A Loyal Lover; or, The Last of the Grimspehrs.

BY ARABELLA SOUTHWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUEEN OF THE NIGHT.

Notwithstanding the heat, San Carlo, the Grand Opera House of Naples, was crowded to suffocation. All the boxes were full; and from tier above tier gleamed out a sea of human faces, turned in silent attention toward the stage.

Savory was the attraction due to their favorite yet somewhat hackneyed opera, "La Traviata," but rather to the appearance of the young and popular prima donna, Leonora Bellani, who had taken over Naples by storm when she made her debut some three weeks since. With her fresh, glorious voice and magnificent stage presence, she at once became the idol, the pet of the easy-going Neapolitans, who now showered upon her frequent and unusual bursts of applause.

Forward and alone, in a box on a level with the stage, leaned a hand-
some young Englishman. Every other minute his operatic voice was leveled in the most undisguised manner in her ear, on her part, allowed her dark, glowing eyes to wander now and then to the box, in a manner which, though unnoticeable by the audience, showed that it was not indifferent to its occupant's persistent gaze.

When the curtain had fallen at the end of the first act, he quit his box, and made his way "after the scene," passing the stage-doorkeeper with the nod of a privileged person.

He entered a large and brilliantly-lit salesroom, and of which sat the "Queen of the Night," surrounded by a crowd of worshippers. Dark, lustrous eyes, with a latent, velvety beauty in them; a profusion of hair, black as the raven's wing, swaying in glossy waves from her white, haughty brow; a stately, yet exquisitely rounded form; and lips that were worn down to their natural expression, in deep accord with that of her other features. It was a face of wild beauty—one of those for which men have run mad from all time.

She was looking, with a smile of quiet indulgence, and then he took his stand at her side, and listened in silence to the lavish praises of her many admirers.

"Oh, yes, he is a young Englishman of wealth and rank. He has excellent introductions in Naples. I met him last month at the ball of the Countess Pascoli; but lately he has been at the Opera every night almost, and has whispered his name about.

"And by his assurance, hopes to carry off the beautiful Leonora."

"Ah! Yes, the curtain was going up for the second act, and the assemblage dispersed.

As the young Englishman was returning to his box, I saw him turn behind the stage door, in mask and mantle, hovered behind him a moment or so unperceived, as if seeking to know his features, and then disappear.

After the great scene in the last act, among the flowers that were showered down on the favorite prima donna, and with which she loaded the head of the little ungainly man by her side, came two bouquets from the young Englishman's box, which she retained herself with special grace.

When the curtain had descended for the last time, he met her as she was leaving the stage, and accompanied her to the door of her dressing-room.

"Don't be long, my darling," he murmured, pressing her little hand. "My carriage is in waiting; and send for me in the salon.

"Oh, my dearest Ralph, I will look with my dark eyes, and enter her room.

As he sumptuously, the masked figure hovered behind him again for a moment, but quietly left.

Presently the summons came, and he made his way along the now darkened passages, and conducted the beautiful cloaked woman on his arm to his carriage, in deep air, and back in handsome open carriage, which was soon rolling over the smooth road.

It was a few moments after, they were silent, and then he asked, "What is it you are thinking of, dearest?"

"I was hoping Anna would have something more to say than she did first. You have come to sip at my little dwelling, my Ralph, I could wish to impress you favorably with its hospitality."

But he answered, "Heartless monster I should be, to think of supper for one instant while in the presence of my heart's idol!"

"You are, indeed, not such an ethereal being, my Ralph," she returned, with a low laugh. "I must confess to thinking of my supper. They were passing now under the shadow of trees, and the air was heavy with the rich perfume of flowers.

"The carriage came to a standstill before a little picturesque villa, garly lighted from within, and they descended and entered together.

It was one-storied, square house, deeply embossed with a curving balcony, and along the back of it, onto which the upper windows opened.

The lights from the supper-room streamed and blazed there, and a broken Mozart, together with murmured words and laughter; and presently the beautiful Italian and her young guest came out, and the air was heavy with the scent of the garden.

There was no moon, but the heavens were cloudless; and from beneath trellised arches, about which the vine-leaves clustered lovingly, they looked down on the terrace and lawns of the suburb, at the dark blue-hanging bosom of the bay, slumbering in its waveless peace beneath the dim starlight.

"And when shall you make the wedding take place?" he asked, bending over her tenderly; "in a fortnight, surely, or less?"

She made a little gesture of impatience with her fair hands, her rich tresses flying.

"Not so soon! Think of all my young years spent in that gloomy castle of my father's; of those desperate days of war, when I was forced to think, when my father lost his life, and his estates were confiscated! And then think of my present days—freed from bondage; how few they have been, yet how swiftly and brightly they pass! Oh, do not hurry me, Ralph?"

"Ah, I see! You think it will be entering into any struggle to secure Mrs. Englishman for the young Englishman, moving back a little."

"No, no; I did not mean that?" she exclaimed, eagerly. "It would be a sweeter bondage, my Ralph. Do you doubt my words? Have I not refused wealth, and rank, and fame among my countrymen to become your wife; and can you ask me to risk the cold English home you will take me to? Ah, you must believe me!"

And she put out a little jeweled hand to caressing her lover's face.

But down below in the shrubbery was a dark form crouching, that ground its teeth and breathed a curse beneath its breath as it listened.

"Then we will wait a little longer," said the Englishman. "And we will not go at once to my cold English home, as you term it. We will linger awhile by your own beautiful Lake Como, and after that we can carry for a little dissipation in gay Paris. I suppose you will choose Amina to attend you? Why such a deep sigh, love?"

"Oh, it is nothing, Ralph. Yes; Amina must go with me, and her old husband, Jacopo. I could not think of leaving him."

A little longer they talked in whispers beneath the quiet starlight, and then the young Englishman arose and took his leave.

She was startled from her reverie by a rustling in the bushes, and presently the sound of carriage-wheels announced her guest's departure.

She entered the room from which the lights shone, and rang a little handbell on the table. An old servant opened the door in answer to the summons. She had that yellow, wrinkled complexion peculiar to Neapolitan women of years ago.

"I feel lonely and frightened, Amina. Come and talk to me," said the fair prima donna, with that familiarity of manner toward her nurse that prevails in Italy as much as in the times of the ill-fated "Juliet Capulet."

And the same garrulity and love of hearing had long ago possessed the old Amina, judging by her eager, complaisant, as pertaining to the ancient nurse of Juliet.

"You are sad, my lady. What troubles you? A little love-quarrel, perhaps. The English are very cold. Yet a right loyal gallant is he," pursued the dame, thinking of the gold pieces that from time to time had filled her old paler.

"No; he is well enough," was the impatient reply.

"I fear me you do not forget the wretched Stephano yet, Ralph.""
tints of summer are toned down, and the luxuriant foliage is donning its mellow garb of departure, in russet brown and pale yellow.

A charming rural village looks out over the deep brown waters of the lake, and from its white walls a smooth lawn slopes down almost to the water's edge. It is not long past noon; the sun is not yet at its zenith; and opening the balcony outside, which is full thirty feet from the ground, and commands a magnificent view of the lake and mountains, blue in the autumnal haze.

Presently there is a faint rap at the door, and she bids the intruder enter with a deep brown velvet jacket. An almost start of surprise and joy fills her heart at the sound who it is, but she exclaims pettishly, "I didn't tell you, Amina, I wanted to be alone! My head aches badly, and your endless chatter annoys me."

The dark woman of the house asks for a cup of tea, and follows her words, as she turns to find the reason. Every trace of color leaves her face, and she starts to her feet wildly as she sees a man with a handsome, passionate countenance, swarthy Italian complexion, and whose black eyes are following her every movement with a strange glitter. She turns abruptly, and, scarcely realizing that belonging to modern society, though not sufficiently extravagant to excite unusual attention. Beneath his loose velvet jacket a deep blue shirt, with a close-fitting crimson waistcoat gleams the hint of a stiletto.

"Stephano?" she gasps.

"I am come, you see! I always told you I should! Don't ask me to be frank, dear Count, and I shall lie on a couch all the afternoon, with only Anaa here for company."

They are talking in Italian, for she has not yet learnt sufficient of his own language to hold converse in it fluently. What the count says is a very pleasant party ombark at the Villa Rucci, consisting of the Count and Countess, their three pretty children, the nurses, and a score of grooms who glide over the clear, rippling bosom of the lake, the sculls being wielded by the two gentlemen with much dexterity.

The Countess is much occupied with her children, to whom she is devotedly attached. The oldest of them is a little girl of some eight summers, with a piquant, pretty face, and charmingly gay manners. The child says, "Alessandro, I am sure he draws the boat exactly like that, for what he drew near the fauteuil, and sinks on his knees beside it gently.

Leonora, I give my life into your hands!" And he flings the stiletto through the casements, and it falls, glittering and twirling in the sun, to the ground beneath. "Forgive me! My love for you has made me cruel, wicked—but forget all! You have tried me, and have found me true. You will smile on me now?" And he takes her little hand, and bends over the side of the boat and, with a great effort, heavily, she says, "I cannot listen to you! Remember, I am a wife!"

"Why are you a wife?" he chides, not heeding her protest. "What ails you, that you so proudly suppose that you would wait, Leonora, till my estates were restored to me? Why marry this Englishman?"

"Ah, my Stephano! I did not hear from you, I thought you had forgotten me. This Englishman was handsome, and rich, and good to me. I thought I loved him. I did love him a little, and I did not care. I have said that I do not care. As she looks up at him appealingly, the tears are standing thick in her dark eyes, and the languishment has fled from her beautiful features.

"Come with me," he whispers, softly, "and repair the past. Listen to me, Leonora! In those days—those dark days at your father's castle, when we exchanged hearts, and were first ranked as man and wife, as your father's captain, ay, a captain of brigands, even. Robbery and pillage were my livelihood; but the crime was the State's. The State robbed me of all that is in me, and I can make no claim to the present Government. Last month they made me restitution of everything—my land, my castle, and my treasures, and I do not press you, Stephano. I cannot go!"

