and I never knew of it till a few days ago."

Maddy stretched her hands toward him, moaning out:
"Oh, Guy, Guy, where have you been, when I wanted you so much?"

Maddy did not know what she was saying, or half comprehend the effect it had on Guy, who forgot everything save that she wanted him, had missed him, had turned to him in her trouble, and it was not in his nature to resist her appeal. With a spring he was at her side, and lifting her in his arms, seated himself upon her mother's grave; then straining her tightly to his bosom, he kissed her again and again. Hot, burning, passionate kisses they were, which took from Maddy all the power of resistance, even had she wished it, which she did not. Too weak to reason, or see the harm, if harm there were, in being loved by Guy, she abandoned herself for a brief interval to the bliss of knowing that she was beloved, and of hearing him tell her so.

"Darling Maddy," he said, "I went away because you sent me, but now I have come back, and nothing shall part us again. You are mine; I claim you here at your mother's grave. Precious Maddy, I did not know of all this till three days ago, when Agnes' letter found me almost at the Rocky Mountains. I wish I had come before, now that I know you wanted me. Say that again, Maddy. Tell me that you missed me."

He was smoothing her hair now, as her head still lay pillowed upon his breast, so he could not see the spasm of pain which contorted her features as he thus appealed to her. Half bewildered, Maddy could not at first make out whether it were a blissful dream or a reality, her lying there in Guy's arms with his

kisses on her forehead lips, and cheeks, his words of devotion in her ear, and the soft summer sky smiling down upon her. Alas, it was a dream from which she was awakened by the thought of one across the sea, whose place she had usurped, and this it was which brought the grieved expression to her face as she answered mournfully:

"I did want you, Guy, when I forgot, but now—oh, Guy—Lucy Atherstone!"

With a gesture of impatience Guy was about to answer, when something in the heavy fall of the little hand from his shoulder alarmed him, and lifting up the drooping head, he saw that Maddy had fainted. Then back across the meadow Guy bore her to the cottage, where Flora, just returned from a neighbor's, whither she had gone upon an errand, was looking for her in much affright.

Up again into her little chamber Maddy was carried and laid upon the bed, which she never left until the golden harvest sheaves were gathered in, and the hot September sun was ripening the fruits of autumn. But now she had a new nurse, a constant attendant, who during the day seldom left her except to talk with and amuse Uncle Joseph, mourning below because no one sang to him or noticed him as Maddy used to do. He had not been sent to the asylum, as Maddy feared, but by way of relieving Flora had been taken to Farmer Green's, where he was so homesick and discontented that at Guy's instigation he was suffered to return to the cottage, crying like a little child when the old familiar spot was reached, kissing his armchair, the cook stove, the tongs, Mrs. Noah, and Flora, and timidly offering to kiss the Lord Governor himself as he persisted in calling Guy, who declined the honor.

Guy had passed through several states of mind during the interval in which he had seen so little of him. Furious at one time, and reckless as to consequences, he had determined to break with Lucy and marry Maddy, in spite of everybody; then, as a sense of honor came over him, he resolved to forget Maddy, if possible, and marry Lucy at once. It was in this last mood, and while roaming over the western country, whither after his banishment he had gone, that he wrote to Lucy a strange kind of letter, saying he had waited for her long enough, and, sick or well, he should claim her the coming autumn. To this letter Lucy had responded quickly, sweetly reproving Guy for his impatience, softly hinting that latterly he had been quite as culpable as herself in the matter of deferring their union and appointing the wedding day for December. After this was settled Guy felt better, though the old sore spot in his heart, where Maddy Clyde had been, was very sore still, and sometimes it required all his powers of self-control to keep from writing to Lucy and asking to be released from an engagement so irksome as his had become. Neglecting to answer Agnes' letters when he first left home, she did not know where he was until a short time before, when she wrote apprising him of grandpa's death and Maddy's severe illness. This brought him, while Maddy's involuntary outburst when she met him in the graveyard, changed the whole current of his intentions. Let what would come, Maddy Clyde should be his wife, and as such he watched over her, nursing her back to life, and by his manner effectually silencing all remark, so that the neighbors whispered among themselves what Maddy's prospects were, and, as was quite natural, were a little more attentive to the future lady of Aikenside. Poor Maddy! it was a terrible trial which awaited her, but it must be met, and so with prayers and tears she fortified herself to meet it, while Guy, the devoted lover, hung over her, never guessing of all that was passing in her mind, or how, when he was out of sight, the lips he had longed so much to kiss, but never had since that day in the graveyard, quivered with anguish as they asked for strength to do right. Oh, how Maddy did love the man she must give up, and how often went up the wailing cry, "Help me, Father, to do my duty, and give me, too, a greater inclination to do it than I now possess."

