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THE UNFAITHFUL GUARDIAN.

CHAPTER IX.

YEAR had passed, a long, terrible A year, whose records were better left to perish, silently.

The early summer brightened once again over the old house, and, as of yore, Nellie Lennox sat on the vine-wreathed terrace, and watched the sun go down behind its temple alales of blue and gold. She was changed-almost sixteen now-grown womanly and tall, with a sort of anxious shadow dimming the tranquil beauty of her face. She was looking down the long avenue dreamily and still, and saw Robert Morris riding toward the house.

"Nellie, dear Nellie, I have not seen you in such an age; oh, how you are grown, Nellie! you look pale too."

"You almost frightened me, Robert, that is all."

"But you are glad to see me-say that you are glad?"

"Always, Robert, always !" "And Mrs. Dexter, she is well? Have you seen your guardian lately?"

"Not for several weeks. I am expecting him and-"

She broke off with a little shiver, growing

"You certainly are not well, Nellie They leave you here too much alone, you ought to have more society."

"Oh, I don't mind; I like the quiet, I am used to it you know."

"But you were not used to wear that dreary sort of look-I don't like it-something is the matter, Nellie."

"When I tell you no, Robert! But come into the house, Mrs. Dexter will be delighted to see you back."

"Not just yet, Nellie-come down to the arbor with me first-don't you remember the last time we sat there, when I read you William Sears' poems?"

She started, drew a little back, looking at him with an eager, inquiring expression. "Don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes, yes-it is so long ago." "Then you have missed me-thanks for that !!

He took her hand and led her gently down the steps toward the arbor, where they had sat that pleasant summer evening, which seemed to Nellie so far back in the

Nellie was not looking at her companion, or she might have seen that he had put off the usual galety which made his face so buoyant and light-hearted, seemed serious, almost sad.

"I like so much to find myself here once more," he said, looking around, "after all, this seems to me the only happy valley."

"Nellie smiled, growing glad again as she looked in his face and met the glance of those clear, honest eyes.

"Now you look like yourself; I know "What do you mean, Robert? It is you

who look serious !" "I was thinking how happy we had been

here." "And did that make you serious?"

"No, no! But I remember that we had left all that far behind-you are almost a woman now." "I am sorry, Robert, I wish we could

be children again, there never will be any happiness like that,"

"But there will, Nellie, if you choose to seek it ! I don't want to be a child again-I am glad that you are grown up; there is something I have wanted to say to you for such a long, long time, and I never could !"

A womanly consciousness came over her. she looked down, blushing, but happy, forgetful of everything in the pleasant sound of his voice.

"I love you, Nellie, and I think you love me; we are both very young yet, but

guardian will consent, you will marry me."

Those words broke the spell-Nellie snatched away the hands which he had been holding, looked into his face with a frightened gaze, striving in vain to speak.

"Nellie, Nellie, what ails you? You are not angry-you do love me-say that this does not come from the thought of being my wife."

She dropped her head upon the rustic bench, and hid her face with a burst of low

"I can't, I can't !" she mouned; "oh, Robert, I am married already. He regarded her in incredulous astopish-

ment, but she still concealed her face in her shining hair, weeping silently as be-"You must be crazy, Nellie; don't talk

such nonsense! I could not jest about a thing like that." "Jest! Does it look as if I were jest-

ing?" She threw back her hair and raised her head, "I tell you that I am married, Robert." He grew pale and sick, there was that in

her face which made him feel that something terrible had happened, but his clear, acute sense refused to credit the tale he just heard

"Tell me all about it, Nellie, I must understand everything."

"Do not ask me, I can tell you nothing! I have already broken my word in saying this, she answered, sobbing again.

"I tell you what it is, Nellie Lennox," exclaimed Robert, flushing with indignation, "if you don't tell me, word for word, all about this confounded mystery, I'll make it worse for those who have brought this on you! Now you are not married. Don't tell me that, for I won't believe, it, you have taken an oath or some such thing, but that is all."