"Their backs are to the door, and so are absorbed to be that they do not hear it open slowly, then shut it and draw the half-closed door, clothes, enter and stand listening, in mute astonishment.

"Nay, you must hear me, Leonora! I have very little, for I am a man. The State was kind, and I have no blood, clothes, in state. Init no ride in horses, in leisure, or the thought of Stephano. And the same time, clothes, and do not press me, Stephano. I cannot go!"

"He can!" she cries. "I little dream it! Go. Leave me as I am, and I will follow you! And with it, a thrilling majesty worthy of the grand actress that she is, she points to the door.

But he does not stir. He only regards her fixedly with those brilliant eyes, and a scornful smile on the thin lips. "You dare not call!" he hisses, tauntingly.

"I have a little friend here—and, nearly, a stiletto significantly—that would settle all our differences in a moment, my beauty! You must know me better. You have forgotten me, my love! Know me, then, Leonora! I will deal you death, rather than know that you live with another!"

She recoils from him, sinking back in the fauteuil. "Oh, Heaven, defend me!"

A sudden light flings over the handsome face of the Englishman. His expression melts its dark lines almost into tenderness. What he draws near the fauteuil, and sinks on his knees beside it gently.

"Yes, Leonora, I give my life into your hands!" And he flings the stiletto through the casements, and it falls, glittering and twirling in the sun, to the grounds beneath. "Forgive me! My love for you has made me cruel, wicked—but forget all! You have tried me, and have found me true. You will smile on me now?" And he takes her little hand, and bends over the side of the boat and, with a great effort, heavily, she says, "I cannot listen to you! Remember, I am a wife!"

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CHAPTER III

AT THE "SILVER TROUT."

It was winter at Grimspeath. The snow lay in great thickness, thick over the land, and it had drifted and filled up one of the ditches that ran along the high road through Grimspeath so effectually that it would not be possible for a traveler on foot not to walk through its treacherous white surface into the aforesaid ditch.

Grimspeath Hall, hamlet, and park—for all three did this cognomen appertain—lay some six miles from the little market-town of Chilhampton in the pleasant county of Devonshire.

Scarcey could the dozen or so of farm-houses and cottages that lay alongside the high road find a break in the darkness, nor, with the exception of the name of village, even as Grimspeath hamlet it was spoken of, followed usually by the remark, "and a very dull place it is." Perhaps, on the winter's evening on which we first became acquainted with Grimspeath, the least dull scene in it was the bar-room of the "Silver Trout."

This was the only inn within some miles of the hamlet, and it was patronized accordingly. The room was a sort of compromise between a kitchen and a taproom; a corner of it, where the flagstones and plates peeped forth from one side, and an ancient cabinet and a small round table, holding several grim-covered, worn books, appeared in greater glory.

Opposite the great, old-fashioned fireplace, on whose wide hearth crackled a log fire lustily, was the little bar; and its pewter pots and brass lanterns, and dark rafters of the ceiling above, glowing in the ruddy glare of the fireside.

Though it was not yet eight o'clock, mine host had taken his seat for the evening in the warmest corner by the fire. Some five or six farmers of the neighborhood were sitting about, and pipes were lighted, and the blue tobacco smoke was curling and wreathing in fantastic shapes among the old rafters, while the home-brewed ale went its jovial round.

Mr. Norton, "the Silver Trout," was a widower. Perhaps that was the reason he was so round, rosy and jolly; and if at times a trifle testy, and inclined to be short-tempered, it was no more than was to be expected from a full-blooded autocrat such as he. For, besides being landlord of the "Silver Trout," he rented the largest farm on the Grimspeath estate, living in a manner before his time, and enjoying to no little sum of money he had put away over it; and he lorded it just as mightily over his farm-labourers as if their families as over the one or two servants who had long been about the old inn.

But there was one young person of his house, who now returned with very little authority, and that was his daughter—an only child.

Indeed, pretty Lucy Norman seemed to have her own sweet way, not only with her old father, but with every one else at Grimspeath. To attempt to control her would be something like attempting to control a butterfly dancing in the sun.

She was as saucy, piquante, warm-hearted a maid as any among the bonny lasses of county Devon. A soft, golden brown were the wavy masses of hair that fell to her shoulders, a mirthful, deep blue eyes met your gaze coyly from out the witching face, with its rosy cheeks and lips, dimpled with roguish smiles; a face that was as pretty as the summer flowers, firm and well-rounded, yet buoyant as a fairy's, and there you have Mistress Lucy Norman.

This sharp, wintry evening she kept tripping blithely to and fro—"trip" is the only term applicable to her airly mode of progression—backing and forth to the bar-parlor, as it was called, bestowing her bright smiles and using her smart little tongue among the worthy farmers.

Every now and again she would slip down through the passage, open the big entrance door just far enough to admit her little head, and peep over the low garden-ledges, and up and down the dreary road, high road.

"Now, lass; it's no good looking out o' that door," came her father's cheery tones from the bar-parlor, as he heard her on one of these little excursions. "He won't be coming down this night to see ye."

"You know nothing about it, dad!" was her saucy way of saying back to him, "you can't see the little bar. He promised to come to-night, and when Harold promises he always keeps his word. Brown October, did you say, Mr. Jeffreys?"

"No; a large, cold, stony walk away beneath the bar.

When the wants of Farmer Jennings had been attended to, she disappeared again.

"It's to be a white night this," continued the old man, "the moon shines high about the old Grimspeath grist.

"'Ere, that, be true!" put in Farmer Jennings, a big, burly man, standing six feet two in his stockings, and with shoulders like an ox; "they be a wild race, those Grimspeaths—freesing and game."

I noticed, and minded the day the old Squyer—this 'un's father broke my 'ead with the butt-end o' his whip, 'cause I was swinging on the farm-gate, and I had to stay there next day, so he sees me, and gives me a gold point to get it mended again. I was young then, and would ha' got it broke twice a day at the price.

The old Squyer, as he was called, was quite a youth with a roar of laughter. When it had subsided, mine host said, "Yes; that's just the way o' the Grimspeaths. My dad used to tell some tales o' the Squyer, who was the grandfather of this 'un; but they're all o' the same sort. Oh, bless my soul, what a change there is about the old Hall since I can remember it."

"Is it true," asked a young farmer, sitting back a little from the circle, and who had not got the rustic twang of those about him—"is it true enough, Mr. Giles, returned mine host, shaking his head gravely. "You may be a new-comer among Squyers or you might ha' known that afore."

"And has the family been much thought of—much liked round about?" pursued the young farmer in改 distribution."

"Loved, sir?—loved!" exclaimed mine host, warmly. "As 'sure's my name's Joe Norman, there has been love, wouldn't ha' done out o' pure love for the Grimspeaths; and my fether and his fethery afore him the same. We would ha' spilt our blood, and welcomed them. Yes, they're much loved hereabout."

"But what's this about the young Squire's marriage? asked the young farmer. "I thought he was married abroad. Is there no likelihood of any children?"

"Ah, that was more'n seven years ago," replied mine host. "They say she was an opera-singer, or something o' the sort, and she went mad, and then died, and was put in a 'ylum. It's a strange story."

"And who was the old man who died at the Hall last month?" "No bullet, no wound, with a rubricun nose; which had been hidden for the last minute in a great brown jug.

"That was an old Italian servant o' the Squyers returned mine host. "Nobody could make much out o' him, because he couldn't speak a word o' English. What was his name?"

"No; Jacopo," replied the short, elderly farmer, sitting in the corner opposite mine host.

"Oh ah; and his old wife lives at the Hall still, all alone."

"Cep't for the gostties," put in Farmer Jennings. "There's been talk enough about the old place being haunted lately."

"Likely as not," said mine host. "But Martin Rawle could tell most about that. He's the only one up there now."

While the door of the old inn was heard to open, followed by approaching footsteps.

"That's my lass's sweetheart, young Master Harold," said the old man, with a knowing wag of his head. But at that moment the new-comer entered.

"Hullo, Mr. Rawle," said mine host; "we were just about to speak of the old Squyer. Here's a chum for ye."

Martin Rawle was a long, thin man, with bushy, dark beard, weather-stained features, and long, sinewy hands. He was respected about there, for he was Sir Ralph Grimspeath's bailiff, had the leasing of the farms, looking after the preserves, and general management of the property.

"Young Mr. Rawle," said the old man, "tell us about the old Squyer. How long is it since the Squyer was here, I suppose? asked Farmer Jennings, when the bailiff was seated, and had been served with a jug of the "brown October" by a maid behind the bar.

"Nigh on four years," replied Martin Rawle, filling his clay pipe, "and then he only stayed a few days to settle a little business."

"Aye, it was to be a bit more business, I should think," put in mine host with a chuckle.

"And mayhap it would be becoming before he does," said the bailiff, "so I'm leaving him to settle a cloud of smoke round his head, and then re-lapsing into silence.

Silence also fell on the group in front of the rude fireplace, and they smoked their long pipes a few minutes contemplatively. There was another bar on the other side of the passage, rather larger, and for more general use, and some of the farm-laborers set there sometimes of an evening. The hum of their talk and the clatter of pots could be heard by those sitting in the bar-parlor now.

Presently there was a sharp ring of a horse's iron shoes on the hard-frozen snow outside as a rider drew rein before the old inn.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE-MAKING.

It was a fact somewhat strange, that no sooner had the sound of the horse's hoofs become audible than the entrance door at the end of the passage was thrown wide, and Miss Mildred and a tall, trim Miss Adela came briskly to her room, with apparently bestowing another thought on the approaching rider.

After being rushed into the bar-parlor, and looked about eagerly for some one; but was evidently disappointed.

"Aha, Master Harold!" cried mine host. "Well, Master, siding for the Hall, eh? Oh she be waiting inside for ye, pointing with his pipe over his shoulder. "She's been dancing about all the evening on the look-out."
Returning the greetings of the assembled company, the young man divested himself of his coat and vest, and righted his high-heeled shoes on the chair. Then he left the bar-parlor, and knocked at the door of the little room next to it impatiently.

