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THE UNFAITHFUL GUARDIAN.

CONTINUED.

SHE looked at the speaker earnestly for a moment, then with a look of unutterable tenderness bent down-took up the hand of the dead man which lay outside the snowy covering-laid it softly upon the pulseless bosom-drew the folds of linen over the face, and went away.

She met no one in the hall, and passed down the staircase, walked out of the house in which she had no longer a place.

Mr. James was standing at a window and saw the carriage drive away-he made a sign to the coachman-but the man did not perceive it and drove rapidly on, so that he had no opportunity of addressing Mrs. Lennox, if that was his intention.

He, too, walked slowly through the house, even as that hapless lady had done, but there was no shadow of care or regret upon his face; he might have been reflecting on some topic entirely disconnected with the sad scene in which he found himself an actor, so unmoved was his countenance and manner. He walked on through the dark drawing-rooms, where the rich furniture and decorations looked strangely out of place at that time, and ascended to the upper story where the dead man lay .-But he did not enter that chamber-he never went there again! He paused at the door of the room which had witnessed the scene that had desolated that family forever. He entered, an looked around-saw the broken writing-desk upon the floor with the papers lying near it. He moved forward and began looking them over, one might almost have thought that he was seeking among them for something, but that could not have been, for he laid them all back without any shade of disappointment in his face. He examined the room, perhaps idly, but if with any purpose, all in vain, for there was nothing to reward his search.

At length, he, too, descended the stairs, leaving those rooms to their solitary magnificence, and never once looked toward the gloomy chamber where lay the motionless form of that man who, so short a time before, had trod those galleries with the hurried footsteps of passion and despair.

The housekeeper was standing in the hall below as he passed through. He addressed some remark to her in his easy, dignified way, passed on to his carriage which waited before the entrance, and drove calmly down the avenue along which that wretched woman had been borne, stunned by a knowledge of her helplessmess and desolation.

CHAPTER IV.

After that hastily terminated interview with Mr. James, William Sears returned to thousand wishes and devices which had so long haunted him.

The unquiet memories of a lonely childhood came back; the hopes that had flashed up like stars into the horizon of his boyhood, only to flicker and die out like fragile torches; the wild dreams, too vague and undefined to seek an aim, which had filled his soul with unrest, like deep waters broken and troubled with the moonlight, all returned with added bitterness, and left him exhausted beneath that strife of painful thought.

It is an error to say that the season of youth is always a happy one. To an imaginative mind, at least, it is full of unrest and wearing suspense, or of delusive hopes which reach no fruition, and east their blighting influence into the coming life.

William Sears had reached that painful era in the life of genius when there comes fell, throwing his rider to the ground. the first consciousness of mental power

ance. The visions which started up in his over the rail fence in front of the bouse, eluded his grasp, and left him with only a again. mocking gleam to mark the course of that inspiration which had seemed so glowing and so real. Faint, broken images were there, but crude and imperfect; full of strength and vigor in the idea, but so weak and inartistic in expression that they only foreshadowed the force and originality which would come with riper years. He wrote much for one so young, but that only made him despair the more; yearning that he had deceived himself, and that the gift he had deemed his own would never reach

a higher level. He was that most wretched of all created beings-a boy, whose soul had forced itself to a quick development through suffering and restraint; who had no childhood and no youth; a thirst with longings that no

draught could quench. His early years had been spent in a lonely house, with only an invalid mother for a companion, a woman who had been chilled and crushed by previous sorrow, and whose life had grown to be only a funeral hymn over the vanished past. Perhaps the influence of this grief was upon her in all its early force at that child's birth, and the anguish and unrest which wrung her soul had been transmitted as a heritage to her offspring, and this it was which had forced his mind to an unnatural precocity that wrought its own misery!

He was a peculiar child, with no playmates, and none of the enjoyments of his age-day after day passed in the seclusion of that shrouded chamber where the pale woman sat, watched by the eager eyes of the boy, until its gloom cast a twilight over his whole being which would never be wholly swept away. Child as he was, he understood that his mother suffered without comprehending it; but he felt it none the less, nor did it diminish his power of sympathizing with that unspoken woe. She died while he was still young, and since then his life had been spent amid books, and in the ambitious training of schools and college. Mr. James had been his nearest friend and protector, but he had been little with him beyond brief, hurried visits in the intervals of school duties; and the boy had never been able to conquer the restraint which the presence of that man had caused him since their first meeting.