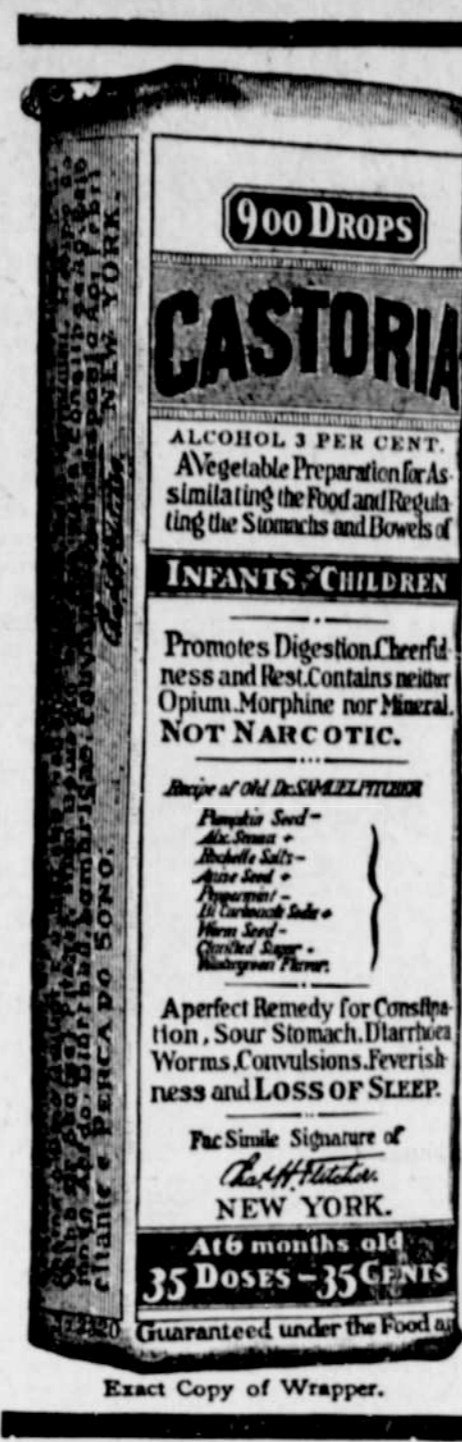
Maddy's heart did fail her sometimes, and she might have yielded to the temptation, but for Lucy's letter, full of eager anticipations of the happy time when she and Guy should never part again.

"Sometimes," she wrote, "there comes over me a dark foreboding of evil—a fear that I shall miss the cup now within my reach; but I pray the bad feeling away. I am sure there is no living being who will come between us to break my heart, and as I know God doeth all things well, I trust Him wholly, and cease to doubt."

It was well the letter came when it did, as it helped Maddy to meet the hour she so much dreaded, and which came at last on an afternoon when Mrs. Noah had gone to Aikenside, and Flora had gone on an errand to a neighbor's, two miles away, thus leaving Guy free to tell his story, the old, old story, yet always new to him who tells it and her who listens—story which, as Guy told it, sitting by Maddy's side, with her hands in his, thrilled her through and through, making the sweat drops start out around her lips and underneath her hair—story which made Guy himself pant nervously and tremble like a leaf so earnestly he told it; how long he had loved her, of the picture withheld, the jealousy he felt each time the doctor named her, the selfish joy he experienced when he heard the doctor was refused; told of his growing dissatisfaction with his engagement, his frequent resolves to break it, his final decision, which that scene in the graveyard had reversed, and then asked if she would not be his—not doubtfully, but confidently, eagerly, as if sure of her answer.

(To be continued.)

The British Museum contains books written on oyster shells, bricks, tiles, bones, ivory, lead, iron, sheepskin and palm leaves.



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Hippophagy.

Hippophagy being in low water in these later days, somebody has set himself to show what an exceedingly respectable history attaches to the practice. Among the ancients, especially in China, eating horse flesh was general, and it was only killed in Europe by a Papal decree of Gregory III., though why horse flesh should have been interdicted does not appear. It was only the famine caused by Napoleon's invasion that revived the practice in Germany, where it has survived ever since.—London Globe.

Not Her Fault.

Tom—The average woman seems to lead an aimless life.
Jack—Well, it's her misfortune rather than her fault that she is unable to throw straight.

Modern, or Not at All.

Geoffrey—Could you be happy in a modest little cottage, darling?
Gwendolen—Not unless it is one of those lovely dreams in concrete, dear.—Chicago Tribune.

That Judicial Decision.

It ends domestic wars and strifes.
Proud man, 'twill hold you, maybe.
It is your business, not your wife's,
To walk the floor with baby.

As It Seemed to Him.

"Some people," remarked the demoralizer, "never seem to be around when wanted."
"Well," rejoined the moralizer, "it is better to be absent when wanted than to be present when you are not wanted."

Curious About It.

Mamma—Go to sleep now or the goblins will get you.
Robbie—Will they come right in here after me?
Mamma—Yes, they will indeed.
Robbie—Then I'll stay awake, 'cause I want to see what goblins look like.—Philadelphia Press.

No Time for Trifling.

"Hands up!" commanded the footpad.
"Get out o' my way!" thundered the other man, scowling at him and striding on. "I hain't got no time to fool with you. I'm doin' a ninety mile walkin' stunt."

The Sniffing Britisher.

The cold, self-contained Britisher is mostly a dreadful fiction, and in situations that seem to him at all emotional he grows as sniffly weepful as any matinee miss.—Sydney (N. S. W.) Bulletin.

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