There was a pause, succeeded by an abrupt "Come in," as grimly uttered as sweet feminine tones could utter it.

He burst in, and there was the young lady he had so unexpectedly, absorbed, to all appearance, over a complicated piece ofNeedlework before her. She hadn't even time to look up to see what was the matter.

"Why, Lucy, what are you doing? Not a good—enough—night—enough of a smile? Why, are your manners?" he exclaimed, going up to her.

She bent over her, and pressed a kiss on her red lips. Then she started, and looked up with a little frown of mock severity.

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Forrester? You are here already! I am surprised you've troubled to come at all; such a bad night, too.

And then she returned to her complicated piece ofNeedlework with a little toss of her head.

"What a terrible tyrant you are! You make a woman's vague, warm home, Lucy. Better late than never, they say."

"So you seem to think, Mr. Forrester. I wish you wouldn't practice it so often," was the reply, as she expected you in the course of the evening; it is now nine o'clock at night—close on bedtime.

"Indeed! Well, as it's your bedroom, Miss Norman, I won't detain you another instant;" and with a twinkle in his dark eye, the young man turned to the door.

There was a momentary struggle on the handle before there was a rustle behind him, and he felt himself most unceremoniously seized and hauled backward by his coat-tails.

"I won't come back unless you put away that needlework!" he exclaimed, keeping his ground by the door, notwithstanding the little tyrant at his coat-tails.

"You mustn't! You mustn't!" she exclaimed. "I have just come, Lucy. Better late than never, they say;"

"'I'm off, then. Good-night!'"

"No, no; I agree.

"'Run away. Hurry?'"

"'Perhaps—yes, I'm sure—for, I have heard some one following me quickly. I peeped round to see who it was, and should have shrieked if it had been that woman; but it was only Mr. Mills;'

"'Did you tell him?'"

"'Yes; and he only laughed, and said it must have been many faces or else it was the old Italian woman, Amina. But he said I had better not tell it about, as there was quite enough said about the Hall being haunted as it was, so you are the first I have mentioned it to, Harold.'"

"Quite right, dear. It's a very curious affair, certainly; but I shouldn't think about it. It would be very bad, don't you know?'

"'What you say had something to tell me, instead of letting me chatter all that rubbish,'"

"'So you call it rubbish? I'm glad to hear that, Lucy. Well, my news is, that just as I was starting for here this evening, Mr. Channing sent for me. He said that Mr. Mills, our head cashier, was going to leave for a better appointment; that Mr. James, second cashier, was to take his place; and then he offered to make me second cashier, with a salary of—listen, Lucy.'"

And he bent forward, and whispered something in her ear.

"Oh, Harold, are you a duck?" she cried, flinging his arms round him, and giving him a vigorous hug.

"That's not worth being late for, eh, Lucy?" he asked, slyly.

"You fellow! why didn't you tell me of it at once? I should have been boiling over with such news as that."

"Well, Lucy, they say women are variable. A little while since I was a tease, then a duck, and now a bad fellow. Which is to be?"

"Don't you laugh! It ought to snow yourself, sir!" she returned, inflicting a pinch on his arm by way of punishment.

Just then they heard the scuffling of heavy feet, and breaking up of the party by the bar-parlor.

"Dear me, Lucy! it must be nearly ten o'clock!" exclaimed the young man, starting to his feet. "I must be moving, dear."

He hastened back to Chilhampton till nearly eleven, Harold."

"No; and you seem to have forgotten all about that bedtime you were so anxious for a short time, and be off, and besides, I've got something to talk to you of.

"What is it dear?"

"Whether he doesn't think it's time for us to name a certain day?"

"It's quite enough, I think you ask me, Master Harold. That's nothing to do with dad."

"What's that, ye young rebel?" cried mine host with a cheery voice from behind them.

"Oh, nothing, dad. Harold's been teasing me, that's all. He's a dear, bad fellow.

"Ah, they're all the same, las. When I was a young man, we was all tied to our mam's apron strings, till five and twenty. Nowadays the lad gubs about after the lasses afore they've left their teeth."

"The lads, Mr. Norman; it's the lasses' fault," returned the young man, warmly.

"How dare you say so, Harold?" cried the young rebel, administering another pinch, that made him jump.

"He—he—and maybe you're part right, said mine host, shaking his head wisely, at his putative righter.

"I can hear Jem round at the front with the mare," exclaimed the young man. "Good-by, Lucinda."

"Good-by, Mr. Norman."

With another kiss from his lady love, and a parting hand-shake from mine host, he went out of the hall, cold night.

The catler was leading his mare up and down on the road before the inn.

In the window was a sinner in the saddle, and with a wave of his hand, entering away down the hard, silent street.

The night was terribly cold, with that still, keen, biting frost but rarely met with in mild country Devon.

The lowering, leading palm that had been hanging over the white land all day, had rolled away, and the very half moon, still young in its second quarter.

Harold Forrester, galloping homeward in the calm moonlight, was thinking over the sad things that had happened, and picturing to himself the pleasant times to come.

He had been but too familiar with the former from his childhood up; but the promises of the future looked bright and captivating now, as to fond youth they ever will look.

He was an orphan, without kith or kin, excepting a maiden aunt, a sister of his father's, who lived with him.

His father had been a man well to do, and owning considerable property round Chilhampton, and an evil way of squandering.

His wife had died in giving birth to their first son, Harold; and some few years after that, he had been obliged to quit his beautiful countrie home, ruined in fortune and broken in spirit.

Dark days from that time forth dwelt for young Harold."

In his days of prosperity, Mr. Forrester, senior, had been very intimate with Sir Geoffrey Grimspeath, the present Baronet's father. The latter's widow, when he died, took Mr. Forrester's daughter, as it was not expected that his father, who was an Irishman, would ever marry again. His wife had died in giving birth to their first son, Harold; and some few years after that, he had been obliged to quit his beautiful countrie home, ruined in fortune and broken in spirit. 

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and Co., which offer the youth gladly accept.

Since that time, seven or eight years ago, Sir Ralph had returned but twice to his ancestral home; but on each occasion had looked up his young friend, and found him in high favor with his employers.

Harold lived in Chillingham with his aunt Fortune, and a scanty income of his own, and was partially dependent on him.

He had fallen in love with, and become engaged to, the pretty daughter of one of the most respected gentry of the county, and the old gentleman stipulating only for a son-in-law in a fairly prosperous and assured position before a marriage should take place.

This was a heavy salary that the young man had received that evening; he hoped, place him in the position required.

But he was middle-aged, and rather slight made, though muscular. He had curly black hair, a black mustache, and black eyes, that gleamed often with a quick, sly eagerness.

His features were regular and good; yet, perhaps, there was a touch of the ascetic about his chin, that might tell a tale in the future of following the evil counsels of others, instead of his own.

In the bank he was accounted clever, suave in temper, and successful; though given at times to strange irascible moods, during which friends and enemies, every thing was sacrificed to his passing ire.

But these humors were, fortunately, very occasional.

He had covered more than half the distance of his ride, when he saw a horseman approaching him from Chillingham at a hand-gallop. Considering the slippery condition of the roads, he looked at his watch, and in a manner that seemed almost reckless.

Surprised to see any one pursuing that lonely way at that time of night, Harold drew rein as the rider came up.

He was a tall, broad, gaunt-looking man, sitting square and firm in his saddle. He spoke without a glance at the other; but Harold caught one glimpse of a stern face in the moonlight, that caused him to start with a muttered exclamation. Then he saw the face of the fatigued figure, listening to the sharp ring of the horse's hoofs fading away in the distance, before, drawing a deep breath, he resumed his way.

"Good evening, sir," said the Baronet, in his calm, equable tones. "Very busy, I see. Really, you are looking charming; and I must say that Harold has some right to consider himself lucky!"

Of course this remark increased the young lady's confusion, and she had to bend low over the bar-parlor, so as not to notice it; however, and smiled to himself, as he continued:

"I have come to ask a favor of you, Miss Lucy. My housekeeper, Mrs. Tyler, was here the other day. I think, Norman! Well, I've just been telling Miss Lucy I have a favor to ask her. Mrs. Tyler says she is short-handed, or wanting help of some kind. There's a great deal to do in this household freshly started like mine, I suppose. She saw your daughter when she was down here, and took quite a fancy to her. Now, if you had a young lady who could come and help you for a few weeks, to run up to the Hall, and help look after things, she will be doing Mrs. Tyler a service, I think."

Miss Lucy's hostess only too glad to be able to oblige her young landlady, and gave her consent forthwith. Lucy herself was delighted with the prospect of reveling in the mysteries and pleasures of household management, and, after that, four or five afternoons in the week she spent there, and soon made herself quite familiar and became Mrs. Tyler's "right hand."

It is true that Harold, on one or two evenings, had arrived at the "Silver Trout," ex- cepting one or two occasions, he was not pleased on being told that she was at the Hall, and having to trudge thither to find her. But these were exceptions, as, when she knew of his coming, she arranged to be at home to meet him.

For some little time after Sir Ralph's return, conjectures were rife among the gentry of that part of Devon as to whether his wife was pregnant, or was engaged in some pleasing undertaking, for he had never been married, after all. He was grimly mute himself on the subject, and among the many friends and acquaintances he met now, there were none ready to give any information to him direct. If, in the course of conversation, a slight hint were thrown out, the talkers, with a steady, fixed stare, would not look at him, that he was not likely to forget soon. Yet it gradually gained ground that the young Baronet—whether widower or bachelor—was already married, and that he had, with families of grown-up daughters caught eagerly at the belief. Sir Ralph so favored the rumor himself as not to give it verbal contradiction.

Sir Ralph Grimspith at this time was about thirty years of age. That he was a handsome man there was no doubt. Judging from his appearance, he might have descended from the old, regard, Saxon blood, and an artist who had chosen him as his ideal of Athelstan, or ill-fated King Harold. He was tall, square, with florid face and figure, his hair and beard white, his hair clustered in short, thick curls over his head. He was a little pale, but his features were fine, and the firm, abrupt chin, lanky frame, and drooping, thin, dreamy, lent character to them. Yet with all this there was a sad, pitless, hard-set expression on that face; and from the eyes, for they were dreamily, diamond-like, of that clear, unclouded light, that told of smoulder- ing fires within, crushed down by iron will, indolent now in the society of his neighbors; a good deal of a duty, and a little of a duty, and he was usually taciturn, with little apparent desire of making friends.

