

OVER THE BORDER.

By WALTER BESANT.

"Then you may depend upon the truth of my statement, Mathew," I said. "He is already a credit to your family."

"How joyful a thing this is!" He folded his hands and raised his eyes hypocritically to heaven. "It shows that the many corrections I gave him produced their effect. I was a throwing of the bread upon the waters. After many days, as one may say, it hath come back to me."

He spoke with a sweetness which did not deceive me.

"And this prosperity, Drusilla. Who told you of it?"

"That I must not say."

"Where, in what place, is the boy?"

"That I shall not tell you."

"How is he employed, then?"

"I must say nothing, Mathew. Do not ask me."

It is very certain that Ralph is alive, and that he is prospering. I shall answer no more questions.

"I will ask other people then."

"It is of no use," I said hurriedly. "There is no one knows except me." This was not true, but at the moment I was thinking of my mother, who certainly did not know.

"No one knows except you?" he repeated. "That is strange indeed."

"It is very strange."

"And how long," he went on, "is the mystery to be kept up?"

"As long," I replied, "as your cousin pleases."

Then his sweetness left him, and he fell again into a madness of wrath. He went away, however, when he found that I would tell him nothing.

All this time I had not written my answer to Ralph's sweet letter. The reason was that I feared my words would prove so poor and weak compared with his noble language; and I was afraid besides that what I might say would offend or disappoint him. What maiden but would have been ashamed? Yet this business with Mathew made me resolve to lose no time, and I began seriously to consider what I should say in reply to the long letter which I carried in my bosom and read daily. In order to be undisturbed, I carried paper and pen to the fuleman's room at the castle, and wrote my letter in the afternoon, whenever I could snatch an hour from my work. What was I to say in answer to the many tender protestations of Ralph? And how was I to speak of Mathew?

"Tell him," said the fuleman, "that Mathew is a villain. Last Tuesday week there was a run to Coldstream—lace and brandy—Mathew stood in and found the ponies. Yet he is a villain."

"And what about yourself?" I asked.

"As for me," he said, "I always said that once the boy got his foot on the low set rung, it would not be long before he was on the top of the ladder. Half way up and more he is, I reckon, by now. So that I am not surprised to hear of his good fortune, and only wish I was young enough to be his fuleman. Tell him that first of all. But Mathew is a villain. Next you may say that I'm well and hearty, and likely to continue in the way of grace, such being my constitution and my habits. Mathew, his cousin, is a desperate villain. Tell him that. You may tell him next that if he still regards eggs I have got such a collection for him as can't be matched. As for Mathew, he is a rogue and a villain. Fish, tell him, are plentiful this year, and others there be in plenty. Yesterday I trapped a badger, and I know of a marten opposite the hermitage. The birds are wild, but I had good sport with his worship last winter, and hope to do something by myself when the nights draw out. Say next that I send him my faithful respects and humble good wishes; and Mathew is a villain. And as for your own pretty self, you sit down and tell him that there isn't a straighter maid, nor one more beautiful, on the banks of Coquet; while, as for eyes and shape and rosy lips—"

"Indeed," I cried, "I shall tell him no such nonsense. No, I will not tell him such nonsense."

"Why, he loves thee, sweetheart. Say it, child, to please him, so lonely he is, and so far away from us. I wish he had thy picture just now, with the pretty blushes on the cheeks and all. A girl ought to be proud for such as him to fall in love with her."

"Is he truly in love with me?" I said, with tears coming into my eyes, because now that the words were spoken I knew very well how much I longed for that very thing. "Why, he says he wishes me happiness with my husband. As if I could take any husband but Ralph."

"There—there," he cried, "tell him that. Tell him that, and it will make him happy and bring him home."

"You think such a little thing as that would bring him home?"

"There's one thing," said the old man, "which women can never understand, and that's the strength and power of love. There was a man in Lord Falkland's regiment—but I cannot tell thee all the story. There was a young gentleman in the Fourteenth, when we were stationed at Gibraltar, in love with a Spanish lady—but of that at another time. What did the soldier care that he got 300 the next day? And as for the young gentleman, he would have done the same—and always said so—if another dozen of duels was to come after it, and him to be pinked in every one. Cheerfully he would have done the same for such another charmer. Ah! he would, and more; but women never understand."