All these reflections and memories were upon his soul during the troubled hours of that long night, and when he arose the next morning they followed him out into the sunshine and dimmed its brightness by their presence.

Mr. James had not returned to the city, the servant told him, when he called at the house, and he wandered for a time about the streets, avoiding every acquaintance that he chanced to encounter, and unable to shake off the depression upon his spirits. A horse was always at his disposal, during his visit to town; and late in the afternoon, he gave orders to the man to saddle it. He mounted, and rode away, glad to find himself free from the bustle of the crowded streets. The sunlight had faded from the sky leaving it leaden and cold, and the cheerless aspect of everything around would have been sufficient of itself to sadden, so great was his susceptibility to every exterior juffuence.

He had ridden on for many miles, and it was growing quite dark, when he was aroused from his reflections by a sudden panse his horse made at a water-trough, near the roadside.

"Poor Fire-fly!" he said, patting the his hotel, restless and annoyed that he had animal on the neck, and loosening the reins found no courage to give utterance to the that he might drink at ease; "I had quite forgotten you might be tired, and bless me, it is almost night, we must go home !" He smiled with mournful bitterness as he said it, and repeated the word half

> nloud, "Home! You have one, Pire-fly; but mine-well, well, the world is wide, who knows what it may afford me yet?"

> He gathered up the bridle, and turned to retrace the road he had been traveling. A small farm house stood a little farther back, and the farmer was leaning on the fence in front, quietly smoking his pipe. He bowed to the youth, who felt, for an instant, a confused sort of envy for his lowly station and quiet, and in his absorption allowed his whip to fall heavily upon the neck of his horse. The spirited creature bounded down the rapid descent, and striking suddenly against, some obstacle, stumbled and

"Are you hurt?" said a voice, as Sears

soul were palpable to his gaze and full of and stood beside him. "I say, there, are entrancing beauty, but when he strove to you burt?" he continued, catching the retain and clothe them in language, they horse by the bridle as he struggled up

> "My arm is hurt a little, I believe." "Not broke, is it?" asked the farmer, touching it with his disengaged hand.

"Only sprained slightly; but my horse is lamed. What the deuce am I to do? here it is night already,"

"Yes, and eight good miles back to the city—that beast never can do it."

"Poor thing!" said William, patting the horse again! "Is there no place near where I could get some sort of conveyance ?"

"I should guess not; mine's the only house within a mile, and my horses have been out to work all day; they shouldn't quit the stable agin to-night for the President himself."

"An agreeable situation, upon my word !" muttered William, looking around.

"Rayther so," returned the man, coolly, puffing out a great volume of smoke, and evidently enjoying the young man's irritation, "but as long as you aren't hurt much, 'tisn't so bad. I'll tell you how we'll manage it. Here's my house close by, go in and stay all night, my old woman 'ill give you a first-rate supper, and doctor up your arm, and to-morrow morning you can get back in the stage."

"I am much obliged to you for your kind offer, but I must return to the city to-night," persisted Sears, with his usual wilful impatience.

"You must, hey? Wall, then, I guess you'll have to try them long legs and shiny boots of your'n."

"Confound it all !" exclaimed William, laughing in spite of himself.

"Wall, I vow you take it so kind o' good natured, considering your sprained wrist, that I've half a mind, if the horses wasn't so tired, to hitch one and take you myself." "I'll pay you your own price if you will."

"I ain't a talking about the money," returned the man, with the true spirit of his class, " if you seemed a bit stuck up I wouldn't do it for your money nor fine clothes neither."

"I should say I was rather thrown down," said William, laughing again. "Come, try and do it."

Before the farmer could answer, there was the sound of wheels, and a carriage came in sight, driving rapidly toward the

"Mebby there's a chance," said the man and before Sears could interpose, he called out to the coachman, "Say, you, stop a minute; seems to me

you're in a dreadful hurry !"

"What do you want?" said the man, checking his horses.