A young lady had made many visits to the Hall before she found there were some strange proceedings and in-junctions on the household that roused her curiosity. She called to see Mrs. Tyler, a motherly, good-hearted soul, could give no satisfactory explanation to her queries.

The ground floor of the right wing—the banqueting hall, as it was known in Grimspith hamlet—was now in daily use; but Lucy had always have a desire to explore the floor above and the secret passages. On this particular to do, she asked Mrs. Tyler, there would be any objection to her doing so.

The worthy housekeeper seemed horrified at the idea of young ladies exploring the banqueting hall, and said that Sir Ralph had strictly ordered that no member of the household should be permitted to enter that portion of the right wing. But Lucy had not heard of such a rule, and, being in the use of the wife of the old Italian servant, who died there lately, and there was no gaineysing the young Baronet's words.

"She must have five rooms leading into that corridor," said Lucy, surprised.

"So I should think, my dear," replied Mrs. Tyler, "though I have never been there my- self. The old woman who was last in charge was very tall, and it's very English she can talk. Her meals are all carried up on the table-slab at the head of the table, and two of them in herself. And nice dainties she do have, too—as good as ever go into the big dining-room. That's by master's orders. And Mrs. Tyler's voice is very clear, and, for clamor, for I do declare she eats more than I do!"

"And does no one ever go there—not a serv- ant even to attend on the rooms?"

"The old Italian woman do come down and borrow a pail and broom, and then she cleans them herself. And Sir Ralph has had the bath-room out of the bath-room on the floor specially for her."

"Well, I wonder if she is haunted," laughed Lucy. "Perhaps it's through the place has got—"

"There's one thing, my dear," said Mrs. Tyler, confidentially, "there's strange sounds heard at times from that right wing. My hus-"
CHAPTER VI.

EAVESDROPPING.

On the other side of Chiltonham lay the estates of the Tremaine family. They extend ed for miles across the land. Tremin was one of the greatest landlords in Devonshire, and would have been one of the wealthiest if it had not been for the mortgages incurred through the wild extravagance of his uncle, the late Earl.

Sir Ralph Grimspeth had made a visit of a few days to Tremain Castle by invitation, and now, when he was leaving, he felt ing that at last his inclinations had become matrimonial, and that the Lady Alice—the young daughter of the house—was the ob ject of his attentions.

Rumor even went so far as to state that the young lady's mother, the Countess of Tremaine, felt so strongly about the matter that she would be very pleased to have him in her family again.

When these reports perempted to Grimspeth, and to the household up at the Hall, they were received doubtfully and distrustfully. For the Tremaines were a haughty and overbearing race, and a stranger, as mine host had said, "could not be regarded as their tenant's and neighbors.

Martin Rawls, when it came to his ears, shook his head. "A terrible thing," he said, "and I cannot believe him.

Both the wings had been added to Grimspeth Hall in the times of the First George, and were not in the same manor style. Lady and Mrs. Tyler had been attending to something in the upper story of the right wing one afternoon, and while the former was engaged in the work of a woman, the latter was still attired in the old Italian servant, Annins. They were used for lumber and storage purposes.

Mrs. Tyler had gone, and Lucy was pre paring to follow her, when she was startled by hearing the rich, full tones of a woman's voice stealing along the passageway out of which the ladies led.

The voice was that of Lady Alice. Lucy summoned all her courage, approached the farther end of the passage, where the tones seemed to increase in volume. They were not very loud, but appeared to come from a distance. The thickening substance were between them and the listen ers.

After a short and close scrutiny, she dis covered a narrow door set into the wall, near it, and apparently of a piece with it. To ordinary ob servers it would have looked like a division in the panelling of the room. It was neither known nor handle to indicate a door, and all she saw was a small, round hole, into which she judged a key could be fitted.

Just for the sake of Mrs. Tyler calling to her, and asking, in surprise, where she had got to.

She went down-stairs at once, and said nothing about the secret door, resolving to take an early opportunity of investigating it for her own private satisfaction.

This occurred a day or so after. It was growing quite dark as Lucy shifted up to the lonely attic passage, and went toward the further end.

No singing—a sound was to be heard now; but her heart beat fast as she saw in the dim light that the secret door was ajar. After a moment's hesitation, she pulled it slightly open, entered the room, and found it was very heavy, but swung back easily, as if on well-oiled hinges. Nothing was perceivable in the darkness, except a sense of aloofness, which at the first glimpse, when she fancied she caught a ray of light, like from a lamp.

All being silent, she ventured to enter what looked like a large store room. She was not only empty, but there was no means of opening it from the outside.

As she realized her position, shut in this narrow passage, leading she knew not whither, a great dread took possession of her, and she turned to the door again. There was only one thing to do—to go forward.

Nervous herself, she commenced feeling her way along the passage. It sloped downward, and after a short distance, making a sharp turn, she came suddenly upon a little spiral stair case, lighted by a small lamp from below. She paused in doubt, wondering how the lamp happened to be there. A strong smell of wood hung down the crooked, wooden stairs. When at the bottom, she found herself on a small land ing, looking, when first she saw it, with the first story. No windows had she seen, and the illumination from the lamp was so dim, it scarcely sufficed to show what sort of a place she was in.

As she stood peering forward into the gloom, she suddenly fancied she heard the murmur of voices in conversation. Advancing a few steps, full of misgivings, she came upon a wide, open doorway, giving into a large space or apartment in perfect darkness.

She could see it was large, because on the opposite side, and some distance away, was another door, standing half open, and through which a flood of light was streaming into the outer hall.

She could hear the sound of talking distinctly now from the door opposite to her, and entered the chamber of darkness with a stealthily, trem bbling step.

She paused the instant she could view through the further door, catching her breath with astonishment at what met her gaze.

A large and brilliant with the glow of amber-colored light, suffused by two lamps, hanging from the ceiling by brass chains.

The costly furniture and fittings, and gorge ous draperies, that screened the large casements, were all of deep crimson hue. The cushions of the settee were of red velvet, and relieved at intervals by glittering mirrors, set between fluted columns, with gilded capitals. And on the marble slab of highly-carved cabinets and side tables were scattered elegant vases of porphyry and ormulum, and rare old pieces of Sevres and Sévres.

Lucy Norman took in this dazzling scene at the first glance, and did not stay to note its massiveness; for her attention was immedi ately absorbed by two people—the sole occupants of the apartment—who were seated on a low, broad sofa, and conversing in the mur mur tone of the hearth.

To her extreme surprise, she recognized in one the Sir Ralph Grimspeth. His back was toward her, and he was leaning over a lady by his side, in a low, amiable manner.

Half-buried in the huge, crimson pillows, re clined, rather than sat, a woman with the most lovely face she had ever seen, Lucy thought.

Wild and beautiful was that countenance, and yet it was a fearful beauty, that carried no light to the gazer's eyes, and somehow sear the soul with its dark; cruel haughtiness.

Gloxy and black were the tresses that rippled unconfined down her back; and inscr, velvety eyes glanced slyly beneath her arched, puckered eyebrows.

At times, her upper lip curled scornfully as she spoke, and her white, rounded arms, bare above the sleeves, were crossed determinately on her bosom.

She was arrayed in loose, negligent costume, of the richest French materials, with jewels and trinkets; and, with a start, Lucy recognized the beautiful, fierce face she had seen that winter's day when hurrying past the heated glass door of the parlor.

All the tales she had ever heard of the young Baronet's Italian wife swept vividly through her memory now. Keeping well in mind the approach nearer to the half open door.

They were talking in a language strange to her, though every now and again the lady waved her English.

From her low, earnest tones Lucy surmised she was beseeching Sir Ralph about something, which seemed to be the subject of their con versation, and captivating her.

And yet Lucy fancied his voice had a softer ring in it than was its wont. And when he inclined his companion's shapely white hand in his own, there was almost a caress about his touch.

Suddenly she started wildly to her feet, flailing off the hand-clasp, and Lucy shriunk with an involuntary start, as the shadow that came over the woman in that instant.

With eyes rolling, and glaring down on the young woman; Lucy fancied the multicolored crimsoning her hitherto pale features, her bosom heaving and panting, and her fingers and hands twitching, as if longing to get a hold of someone. For she resembled a tiger, ready for its fatal spring.

And Lucy could almost have screamed when, the next moment, Sir Ralph seized the beauti ful fury by the waist, and forced her down, struggling madly, onto the sofa.

Amina, the old Italian woman, entered, carrying a lamp, and went to the struggling woman, soothing words and gestures. Then Sir Ralph rose, lifting his wild burden in his arms—tenderly almost, Lucy thought—and carried her to the bed beside her, and Anima following with the lamp.

Hastily, Lucy retired through the open doorway onto the dimly-lit landing again. She was seized with a sense of darkness, Amina following with the lamp.

...
several broad leathered straps attached to it; and while he was holding his fair burden down, the old woman proceeded to fasten it to her own waist, and under her arms, taking care so to secure them that the buckles were quite beneath the couch. When she had finished, the beautiful Fury was firmly fastened, and lay there grinning at her teeth, and graying venefically up at her captor.

Sir Ralph addressed a few words in a low tone to Aminta, then came toward the outer door.

Lucy had been so much astonished and bewildered that she had not, seen that she had almost forgotten her own strange predicament. Pearing to be found in the position of an ave-nsar, dropped by the brawny creature, seen down in the shadow, with the hope of afterward obtaining her release through the old Italian woman. To her dismay, he closed and locked the heavy door from the outside, and, not noticing her, passed up on the spiral staircase.

In a few moments, that seemed like hours to her, she heard an abrupt exclamation from above. He had evidently discovered that the door leading onto the attic floor had been shut. Then she heard his steps slowly descending the spiral stairs again, and felt that discovery was near.