With these mysterious words did he encourage me as to the force and vehemence among men of the passion called love.

If Ralph was only home again, we should have a protector. I thought of this and hesitated no longer. Yet it was an unmaidenly thing which I did, and to this day I am uncertain as to whether I was justified by all the circumstances. It was, besides, a dangerous thing to do, because I am convinced that nothing more effectually turns aside the fancy of a man for a woman—which is a delicate and tender plant, even at its strongest—than the thought that she is lacking in the modesty and reserve which are the choicest virtues of a maiden. Yet I ran that danger, though I trampled the most precious thing to me in all the world, the heart of my Ralph. But there is a time to speak, as well as a time to keep silence. What I said was this:

"DEAR RALPH—I have now received your letter, and I thank you for it with all my heart. My father hath lost all in London, and is now returned to his native place; we are, therefore, poor indeed, and have nothing to live upon except the annuity which he long ago bought for my grandmother, who falls daily; when she dies we shall have nothing. Also, my father is afflicted with a strange belief that he is rich. This makes us unhappy. Mathew hath spread abroad a report that the mill is his, and not yours at all, by reason of a second will, which nobody has seen except himself. I fear that you will have trouble with your cousin. The fuleman is well and hearty, and bids me tell you—Here I set forth as many of the messages as I could remember. 'As regards myself, he bade me say many things out of his heart—but for he loves me, but I must not write them down. My dear Ralph, do not say again that you want me to have a husband. I shall never marry any husband nor love any man, except yourself, if you still continue to love me. Indeed, there is no moment of the day—if you will not think me unmaidenly to confess this thing—when you are out of my thoughts, and I pray night and morning for your safety and speedy return. Mathew has asked me to marry him, and is angered because I refused. He has spread abroad reports that you are now a highwayman. Will you come back to us, dear Ralph? I am in great sadness, and I am afraid that Mathew means some mischief. Yet I would not mar your fortune by calling you away from the work you have in hand. Mathew threatens me with revenge, and Barbara, his sister, bids me read passages in the Holy Scriptures which threaten woe to sinners. I am afraid what they may do, though I cannot think that they can do us any evil. It makes me unhappy to think that any can believe here that you have become a highwayman. Yet I keep your letter secret, and no one knows where you are. The fuleman says that a villain must have rope enough to hang himself. Ah, Ralph, if you could come back to us. But the quiet country would be tedious to you after your splendor and the pleasure of an active life. But whether you come home or whether you stay, you must always believe that I am your loving DRUSILLA."

"P. S.—I forgot to beg that you may not take it ill that I have written these words. For, indeed, you may be married, or at least in love, with one more worthy than myself. And if that is so, I wish both her and you many years of happiness and love, and shall only ask her to let me love you still as my brother. How can Mathew presume to court a girl who has known Ralph?"

CHAPTER VIII.

IS IT TRUE?

Now was Mathew pulled asunder with a grievous doubt and anxiety. For not only might his enemy, as he considered him, appear at any moment to demand a strict account, but he knew very well that if he pushed on his suit or attempted any devilry with us, I might send for Ralph and ask his protection. Yet could my story be true? How could I know and I alone, of his welfare and the place of his dwelling? Was it possible, he thought, that such a secret, if there was any secret, should be entrusted to the keeping of a mere girl? If the boy was really doing well, why did he not return on his twenty-first birthday and claim his inheritance? So that the more he thought about it, the more he tried to persuade himself that the thing was false. And yet he was afraid; I could see that he was continually haunted by the fear of what might happen. He sought me often and begged for information concerning his cousin. Next, he tried my father, but his memory as regards the lad was quite gone, and my mother, but she took no interest in the subject, and said she knew nothing about the boy for her part.

"Yet," said Mathew, "your daughter pretends to know where he is and what he is doing."

"Then," replied my mother sharply, "Lord help the man! go and ask my daughter."

"But she will not tell me."

"Then how can I? Hark ye, Master Mathew: you come here too often. My daughter hath given you her answer. She bears no love to you; she will have none of you. Go, then, and leave us alone. We are poor enough, God knows, but not so poor as to thrust husbands on our girl against her will. Leave us to ourselves, good man, and find another wife."