"I don't want nothing, myself; but here's a young chap that's lamed his horse, and says he must go back to the city tonight."

"Sorry for it, but I've got a lady inside."

"Wall, I guess she'd be glad of a lift if she found herself in sich a hobble," said the farmer. At that moment the glass of the carriage

was let down and a lady leaned out.

"Why have you stopped?" she said, quickly, "I must get back to the city !"

"If ever I see folks in such a hurry !" muttered the farmer, taking his pipe out of his mouth, "you're just like this young man, ma'am," he continued, with the utmost composure.

She turned toward the speaker, and the beams of the rising moon fell full upon her face. There was something in the expression of those pallid features, and wild, sad eyes which startled Sears. He moved forward, for the first time, and touching his hat courteously, said,

"Excuse me, madam, I had no thought of stopping you in this rude way-pray, let your coachman drive on." "'Taint no such thing, ma'am, he's hurt

his arm in the fall he got from his horseyou'd better give him a lift !" "Hurt," she said, hastily looking toward

him, "get in if you choose, sir." "I beg ten thousand pardons!" exride on the box."

"No, you can't," interposed the farmer, 'you're growing whiter and whiter : jist get in there, and send over to see about hour ! your horse in the morning-my name's my barn till then. Mind and have a doctor take a look at that wrist of your'n when you get home !"

not even hear. She had thrown herself back in her seat, her face shrouded in her thick veil, silent, and unconscious of everything passing around her. The farmer closed the door, and the coachman drove on before the young man recovered from the astonishment into which the whole scene had thrown him.

The lady did not move or speak, and her face was so completely concealed by her veil that he could not catch another glimpse of her features. They drove on for some time in utter silence, at length, the ludicrousness of the scene struck his quick fancy so vividly that he could with difficulty restrain a langh.

"I cannot thank you, madam, for your kindness," he said, "but---

She gave a sudden start at the sound of his voice, as if she had forgoften his presence. William paused, fearful that his attempt to converse had offended her; but after a little she said, in a low, hurried

"Did they not say you were hurt?" "It is nothing, madam, my horse fell with me and burt my arm somewhat, but I can very well bear the pain."

She returned no answer, but Sears caught the repetition of the word in a slow undertone. She spoke no more, and he would not again intrude upon her meditation. He longed for another view of that pale countenance contracted with some terrible suffering, and marveled who the woman could be with whom he found himself so unexpectedly thrown. The silence, and the remembrance of those wild eyes brought back the sorrowful feelings of the morning, mingled with his curiosity and aroused compassion.

That face reminded him of something, but he could not tell what; he knew no one who resembled it, and yet the likeness was there. Then came a thought, it was like a book that he had read, yes, a book which had inspired him with an interest no tale had ever done before. It was a story of vague suffering like his own, a record of patient endurance breaking at last from its passive misery to the sharp agonies of despair. Such was the expression of that face-his poet glance had read it in that momentary view-he could almost have believed her akin to one of its characters. Then he smiled at his own folly and strove to think about something else, but the idea would recur with a pertinacity which wearied him.

His unknown companion sat there, silent and immovable, and after a time the pain in his arm caused Sears to descend from his poetic romance to the commonplace reality of physical suffering.

The coachman drove rapidly on, and they reached the outskirts of the city before Brown---' William was aware. Then he forgot his discomfort in the desire to hear that voice once more, and impress it firmly upon his mind. He tried to frame some expression of thanks and regret, but the words remained unuttered, not from a feeling of timidity, but the knowledge of the suffering which that woman endured, and how harshly commonplace would jar upon her strained nerves.

So they drove on until the coachman himself came to a halt, and tapped upon the glass back of him to attract their attention.

"Ask the lady where I shall drive her to," he said, when William opened it. She did not appear to heed him, and

Sears repeated the question. "He wishes to know where he shall set you down, madam."1

She half rose and partially threw back her veil like one amazed.