She saw him slowly emerge into the dim lamplight, gazing about him with searching eyes. He had just finished her, and with two bounds he was at her side.

"Whom have we here?" he exclaimed, in a hard, clear voice; and, seizing her by the shoulders, dragged her beneath the lamp. "Lucy Norman?"

"He dropped her arm, and regarded her with a stern look of inquiry.

"Yes; yes, Sir Ralph," she fal-tered. "I found the—the door open, and—"

"How much have you seen, my girl?"

asked Lucy hesitated.

Perhaps I had better ask how long you have been here?" he continued, serving for my poor wife yonder—do you think you could do it, Lucy?"

The gentleman in whose spoke of his we will be taken within the walls, so different to what she had always thought hidden under that grim visage and demeanor.

"I would try, sir," she answered earnestly. "I will take you at your word, my—girl," he said, smiling down at her. "We must be friends, Lucy, and another time I will talk to you further. We will go now."

And, saying this, gave that key from his pocket, descended the spiral staircase again, Lucy following.

She had promised to be at the "Silver Trout" punctually at six o'clock that evening to meet Harold; but when she arrived there, found that she had overstayed her time at the Hall, and that it was long past that hour.

As she stepped out of her cherub father greeted her with a shake of his head, saying, "Eh, lass, where have yo been? Mealster Harold's been waiting this long time, Lucy. You poor soul. Rare put out be, I tell you, and I don't wonder at it. He's left a let-ter for ye, though."

Poor Lucy colored up rosily red, and, taking the letter, turned into her own sitting room, without a word.

What Harold had to say was short and sharp, and referred to the necessity of young ladies keeping a close watch on their families to keep their lovers. There were evident traces about the letter of a temper that had been thoroughly tried, and Mistress Lucy's deep blue eyes slowly filled with tears as she read it.

The door opened slowly behind her, and the young man himself put in an appearance.

He had been to the stable to fetch his mare, and saw his lady-love arrive.

When leaving an hour or two later, all was at peace between the young couple, and he said, "I shall ride over on Thursday evening, then, to see you, Lucy; and this time I hope Grimspeth Hall won't absorb your attention half the day."

"Oh, dear, no, Harold! Thursday is the day of the bull, you know. Oh, and it is going to be such a grand affair! Half the county is to be there."

"Is Lady Alice Marston invited?" inquired Harold, quietly.

"Yes," said Lucy, coloring faintly. "Why, Harold?"

Haven't you heard what the world says about her and Sir Ralph?"

"Yes; I believe a word of it. I—I think it's all nonsense."

And Lucy seemed somewhat confused.

"You are pretty well informed as to Sir Ralph's intentions," said Harold, with a slight laugh. "At any rate, if I come on Thursday evening it will suit you, Lucy?"

"Certainly! In the afternoon I shall be up at the Hall to help Mrs. Tyler; but after six I expect they would rather have my room than my company. I shall be waiting for you."

"Quite sure, Lucy?" asked Harold, stooping to kiss her.

"Of course, you old goose!" she returned, laughing. "Why, what at jealous old figute you are, Harold!"

"Don't call names, miss!" he exclaimed, in a tone of displeasure, and another kiss, he went forth, mounted his mare, and was gone.

The ball at Grimspeth Hall, the first given by its master after he had settled down made, was indeed to be a grand affair, as Lucy said.

Already, some old family friends were staying there, and an air of festivity reigned over the place. Among them was Lady Bulte, whose husband, Colonel Sir Henry Bulte, an old friend of the last baronet of Grimspeth Hall, had met his fate in India from a seyep bullet, while heading a gallant charge.

Her only daughter accompanied her, a sprightly girl of eighteen, with brown eyes and red hair, and the rich, well-shaped hands of a princess.

It was Lady Bulte, who willingly consented, at Sir Ralph's earnest solicitation, and on the score of old friendship, to perform the humble services as hostess on the occasion coming at the Hall.

From an early hour on the eventful Thurs- day evening, the stream of family, and every description set in, flowing steadily through the lodge-gates, and up the broad avenue.

Leaving against one of the finely frescoed plasterings of the atrium, was a young man with a slight, graceful figure, and features as delicate and effeminate as a woman.

He was without the usual hard hat, and every atom of color gone from his passionless countenance. Giving not the slightest heed to his companion, he turned and quitted the statue-like figure, and started toward the Hall. She followed him closely, her lips tightly compressed, and her eyes shining brightly.
inquired, but nobody knows anything of her. It seems that, oddly she doesn't live here altogether; it isn't for the want of asking, I'll be bound."

He spoke with a snore, and looked hot and angry; one of his dangerous tempers was on him, evidently. The Baronet's blue eyes glittered like steel, and he put out his mighty arm with a pithing fist, and swept away the young man confronting him.

"Is it the pretty young woman—Miss Lucie?" came a full, sweet voice, with a foreign accent.

Harold Forrester's eyes fell upon the speaker, noted the glorious features, the raven hair, and the black velvet robe and sparkling diamond brooch that adorned her face. Then he said: "Yes, Miss Lucy had told him about seeing in the window of the hamlet wing.

"What about her?" asked Sir Ralph, a little huskily.

"Ah! I am taking care of her," laughed the beautiful woman on his arm.

"The moonlight darkened and lowered at her dangerously.

"Wait a moment, Forrester," he muttered, curiously, and then pursued his way with his companion. A look of inexpressible interest came over the faces of Margaret Rawle and Anna in front of them.

When Captain Dudley Marston had seen them, he had been much interested in the two Avonside-looking, likewise appeared, and the Countess of Tremaine stood before Sir Ralph.

He did not winces; he knew what was coming. He had no doubt the Countess would influence the young lady to——my wife, Lady Grimpeth!"

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO KISSES.

The magnificent and beautiful woman at his side bent her head gracefully as he spoke, her eyes, filled with unutterable emotion, looked at him affectionately. There was a commotion and hum of voices among the crowded guests, and they began dropping away by twos and threes, with ominous looks. Lady Butler had shrunk back among them, with a timid little bow and a few mumbled words, when Sir Ralph spoke. A young man lounged forward lazily, still with that deep glitter so droll to the eye. He was talking to the lady.

"My lady," he lisped, in a sweet, boy-like voice, sauntering up to the Countess, "this doesn't go with my line of work."

Lady Tremaine had held her ground in silent indignation before the Baronet, not taking the slightest heed of his introduction, and her scornful gaze never left the buxom guest before. She now turned, and without removing her gaze, accepted her son's offered arm, and moved slowly away, the young husky not bestowing a look upon the object of his mother's resentment.

"Come, Leonora," muttered Sir Ralph, betraying his feelings swiftly. "That woman whom he had claimed as his wife: "we won't,"

One instant she hesitated; one instant a light gleamed in her eyes, wild and lurid: then it was gone, and the young lady faded, within, and bending humbly, she took his arm.

The people fell back on either side as they passed through the ball-room, passed by the wall beside the portrait of the Lady Avonside pink lips and haughty face, and out into the wide gallery, where the first object Sir Ralph's eye fell upon was the terrified visage of the old lady, Tremaine. But she turned, and just behind her Martin Rawle's tall figure.

With a wave of his hand, signing them to follow him, the young man gravely took his companion by the arm. They were passing the head of the grand staircase, where a cluster of powdered footmen was standing, waiting. But Sir Ralph led off. The group excitedly, and rushed up to Sir Ralph.

Where is Lucy Norman, Sir Ralph?" he exclaimed, in a quick, peremptory tone. "They told me at her home that she was here. I have to do so. It's out of date; a thing of bygone days.

"Perhaps horse-whipping is out of date," replied the young husky, listlessly, and toss- ing a half-finished glass into the fire; but couldn't happen to meet me in the presence of fash- ionable resort, Grimpeth, or, by Heaven, I'll make the experiment!"

"He was speaking but as gently and evenly as if he had been paying a commonplace compliment, and he stood twirling his delicate mustache with almost a smile on his face."

"Lady Tremaine, up and down, all the while, for an instant the looker observed in his hand. Then it was replaced.

"As it happens, I am crossing to France to- morrow. Sir Ralph's wife who had appealed

It was muttered in a stilled, monotonous voice, scarcely like a human being. The young husky smiled curiously, and without another word sauntered out of the apartment.

Harold had only waited a few minutes when Lucy appeared, and becoming him, he fol- lowed the young woman down stairs, and was met by the door of the house by a side door into the cool, brisk air of the morning.

She was pressed more than half-way toward the hamlet before Harold spoke. He asked her, in a repressed voice, if she had any- thing to say to account for her strange conduct as of late.

"Quietly and gently she told him how she and the old Italian servant had been locked in a certain strong-room in the right wing, from evening to evening in the evening. They had been kept until Martin Rawle found and released them.

No doubt he (Harold) had heard already of Sir Ralph's wife who had appeared so suddenly, and created such consternation among the guests. She was it who had so unceremoniously locked the man in the hamlet, and thus been able to escape their vigilance.

"So it was Sir Ralph's wife—the opera- singer, I suppose?" mused Harold, thinking of the beautiful face that had smiled on him from the Baronet's side.

He had forgotten his wrath for the moment in his surprise, but now he turned on the girl impishly.

"And what business had you with this mad-woman, or in the house at all, for the matter of that? You are not Sir Ralph's ser- vant?"

"Harold, don't be unkind!"

And pretty Mistress Lucy looked up in his face reprovingly, with a little bright hand on his arm. But he only shook it off cheerfully, and walked on faster.

"You know, Harold, how liberal and generous the Squire's family have always been to all of us for generations past; and how father looks at it. He would do anything for them. What, then, would he say if I were to refuse to perform the slight services at the Hall that I can do?"

They had passed out of the park, and were already half-way through the district of the Trout.""The wind sighed freshly through the bare branches of the trees, and the night was clear and cloudless. In front of them lay the little churchyard, and the small, white tombstones looked dim and peaceful beneath the silent starlight. Under the lowly, ivy-crowned tower of the picturesque church, whose outline could be traced crisply against the moonlight, the mortal generations of Grimpeths, as the marble monuments, tables and escutcheons within could testify.