After this, Mathew remained quiet again for three or four months. That is to say, he came no more to the house.

So great, and reasonably great, was my suspicion of him that I was certain he would do something to revenge himself upon me, or to get me in his power. Yet I knew not—I could not guess—what he would do, or in what way he could injure

me, as if the machinations of wicked men can ever be suspected and guarded against; as if the head of him who is desperately wicked may not conceive, yea, and execute things which an innocent girl would believe incredible. The first alarm was caused by a visit from Barbara, who came to see my mother and myself, together or separately. She said she was a messenger from her brother, who, whatever I might say or think, was the most forgiving and the most long suffering of men; that he was perfectly prepared, if I would make submission, ask pardon for the injurious things I had said, and reveal what I knew of Ralph, viz., where he was living, what he was doing, and what were his intentions; to pass over all, and to take me once more into favor.

"Good Lord!" said my mother. "Does the man think he is the Great Bashaw? Favor, indeed!"

"Beggars," said Barbara, "must not be choosers."

At these words my mother flamed up, and asked Mistress Barbara many questions relating to her birth, parentage, wealth, religious professions, personal beauty, and so forth, leaving her no time to answer any. This is, with respect to the memory of a kind parent, a manner of speech common among women—even well bred city madams when they are angry. Finally, she said that there had been quite enough said about Mathew's proposals, and that he was to understand again, and once for all, that they were distasteful; upon which Barbara coughed, and said that she had delivered her message, that she had no desire, for her own part, for the alliance, which would be certainly be as distasteful to herself as it was to Mrs. Hetherington, and more so, for her brother had a right to look for fortune, which would be of much more use to him than a baby face; that she was surprised, being a messenger of peace, and sent by a man of substantial estate, as all the world knew, to be thus treated by folk who were expected shortly to come upon the parish, and the daughter to be glad of honest service and a crust. But enough said.

"Hoity toity!" cried my mother. "This is brave talking, indeed, from plain millers and simple farmers. Is the world going upside down?"

Barbara went away, but returned a little before Christmas. Mathew, she repeated, was of so Christian a disposition that he was still waiting for submission and to know where the boy was to be found. She also held out her skinny finger in warning, and when I laughed and refused either to make submission or to tell where Ralph was living, she bade me tremble and read the first chapter of the book of the Prophet Joel, applying verses four to twelve to my own case, especially the last clause, which on investigation proved to be a prophecy that joy should wither away from the sons of men. I laughed again, but I confess that I was disquieted. What consequences? I was soon to discover that the woman used no idle threat, though I believe that she did not herself know anything of the abominable plot which Mathew was contriving for our destruction.

This, I say, was just before Christmas. We passed the season of festivity in comfort, thanks to a gift from Mr. Carnaby of a noble sirloin and some bottles of good wine for my father; but on Twelfth Night my grandmother, who had become very feeble of late, suddenly showed signs of impending change. This was a truly dreadful thing for us, not only for the loss of a good and affectionate parent, which those who have faith ought not to lament, but because at her death we should lose even the small income which we had, and there would be nothing but the house. It was with despairing looks that my mother and I sat by her bedside all that night. In the morning she died, having been speechless for some hours; but, as happens often with the dying, she rallied just before the end, and recovered for a moment the power of speech.

"Child," she whispered to me with her last breath, "thou hast been a good child. The Lord will reward thee. Be of good hope, and never doubt that the boy will return to be thy protector and thy guide."

After her funeral I asked my mother if she had any money at all. She told me that on leaving London some of their old friends made up between them a purse of a hundred guineas in memory of old times, but after payment of their small debts and the cost of the journey from London, she had the sum of fifty-five guineas put by for unforeseen wants—that we must live on this money as long as it lasted, after which she supposed we must starve.

Fifty-five guineas! Why it would last us a year and a quarter at least with prudence. Fifty-five guineas! It was a little fortune to us. It would keep us until I got a letter from Ralph. Whereupon I told my mother to be of good cheer and to wait patiently and hope for the best. She sighed, being never a woman of sanguine disposition, and ignorant of those secret springs of happiness within me which made me think lightly of present poverty.