"Where?" she muttered, "where?" She sank back in her seat-in all that great city was Mrs. Lennox, for she was the occupant of the carriage, could think of no friend of whom she could claim protection! William felt rather than understood her hesitation, but the coachman called

"I didn't understand, where shall I

The lady strove to recall her thoughts, and after another pause gave the address of a woman who had once been a servant claimed the young man; "I can very well in her house-of all the many with whom her station and wealth had given her influence, that poor domestic was the only one to whom she could look in that terrible

They turned down the narrow street she John Wilson, and he'll be safe enough in indicated, and the carriage drew up before a house that looked dingy and dilapidated even in the light from the street. Sears opened the door, assisted the lady to de-He almost pushed Sears into the car- scend, and gave her his arm up the broken without the faculty of giving it free utter. sprang to his feet, and the farmer leaped riage, drowning his confused apologies in a steps. It was his right arm, and even the

torrent of explanations which the lady did stranger's touch gave him exquisite pain, yet, folly as it was, he felt a sort of pleasure in the suffering. He knocked at the door, which was opened from within, and the lady would have entered without a word.

" Farewell, madam," he said, with a respect for which he could not account, 'you have saved me much annoyance.'

She turned full toward him-the glare from the smoky lamp showed his tace, learnest and full of sympathy.

"I-he says I have done it !"

She passed him and disappeared up the narrow stairway before he could speak, leaving him lost in astonishment. The

coachman's voice recalled him to himself. "You'd better get in, unless you're going to stop here too-in that case I'd like my pay."

Sears went down the steps, but before the man could start on a little girl came out, saying,

" Wait a minute, the lady wanted me to give you your money."

"Keep it for yourself, little one," returned William, "and tell the lady it is all

He bade the driver go on, but as long as the old house was in sight he leaned out of the carriage, looking up at the windows as if endeavoring to catch another glance of

the pale stranger. He found two or three young men acquaintances awaiting his arrival at the hotel, but he was in no mood to listen to their joyous conversation. His slight accident was excuse enough for his desire to be left alone, and when they had gone and a physician in the house had applied some cooling remedy to his arm, he sat down by the fire to recall with minute care every incident of that brief meeting.

Sears was too fanciful not to indulge in a thousand visionary ideas concerning the stranger; and her resemblance to something in that book still puzzled him.

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. Lennox received a warm greeting from the poor woman whose protection she sought, and Janet was not backward in using harsh terms regarding those who had so cruelly treated her former mistress. But she was checked by Mrs. Lennox, who

"Don't, Janet! Remember my husband is dead, do not say anything that reflects upon his memeory."

"It wasn't him-oh, no, I'll never believe it! Girl and woman I lived many years in that house, and I know that the man who was so good to my lone mother fresh from the old country, couldn't do a thing like that. He was set on, I tell you, mistress, worked up to it by somebody; there's a plot somewhere, but if ever I find it out, as sure as my name is Janet

"He believed me innocent, they were the last words he spoke !"

"Bless him for that! He had his faults, but he was a good man, was Mr. Lennox, and I know he couldn't long have had a doubt of you."

It was a low, scantily furnished bed room in an upper story of the old house, to which the homeless wife had been driven upon the night succeeding her husband's death.

The appearance of the room betrayed the poverty of its owner, but everything was scrupulously neat, and there was a painful attempt to make the room look cheerful and bright.

An old rocking-chair was drawn up near the fire, and in it sat Mrs. Lennox supported by pillows, pale and exhausted, but with an eager expression in her face, which betrayed the fever within that gave strength to her worn-out frame. Her slender hands were clasped over her knee in an attitude habitual with her, and which gave a drooping, despondent air to her whole person, more painful than any audible expression of suffering.

"Mr. Morris does not come," she said at length, . "can be refuse me even that?" " Hark ! there's a loud knock at the door down stairs-I'll run and look."

She hurried out of the room, and Mrs. Lennox staggered to her feet, and moved feebly toward the door.

"He's come, he's come," exclaimed Janet, rushing back, "I heard them tell him I lived up stairs. Just go out into the other room and see him, I'll slip down the back way so as not to disturb you."

Mrs. Leunox gathered up her feeble strength, and tottered into the outer chamber just as the old man entered. She could not speak—could only stretch out her arms with an imploring gesture, which Mr. Morris did not need. He looked suspiciously around the room, glanced at her dress, and unconsciously his heart hardened a little. To be continued.