Lucy, the young lady."

Lucy," said the young man, a little fre-
fully still, "it's past three o'clock. I've been waiting for you since eight last evening. I daresay you think me cross; but it's your own fault, Lucy, for you didn't come. From time you've not kept your appointment. If you loved me only half as well as I love you, you would manage matters differently, I think."

She went on, and even in the dim starlight he could see that the blue eyes raised to his so gently were welling over with tears.

"Can't scold me any more, Harold. Forgive me," she whispered. "If you only knew how much I loved you, how tenderly and dearly, you would come down to-night—that is, this night—there's a darling! See; you're making quite a baby of me," as she wiped up the little rivulets of tears that were sliding silently down her cheeks.

He couldn't resist the soft, sweet pleading, bent over her fondly, and kissed her.

Then they went toward the inn, and mine host, the Squire, knew he was welcome, and right glad he was welcome. A few minutes later, Harold, mounted on the mare, was setting off on his dark journey to Chilhampton.

CHAPTER IX.

CHANGING SCENES.

The night following the ball at Grimspheth Hall was wet, stormy, and gloomy. The wind howled round the gable-ends of the old "Silver Trout," and roared in its wide chimneys.

The horses, shaggy and wet, drew rein in front of the cheery inn, after his ride from Chilhampton. He dismounted and entered, to find a scene of excitement and confusion going on.

A babel of voices issued from the bar-parlor; mine host, alone, sitting in front of the fire calmly, only a little paler than usual. From time to time he read and recrooked a short, rather written in pencil, that he held in his hand.

Mr. Norman," cried Harold, exactly, close to his ear, "where's Lucy?"

Mine host turned round uneasily, with very little of the joviality left in his round face.

"She's gone—away!" he replied, a little thickly.

"I knew it—I was sure of it!" gasped Harold, old, between his teeth. "I saw her not an hour since, on the road to Chilhampton. There were others in the carriage, and one of them was that soundless Grimspheth."

Mine host started quickly to his feet, all his color leaving him at once.

"Look ye, Harold Forrester! Ye may speak what ye like o' me and my daughter; but as sure as ye say a word again the Squire, or the Squire's mare, will run you through.

And the old man paused, with clenched fists, glaring furiously at Harold.

My Lucy, she la' a wrote me, and said as how she would go to London, when she could, to see the doctor. "M. Picarde says the coach was haled from this window; and, nobody being in view, the driver carried the trunks out, and gave a boy to hold it at the door of the station. He heard the lady give the direction. It was all done so quietly, our neighbor thought nothing could be wrong. But he over the man's number on his vehicle—No. 447."

Martin Rawle entered the room at that moment, hearing the excited voices within. Lucy rapidly told him what had occurred.

"And now what can we do?" she asked.

"Sir Ralph will be in a fearful way."

"We must follow her," said Martin Rawle, decidedly.

Within half an hour they had started, and before the middle of the following day had arrived at the house, where the Grimspheth was lost, notwithstanding their inquiries. Doctor Joselin of opinion she had returned to England via Folkestone.

On that evening they decided to Paris to get the assistance of good detectives.

On arrival at the doctor's house, they found that Sir Ralph had returned only a short time before. His features looked worn and pale, and he heard their news in grim silence. After a few minutes' stern thought, he muttered savagely, "I will look for her myself if I will hunt the world through till I find her!"

Martin Rawle and Lucy returned to Grimspheth the next day. They had been away nearly three weeks.

A solitary rider was pursuing his way slowly along the broad avenue through Grimspheth Park one night. The moon was up, and her bright, slivery beams found their way through the overhanging trees, making a pretty change in the pattern across the grass. It was Harold Forrester, and a fortnight had elapsed since the flight of his lady-love, and he had neither seen nor heard a word of her. He had not been in the "Silver Trout," since that night on which he had told mine host his opinion on the matter; but he had come several times to Grimspheth, hoping to gain tidings of Lucy. His suspicions, he thought, now, were only too well verified. The ten days she had named had passed, and her absence was proving alarming.

He raised his eyes to the galloping sound of horse's hoofs, that was bearing down on him from the Hall end of the avenue. On it came the coach, he thought, looking like a cathedral aisle with the floods of silver falling between its massive pillars. In the next instant Harold's blood boiled in his veins; he saw the driver's figure approaching him, Sir Ralph Grimspheth, on his favorite gray charger.

"Is that you, Forrester?" asked the Baronet, in his usual calm tones, reining up. "I'm glad I've met you."

The moonlight fell full on Harold's features, and all the passion and revenge that he had been burning up the last fortnight burst forth on them now.

"So am I, Ralph Grimspheth! I'd have given my life to have saved my Lucy from bearing away to her ruin, poor dupe, that night I passed you! Hound! Where is Lucy Norman?"

Sir Ralph sat in the shade quite motionless, but there was a strange, thrilling quietness in his voice.

"Do you know, Forrester, that for less than three days since Lucy told me she left a man scarce three days since dying on the Belgian border, I have cared; I'm not a man given to think much of consequences."

"I heard it!" laughed Harold, wildly.

Poor young Marston's but one of many! You've made a wreck of lives enough; one, more than enough."

Sir Ralph sat like a statue, still in the shade.

"You've ruined mine; but, by Heaven! this night I'll make you answer for it! You don't go ta' ride the Baronet's reins furiously—"
"Do not trouble yourself, Mr. Forrester," said some one, "but run your friend, and you shall be well taken care of." It was a woman's voice that came to him from behind the sofa, sweet and full, but with just that foreign accent that had been noticeable when she had addressed the crowd gathered round him in the street.

Without more ado, he was conveyed up-stairs gently to a bedroom, and the surgeon set his leg.

An old woman appeared on the scene to nurse and minister to his wants, and for the next fortnight he saw no face but hers and that of the medical man. In vain he questioned her about the name of his benefactress; she said nothing. It is not for me to say, any more about the matter than he did. All she could say was, that the lady who engaged him had apartments in the house and paid her liberally.

It was nearly three weeks before he was able, with the assistance of the nurse, to move down to a lower floor, and lie there wrapped in a dressing-gown.

During that time he had never desired to have a single message sent to any friend or relation of his, as he did not know, any more about the matter than he did. All she could say was, that the lady who engaged him had apartments in the house and paid her liberally.

Presently the door opened quietly, and thinking it was the nurse he did not look up. Then he saw that she was a small woman and half his height, and that she had an air of sadness about her.

"Lady Grimspeath," he said, "is it you?" She nodded, and he added, "Come in."

"I have a message for you," she said, "from Mr. Forrester."

He thanked her and asked her to wait in the hall.

"Yes, Mr. Forrester. Is that anything wonderful?" she laughed. "So you remember me after seeing me only once? Don't stir yourself up in a lather, and she brought a chair, and seated herself opposite him, watching him narrowly.

For he turned deadly pale, and a strange, wild look came into his eyes.

"Where is your husband? Is he— is he in the house?" he demanded, breathlessly.

"Oh, no," she said, "I have heard nothing of him."

"But how—how do you come here, if you will pardon my asking? I understood you were— were very well," he faltered.

"You must know that I was a lunate, as they call it? Speak it out, Mr. Forrester! Mad is the word! It would surprise you to hear that I never was mad," she continued.

She bent forward, speaking quite calmly and earnestly, and her face wore the grave and haughty expression natural to it.

Harold Forrester, he thought to himself that if she were mad now, there was considerable method behind her madness.

It is the truth," she continued, slowly, "and you are wrong in thinking that the general belief about me are best known to myself. The truth was known to Ralph Grimspeath, the grave." And her eyes flashed wickedly as she said it.

"But about yourself, Mr. Forrester. How do you suppose I came to know your name, and who you are? I need not ask you if you remember Lucy Norman—pretty Lucy, as I thought her," he went on. "Again Harold Forrester's face paled, and the same wild light gleamed from his eyes as before, while speaking.

"Never! Not one single instant! I have sought her everywhere; I have followed her to France and Belgium, and all the haunts of her. I came to London a month ago, hearing that Sir Ralph had been seen here. I knew she was with him. Can you tell why she was with him?"

"She was to be engaged to me! I only thought that near rain she was; but I might have known better, while Sir Ralph Grimspeath was in her company. It is too late now."

She watched him furiously under her long, dark lashes as she spoke, and a cunning, evil expression was on her features.

"Curse him!" graced Harold. "From the very first I knew that I would go to Heaven I could meet him now! He should not escape me again."

"Do you know whom you are speaking of, Mr. Forrester?"

"Lady Grimspeath, I beg your pardon. You must consider my provocation. It may be only a little matter to him, but to me—"

"I have not seen him since the last time I saw him," she interrupted, firmly. "Do you think I have cause to love him? Do you think seven years of forced imprisonment—seven years' solitude—seven years' dreariness—seven of the sweetest years of a woman's life stolen from her, are cause sufficient to make a woman love her husband?"

"Lady Grimspeath, if you hate him, what must I do?"

"Looking at the glowing, passionate face appealing to him now, he scarcely knew what to say to her. She was still mad; there was a woman; and if so, the Baronet had incriminated his wife on a false plea, he could understand how intense her feelings might be.

"It is not my purpose to give you a long account of the sufferings and wrongs I have endured in his house, and I shall not now."

"Enough that I hate Sir Ralph Grimspeath as deeply as you can do; enough that I am determined to be revenged on him for the wrongs which I have suffered at his hands."

"And I hate his track; and I saw you in the street I knew your face at once, and remembering the injuries you had received at his hands, thought you might make something of it by the way you had recovered. And now, Mr. Forrester, you are in possession of the reason of my apparent kindness to you."

The bitter, vengeful passions that had been smoldering in Harold's breast burst up anew at her words. To make the man suffer who had made him suffer, who had destroyed the happiness of his life; who had struck him like a hound, and ridden away, leaving him impotent—this had been the dream of the last three months; and he had given vent to it in common cause with his temperance. An inward qualm seized him while she proceeded to tell him her plans to him as far as she thought proper; but he did not give her his blessing, and drowned all scruples in the cruel thirst for revenge.