And now you shall hear a plot of diabolical wickedness, which for the time was successful. We all know that for a season sinners are sometimes permitted to compass their own designs, but for their sinner undoing in the end.

Two days after the burial of the dame, at a time when we might be supposed to be overwhelmed by the calamity of being left destitute, Mathew came to the cottage. He looked ill at ease, and his eyes met mine shiftyly, but he spoke out with boldness, while he produced a leather pocket book and turned over certain papers within it.

"I have come, madam," he said address-

ing my mother, but looking at me, "to inform you or your husband—it matters not which—that I can no longer wait for the interest on the principal of my money, and that you must be prepared to pay, or take the consequences."

"What interest? What money?" asked my mother.

"Why," he affected great surprise, "is it possible that you are going to deny the debt?"

"What means the man?" my mother said impatiently.

"Nay," said Mathew, smiling, but looking like a hangdog villain the while, "this passes patience. I mean, madam, my loan to your husband."

"What loan?" she repeated; "and when?"

"Why," said Mathew, "if you pretend not to know, I am not obliged to tell you; but since—Well, I will tell you: I mean this, madam, the sum of two hundred pounds advanced by me to your husband, for which, and in security, he hath assigned me a mortgage on this house."

My mother was quite wise enough to know what was meant by a mortgage. She asked, but with pale face, where was his mortgage.

Mathew unrolled a paper and laid it on the table. My mother read it through hurriedly. Then she sank back in her chair and covered her face with her hands, saying:

"It is true, my child. Here is thy father's signature. This is the last blow."



"Here is thy father's signature."

Mathew rolled up the paper again and put it in his pocket.

"Can you, madam," he asked, "pay me my money?"

"Go ask of the poor demented creature to whom you lent it," she replied.

"Then," said Mathew, "if the money be not forthcoming I must sell the house. Yet there is a way."

"What way?" I asked.

"You know the way. You have only to tell me where the boy is and to marry me."

I shook my head.

"And you, sir," cried my mother, "you

who lend money to poor madmen for the ruin of their house, you—a villain if ever there was one—you think that I would give my daughter to such as you?"

"Very well, madam, very well," said Mathew, unmoved. "Very likely the cottage will sell for as much as the mortgage. Perhaps, if not, your husband may carry his extravagances to a jail, as provided by a righteous law."

Here he lied, because, I believe, my father could be called upon for nothing more than the house which was his security.

My mother pointed to the door, and Mathew went away, leaving us bewildered indeed. Two hundred pounds! Now, indeed, we were ruined. But what had he done with the money?

"Mother," I cried, "it is a black and base conspiracy. My father has never, since he came from London, possessed a single sixpence. Think of it. If he had a penny we should have known it. Try to remember if ever you saw the least sign of his having money."

No, there was none. He wrote no letters and received none; he bought nothing. His clothes, which were now old and worn, were the same as those he wore when he returned home. On the other hand, because he was of a generous heart, he was forever giving away what he called money in large sums by means of drafts upon London bankers, which he would sign and press upon the recipient with kind words. For instance, on my birthday he always gave me an order for £100 on a piece of paper, signed by his own hand, "Sol. Hetherington," bidding me, because I was a good girl, go buy myself some finery and fallals. At Christmas, the New Year, Easter, Roodsmass, fair time, and other times of rejoicing, he would fill his pockets with these valuable gifts, and sail forth—first to the vicar, with an offering for the poor, saying that it was little merit to give out of abundance; that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver; that the poor we have always with us, that a rich man must remember the fate of Dives, and that, for his part, he would that the church had all charities in her own hand, so that schismatics, profligates and persons without religion should starve, with other pithy and reasonable remarks. Having received the vicar's thanks and a glass of usquebaugh to keep out the raw air of the morning, he would proceed up the village street, the boys and girls touching their caps and making courtesy to him, while the barber and blacksmith would offer the compliments of the season, with the hope that her ladyship was well. Then he would pass the cottage of Sallor Nan, and would call her out and press into her hand a folded paper, saying that it was for Christmas cheer; that she must rejoice, with a dish of good roast beef and plum porridge, and

a great coal fire, and bidding her God speed, would go on his charitable way; while some laughed and some looked grave, and tears would fall from the eyes of the women to think that one so good and generous should also be so poor.