Half an hour later, he was able to comply with the desire of Lady Grimspeath, and, with assistance, descend to the sitting-room. There he found the man she had revenged on—her husband, in the shape of the sweet, soft-voiced, handsome gentleman who had called him—"who informed them that he had discovered the Baronet was in London, and gave them his address."

"But I think you must be aware that Lady Grimspeath required of him was in the habit of doing very rarely, speaking with a kind of uncouth piety, as if he were imperiling his
A LOYAL LOVER.

soul for the first time in his existence. It was a matter of considerable trouble and of consid-
erable expense. To cover the cost of a considerable amount of money would be required to carry it through. Being pressed to state a sum, the amount he named was certainly very consider-
ably less than what he had been led to expect. How- ever, she said that a portion of the demand should be paid down, and that on the comple-
tion of their plans, she should enter into posses-
sion of the old lady's property, further down stream.

The summer sunstreamed into a comfort-
able but slightly faded sitting-room, and onto the bowed head of a young girl, the ruddy
beams seeming to linger tenderly about her golden-brown tresses, as she sank upon the floor, and her face was buried in her hands, from between which heavy sobs burst forth. An elderly lady, whose dark hair was already laced by a heavy silver-rouged headband, was watching with a look of gentle commiseration.

"Oh, Miss Forrester, what can I do? I'm thoroughly at my wit's end! The Doctor seems to think me faithless—worse! Harold, Harold, how could you? It will break my heart, will it! And there is nothing to be done?"

"Painstaking patience," said the old lady, softly. "It is a heavy trial for you; but he will come back again, Wall and trust.

Poor Mistress Lucy! The trial was heavy for her, and the sorrow almost more than her aching little heart could endure. The weeks had gone by since her return, and she had heard of the movements of the bishop and the lady, and how she had come to Chilhampton to seek news from her aunt.

But when she reached the churchyard on her way back to the "Silver Trout," that lovely summer's after-
noon, she passed by while the little gate. She thought of the last time she had seen him—he had been so fond and so=%

saying, and the ready tears bedewed the soft cheeks, which not even grief could rob of their rose tints, and she murmured, dreamily, "And what is my love doing—where is he now?"

Ah! what was he doing? It is fortunate, perhaps, for true hearts that, in instances like this, the bitter tend-
eyes; and again the ready tears bedewed the soft cheeks, which not even grief could rob of their rose tints, and she murmured, dreamily, "And what is my love doing—where is he now?"

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eyes; and again the ready tears bedewed the soft cheeks, which not even grief could rob of their rose tints, and she murmured, dreamily, "And what is my love doing—where is he now?"
"Ah!" she cried, as she saw their shadows die away beneath the dark portal. "Now am I satisfied! And you, my poor Stephano, are avenged!"

Harold looked at her in surprise; for her words were uttered very passionately, and in a language unknown to him.

"Go, young Doctor Borkwood returned, and then he looked very pale, and his usual pious intonation had left him. He trembled slightly, and merely said, as he conducted them across the hall to the front door: "I am a man of my word, Lady Grimspeth, or I would not carry this job through. Three of my attendants will have to be on sick leave for a month; and we have a fearful case in hand."

CHAPTER XII.

AMONG THE EVENING SHADOWS.

A soft, golden evening in August. The air is still—hushed, save the occasional twirler of a bee. He is asleep, and hum of a home-wending bee; says, also, that a young man, who is seated listlessly on a cross-barred gate, is kicking the third bar as an accompaniment to his thoughts.

He has arrived thus far—two miles on the high road from Chilmington to Grimspeth, and now has called a halt to himself, to question his conscience and feeling as a whole. He whispers a little tune, softly and sadly; and as he gazes up the silent, white road, which is beginning to look shadowy and pleasant, and soft, and as he sees the shadow taking the air on its own account in the early dusk; and, indeed, it is approaching him.

Certainly, it is more pronounced than its kindred, and then, by stages, develops from a formless shadow into a human form, just as a light, firm, tanned, trend, becomes amiable, and the figure stretches to him; and though its charming, girlish outline sends the blood surging up to his heart in one big wave, but he is calm.

Only his sobs as one spellbound, gazing till it has glided quite out of shadowland into the substance, and is close before him.

And when the sweet, beseeching face, with its blue eyes liquid in their tears, and its rosy lips quivering in their emotion, looking so like an angel's with its aureole of golden-brown, but he is so tenderly and softly, her white hands are clasped as the little pent-up "Oh, Harold!" bursts from her, he just heaves a deep, yearning sob, that tells more of pain than a thousand words, and without another sign drops from her seat, and flies past her down the high road.

On, he curves with a breathless stillness, and he is lifted to his own soft turf by the roadside, sitting his great sobs by burying his head on his arms.

"But," he lies there until he grows calmer; then by-and-by he thinks it is growing late, and that he must return to Chilmington, so raises his head. To sit on the turf but a few yards away, is she who came to him out of the evening shadows. The tears still glis- ten on her gentle face, and she is gazing at him with a pure, tenderly expression, while his face was hidden, and sat there since in silence.

His teeth are clenched, as if to keep his tongue from speaking; and he is about to rise and move off wearily, when she bends forward and whispers, in soft, earnest tones, "Harold, my love, why do you have me? Have I done anything that is displeasing to you?"

He snaps to his feet and leans against the field-fence close by. He feels he must escape the young girl's eyes, so he lies, not to confine her.

"Your conscience should be the best judge of what you have done! My prayer has been never to meet you—never to set my eyes on you."

He speaks huskily, and with an effort. For a few moments she does not reply, but suppresses a little rising sob.

"I know what you think, Harold. Your poor aunt told me of your cruel suspicions only a few days before she died. Had you known then how bravely she had gone alone, you might not be doubting me now.

"He is silent, but there is a great wild feeling of hope springing up within him.

"What were you doing away with him?"

"What were you doing away with him?"

"Do you mean the Squire? I went to accompany him. He came away to France, and her old nurse was unwell. He went no farther than Calais with us. Then he placed us in charge of a doctor, and we went on to Paris. I tried to find him till I set off on my return three weeks after."

"She rises, and goes and stands before him."

"Ave, Harold! and see me and tell me all this! It is a month since I returned to Chilmington."

"Was it for me to come, Harold? I knew I had nothing to ashamed of. Besides, father wouldn't let me."

"A great struggle has been going on within him between his doubts and his hopes. He feels that he is dealing with wild, wild eyes that he has behaved like a brute."

"Lucy, what have you to say to me?"

"Her heart goes out to him with a little, low cry, and he holds her in his arms, and her head buried on his breast."

"Forgive me, love!" he murmurs in her ear; and her face is raised readily, with ever such a little touch of sappiness in the deep blue eye, for his kiss."

"The evening shadows have crept down close about them now. Presently they are stroiling about just like a huge, hump-in-arms, and:

"I feel must scold you the least bit in the world, Harold," she says, squeezing his arm.

"But he seems lost in thought, and when he speaks, the tones of his voice are quite grave."

"Lucy, my love, don't ask for explanations now; don't increase our sufferings. The property is terribly hampered with debt, you know, owing to Sir Ralph's extravagance, and yet she is raising more money on it. Father and the other gentlemen are in a fearful way; but, what can they do while Sir Ralph is away! No one knows where he is."

"Harold Forrester knows now that he has a new owner, and has been changed. The house is seamed by its groundless jealousy and irate feelings he has been betrayed into committing a foul sin. And he revives his horror seize on him with tenfold violence.

Through the evening shadows they sight now the scattered lights of Grimspeth hamlet. The "Silver Trout" is to be distinguished by the broader, ruddy band that streams from it. He pauses in their walk, and turns to her.

"Lucy, my love, don't ask for explanations now; don't increase our sufferings."

"I can scarcely imagine her object in telling me so; but she did. She had quite enough to complain of without that. What a piece of villainy of his to lock up a sane woman, and his wife, too!"

"But, Harold, Lady Grimspeth is not sane. I was with her three weeks while she was under one of the cleverest men in Paris. He says hers is a very curious phase of mental dis- ease."

"No, certainly not. But why, Harold? What do you know of Lady Grimspeth?"

"He Labor is not to blame for confining her."

"I fear I have committed a great crime," he mutters, hoarsely. "But no. He struck me, and jeered me. He only has his due."

"What is it, Harold? What troubles you?"

Then he tells her how he met the Baronet that moonlight night on the broad avenue, when the fiend of jealousy was gnawing at his heart, and he had suffered at the Baronet's hands. And he is suddenly and hot again as he recalls the scene."

"He cares for neither man nor law, Lucy. He did not even call me."

"Hush, hush, dear Harold! Sir Ralph has much to account for, but we may not judge him. He has suffered much—his life has been a sad one. I shall love him; I shall love him. I have loved his wife from the very first but too well. Her affliction has been a life-long trouble to him. Such trials failing on strong, fierce soul, he has loved her."

"He loves his wife, you say!" exclamations Harold Forrester, vacantly.

"Yes, I am sure of it. But where is he, Harold? They have been gone changes at the Hall since you were at Grimspeth. Lady Grimspeth is there, and she is much better than she used to be, but still has these attacks."

"Martin Rawle says she shut herself up in the strong-room there for two whole days and nights last week, without any food. I have not seen her."

In the Squire's absence she has dem- anded that the management of his affairs shall be handed over to her, and Martin has been engaged to help her. The property is terribly hampered with debt, you know, owing to Sir Ralph's extravagance, and yet she is raising more money on it. Father and the other gentlemen are in a fearful way; but, what can they do while Sir Ralph is away! No one knows where he is."

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It was laid out tastefully as a garden, and here several persons were lying and sunning themselves. Several apartments, well-furnished, well-lighted, and comfortable, opened into the hall, and two broad stone passages ran from the front to the rear.

The Doctor and his myrmidon passed through one or two of these apartments. The occupants were sitting about, childish-looking, and then some would rise and walk slowly about, the motions of others, while unconscious of their own, and some even reading apart. But wherever the two inspecting riffraff went, a change took place—subtleties grew circumspect and trembling. The Doctor's great system was in full force here. The furniture was taken out, and then the wretched magistrates took their periodical round, they had nothing to do but admire the implicit obedience and professed comfort and happiness of these patients.

"How is he to-day, Royce?" asked the Doctor, as they were ascending a wide staircase, running from midway down one of the passages.

"Just about as usual, sir. Quiet maybe, but all the more dangerous for that. We've got 'im there in the west wing, and 'im and the lot are with 'im."

"This is becoming a nuisance, Royce; they can't be dancing about him always. We shall have to unlatch him."

"He's a-sittin' there quiet enough now—toc quiet for me. I reckon he's 'atchin' some mischief."

"I'll give him something else to sit quiet about," muttered the Doctor, showing his white teeth vindictively.

"The devil—that's what?" exclaimed the head keeper, and then the laugh turned into a snigger.

There was a fearful crash of window-glass, and a confused uproar of men's shouts and snarlings.

They had reached the upper landing now, and both rushed to a window overlooking the quadrangle.

A deep gulf burst from the Doctor's lips.

"That's him!" roared the head keeper, pointing down into the quadrangle. "He's smashed the winder, and climbed down by the tree."

The crash had evidently come from one of the windows in the west wing, which was now paneless.

The branches of a big tree extended close to it, but it would require a very bold man to leap from the sill into them.

"I'll have that tree cut down!" cried the Doctor, as they hurried upstairs again.

"Are all the windows locked, Royce?"

"Safe and sound, sir. Trust me for that."

"Then he's all right," growled the Doctor.

"William's in the quad at the time," said Dr. Blakely, "he was in the quad at the time. He's nabbed him by now, most likely."

"Sorry for William's good looks if he's tried it all," muttered Doctor Borkwood to himself.

They were in the hall now, and rushed across it, and out into the quadrangle.

A wary eye was kept on the priest; but the Doctor stood calmly watching just outside.

"Is that mill going?" he asked of a keeper, who ran out past him.

"Hardly, sir," said the man.

It was at once apparent why the Doctor felt no uneasiness. The wings of the asylum projected to the front and back of the mill-stream, and from them extended a wall, a full fifteen feet high, into the water itself. Quite unscalable was this flat surface of brick and mortar. There were no proper appliances, no ladders, no such, had been proved in but too many instances. The mill-stream itself thus formed the fourth and by far the most formidable side of the quadrangle, and of itself to theLLUSSS, bulging, boiling waters, speedily found a terrible death in the mill-machine below.

The patient who was attempting to escape was the man who had been entrapped nearly a month ago—Sir Ralph Grimsman. They had got him at bay now, against the wall near the mill-stream, and five or six keepers were close around him. When the window was broken, he had the first to lay hands on him, for two of their number had already gone down, disabled, beneath those terrible blows straight from the shearing off of the mill. Again he broke through their ring, and dodged them right and left, and running round the quadrangle seeking some outlet. One of them he knocked senseless with his blow of his fist, as if it had been a sword. His eyes blazed scornfully at them, and on his livid features was a look of such intense and chilling them at the heart as they faced him. Suddenly a thick set, sturdy man, leaped on him, and seized him round the middle.

"Stop!" he exclaimed to them, opening his mouth to speak for the first time in weeks. "I'll sell my life dear! The first man that touches me! I'll give him back to that God! If I can't do it, we'll both go in together."

He didn't shoot; his tonses were cold, ringing and clear, but there was no other man's resolve in them, and they paused.

There had been a loud ringing at the asylum bell during the last few minutes, but no one had attended to it.

"Just then, however, a keeper placed a note in Doctor Borkwood's hands, as he stood, pale and trembling with anxiety and passion, at the top of the quadrangle.

"From a lady, sir. She's been waiting this half-hour, and is just outside now."

"Oh—"

But he stopped short at the unusual appearance of a woman close beside him.

He knew her in a minute; the hunted man by the mill-stream had seen her, and boldly forward a dozen steps; his arms dropped by his side; his pursuers closed on him; he was a captured man—unsuspecting.

"Haven't I seen you before, my lady? He is dangerous; he is in a terrible state of frenzy. Not heeding the warning, she strode across the quadrangle toward the little group, her eyes flashing strangely, a slight foam decking her lips, and her little white hands tightly clenched. His gaze was on her, and there was a curious soft expression in his eyes; but he gave no sign of it.

"Wait!" she said, authoritatively, to the keepers who were leading him away.

Then she went close up to him.

"You turn me over; I would not spare him then; you would show him no mercy—him whom I loved! I would never have seen him in that house, I would have been true wife to you; but you were hard. I can bear hard now. My revenge is sweet; it is better than yours; it is more lingering. How like you it?"

She spoke in Italian, and almost hissed her words. Her beautiful features were distorted with an expression almost demoniacal. He groaned, but the man didn't look up, and all the fierce light fled from his haggard features.

"You are revenged, my Stephano?" she muttered, turning from him at length.

"What is this?" exclaimed Doctor Borkwood, hurrying up to her with the open letter
in his hand.  "He has gone for the magistrate?"

"Yes; we must send him away," she retorted, excitedly, "at once. They will release him."

But it was too late. The uniform of the constabulary were already visible in the hall. There was no delay. Mr. Harvey was thrown from his horse, and was quite passive in their hands now.

"Dinner!" cried some one at the upper end of the quadrangle. "Don't let any one go! Where's Doctor Borkwood? Doctor Borkwood, what does this mean?"

"I have nothing to say," replied the magistrate. He came forward, followed by Harold Forrester, Martin Rawle, and the sergeant and constables bringing up the rear. "I have nothing to say back," he exclaimed; and the keepers obeyed.

"He's highly dangerous, Mr. Harvey," put in the Doctor, following his usual system. "He's just broken loose. You see that poor fellow there," pointing to where some of the attendants were lifting the body of Royce, the head constable, "he's the issue of this whole business."

Harold came forward, and the doctor grew very pale.

"That Sir Ralph Grimspeoth has been placed under the charge of Doctor Borkwood by a mistake. I believe him to be as sane as I am."

"It is false —false!" screamed a woman's voice behind him.

"And who may this be?" inquired the magistrate, turning and surveying her calmly.

"Lady Grimspeoth," said Harold Forrester. "Humph! The sorrowing and afflicted wife — oh!"

Although Mr. Harvey was only an English courtier, and he had taken care to hurry the matter along, once on the track, he could go forward with considerable energy and common sense.

"Now, then, Sir Ralph Grimspeoth, will you inform me whether you consider yourself sane, and if —"

"Most improper way—" commented Doctor Borkwood, hastily.

"Harold, I am aware that it is not the method usual with the medical faculty, but for that reason it may be all the more necessary. Now, then, Sir Ralph Grimspeoth, do you believe yourself to be as sane as any sane person present?

"I believe myself to be as sane as any sane person present," returned the Baronet, quietly. "Release him!" said the magistrate to the keepers. Reluctantly obeyed.

"I give you notice that I will not be responsible for the consequences, Mr. Harvey," said the Doctor, sulily.

"No; but I will," was the quick reply, with a glance that showed the magistrate was fully aware that he still had certain strict investigations, Doctor Borkwood, before.

But he was interrupted by a strange, unearthly yell. It proceeded from the brink of the river, from among the rocks which they were only distant some two dozen paces.

"My wife!—Leonora!—my love!" cried the Baronet, hoarsely.

A young woman, standing over the rushing flood, looked fearful; her beautiful tresses, which had come unbound, streaming in the breeze; her eyes were sagged, and her face was drawn with a strange, wild terror. One instant she was seen thus, the horrid, wild laughter ringing out on their ears, then the space in air she had occupied was vacant. Only for the time that they were fetching a breath, though, and then, with a bound, Sir Ralph Grimspeoth, the injured but loving husband, filled her place. He paused but to jerk off his coat—no trivial thing for him. He kept to his love; and ere their shouts of horror had died away, he was gone. They strained every nerve to stop the mill. In their anguish, time, breadth, height, seemed to cease from them.

He reached her, and they could see her arms wound round his neck; he struggled with Herculean efforts for a minute nearly, then he was overpowered by the current.

They could see that he kissed her; they could see by the movement of his lips that he was whispering — but there the discourse of his words was, those on earth can never know.

Locked in each other's arms, on they rushed down the boiling, frothing flood unto the silent sea of death.

Revolved at last, Stephano!

A couple of hours later, when the water was drained off, their mangled remains were found. They were placed in one coffin, and buried in the family vault in the little church down at Grimspeoth.

Mr. Harvey's investigations were limited, for the owner of the asylum—the eminently respectable Doctor Borkwood—anticipated him by a well-arranged trick. He took with him all his available treasure, and left a considerable amount of debts behind him. After that time, Millbury had no lunatic asylum to boast of.

Grimspeoth's own creditors were satisfied upon by the creditors of the late owner, and sold to defray his debts. When the new purchaser came to take possession, Martin Rawle was at once engaged as bailiff.

Mine host gave up his farm when his daughter Lucy married Harold Forrester; but he was still keeper of the little farm at Trelawne. On the winter evenings he is yet to be found in his corner by the big fire-place, jovial, as of old; and opposite sits big Farmer Jennings and Martin Rawle.

Harold Forrester is now a partner in the bank at Chilhampton. He has repurchased the estate once belonging to his father, who was blessed with a loving wife, and two or three little Forresteres, lives there very happily.

Pretty Mistress Lucy is as piquant as ever; a little more matronly, and rounder, perhaps; but not a whit less charming. On Sunday they frequently go over to the "Silver Trout," and spend the day with mine host.

Then, in the evening, Harold and she will wander quietly through the little churchyard, and into the picturesque church, and stand silent before a simple marble slab, set into the walk alongside the monuments and escutcheons. As they gaze up at it side by side, she knows he has come there as a duty, for the one shadow on his life now is sad, whereas with it he is connected. Only two names are inscribed on its pure, white surface, and beneath them the word "drowned," and a single date; but it tells all that is generally known of the fate of the Last of the Grimspeoths.

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