Alas! my father was one of those who could never become rich.

Even while we spoke of this we heard outside the voice of my father as if to confirm our words.

"It ill becomes men of substance, Mr. Carnaby, to allow poorer parishioners to bear the burden of such things. I will myself repair the roof of the church at my own charges. Nay, sir, permit me to take no refusal in this matter. If it stand me in £1,000 I will do it. Why, it is a lending unto the Lord; it is a good work."

It happened that in some way I had more influence over my father than any one. That is to say, he would unfold his mind—such as it was, poor man!—to me with greater freedom than to my mother, who could never make any show of interest or belief in his magnificent designs and charitable schemes. I therefore tried to learn from him, if I could, the truth of this business. After listening to a long story of his intentions as regards the church and the endowment of the living at Warkworth, I turned the conversation upon Mathew Humble, and asked my father if he had of late seen and spoken with him. He said that Mathew now avoided rather than sought his company, for which he knew no reason, except that when you have obliged a man it frequently happens that he keeps out of your way—a thing, he said, of common experience in the city, where young men, incautious men and unlucky men often obtain assistance in the prolongation of bills and loans.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

TOO MANY LAWYERS.

Hungry Ones Foment Litigation and Clog the Wheels of Justice.

In a recent address delivered at Chicago Judge Walter Q. Gresham declared that the standard in his profession was not so high as it was twenty-five years ago, and that the law drew less and less upon the ablest and best men of the nation. David Dudley Field, a lawyer of equal eminence, asserted not long ago in an address before the American Bar Association, that one of the chief reasons for this change was the undue multiplication of lawyers. He cited the fact that there were 70,000 lawyers in the United States against 7,000 in Germany and 8,000 in France, the number in proportion to the population being more than seven times as great as in Germany and five times as large as in France, as evidence that the courts were clogged, cases strung out indefinitely and the whole machinery of justice hampered and degraded by the scramble for business for three or four times as many lawyers as are needed.

There is much force in these statements by two of the most eminent lawyers of the day. It is apparent to all observers that there is a vast amount of litigation fomented by hungry lawyers, and that all necessary legal business could be done as well and much more rapidly with one-half of the bar growing crops or making cloth and machinery. It is equally clear that the tendency of this scramble for a livelihood is to make the law less attractive to men of the highest abilities and to lower the standing of the profession. For the interests of the public and of good lawyers as well, there should be a persistent effort on the part of law-making bodies to simplify the methods of the courts and increase the efficiency. If cases could be finally disposed of in half the time now required, the saving to the public would be enormous, hundreds of pettifoggers would be driven out of the business and the legal profession would gain greatly in the respect and confidence of the public.—Cleveland Leader.

THE CHINAMAN'S HADES.

How the Wicked Hethen Is Supposed to Fare in Pluto's Kingdom.

The sixth court of hell is situated at the bottom of the great ocean north of Wuchio Rock. It is a vast, noisy gehenna, many leagues in extent, and around it are sixteen wards or ante-hells. In the first ward the sinful soul is made to kneel for long periods on hot iron shots; in the second they are placed up to their necks in filth; in the third they are pounded till the blood runs out; in the fourth their mouths are opened with red-hot pincers and filled with needles; in the fifth they are inclosed in a net of thorns and nipped by poisonous locusts; in the seventh all the flesh and bones are crushed to a jelly, all except the head; in the eighth the head is denuded of skin, and the flesh beaten on the raw; in the ninth the mouth is filled with fire; in the tenth the pounded flesh off of the body is licked and roasted by sulphurous flames; in the eleventh the nostrils are subjected to all loathsome smells known to their tormentors; in the twelfth they are to be butted by rams, oxen and buffaloes, and at last subject to crushing pressure by being trampled by horses, in the thirteenth the heart will be taken out and skinned, in the fourteenth the skull will be rubbed with sandstone until it has been entirely worn from the jelly-like mass which was once the body; in the fifteenth the body will be separated in the middle and carried with the bare, bleeding ends sitting on red hot plates to the sixteenth ward, where the skin will be removed, dried and rolled up, after having written upon it all the sinful deeds done by the soul while an inhabitant of the fleshy body; after that the body will be consigned to the flames.—St. Louis Republic.