"I tell you, Robert, that I am mar-

He sprang up, as if he would have stood between her and some great danger, while his truthful face flushed and paled between a stern indignation and a great sorrow.

"To whom, Nellie, to whom?" "You must ask nothing more !" "Don't be silly, I will know everything ! Is it your guardian-has he dared ?"

" No, no, not he !" "Who then, tell me, I will know Where is he? When were you married?" Nellie only shook her head in answer to

his rapid questions. "I'll find out some way of getting to the bottom of this affair," he exclaimed, rushing out of the arbor, "I will, by heaven!"

"Stop, Robert, stop-come back-do,oh, do !" He paused at the wild entreaty in her voice, returned and sat down by her again. "Then tell me all about it! Does Mr.

James know of it ?" "I will not say another word until you promise me to do nothing-never even to speak of it to any human being until I

have given you permission." "I promise-yes-who, who?"

"Do you remember those poems that we read ?"

"It is William Sears-great heaven!" "Don't grieve, Robert! I didn't know

-I hardly understood-it is a year agowas so young! We were married, and then he went away, I have never seen him since."

" Where is he now ?"

"I do not even know-he has not once written! Oh, Robert, pity me!"

"Do you love him, Nellie?" "I have only seen him once or twice! I did not feel unwilling-I did not think much about it until lately, and now-

She bowed her head for a moment, and the hot tears poured scalding upon Robert's

"Don't cry, Nellie, something can be done! Perhaps the marriage was not logal ?"

" I have seen the certificate-I know the clergyman's name."

"Curse them !- I see it all-it was for the money-it was your fortune tempted them.21

" Not my guardian-oh, no-I will never believe it ! He thought that Mr. Sears loved me, I know he did." Robert shook his head.

"You are so innocent, so unsuspecting ; poor Nellie! Oh! God will punish them for this crime, if it be out of the power of man. But there is a way-there must be -you were so young----

" I will do nothing, Robert, nothing! Perhaps he will never come back."

"And you will wear out your youth cause?"

I want your promise, that as soon as your awaiting his return ! No, by heaven, that you shall not do! I cannot think yet, my head will be clearer by and by-there is some plot and treachery here."

"None, none! My guardian thought Sears loved me-it may be that he believed so himself."

There was a sudden noise of wheels, and Nellie sprang up looking toward the house which was visible, though the arbor itself was hidden from view.

"It is my guardian-it is Mr. James." "I can't see him-I should tear his heart out on the spot! Good bye, Nellie, I will come again, kiss me once, just once, at least I can be your brother still !"

She felt his arms tighten about her waist, the touch of his lips warm upon her cheek, and he was gone.

The next thing she heard was her own name several times pronounced, it was her guardian's voice. She tried to move forward, but before she could leave the arbor, Mr. James entered it, pale and convalsed with some strong emotion.

"Come with me, Nellie, quick !"

"What has happened-what is it?" "Your husband is in America!"

She fell down with a cry. He raised her up, helped her toward the

"Your bonnet-a shawl-anything! We have only time for the train-be quick !"

"He here-here !" "Yes, and-but hasten! We will see who shall conquer-only come, Nellie, come !"

CHAPTER X.

We must now go back to other characters in our story, and events which transpired a few weeks previous to those related in the last chapter.

Catharine Lennox had returned to Paris at the close of that year which we left without record. She had been for many months in the north of Europe-she felt a sense of relief in the companionship of nature and the awful solitude of those mountain passes. How the days dragged on perhaps she herself could hardly have told. For a season she was ill, watched and tended by her faithful Janet, the companion of her wanderings. At length her very misery forced her into action, and once more she took up her pen.

Whither Sears had gone she knew notthere had been no communication between them since that parting in the valley of Chamouni-but she felt that he was yet alive, maddened perhaps and desperate beneath the long night through which she still looked up to heaven, though no star broke the impenetrable darkness which en-

He was living still, that she knew. Was he with Nellie? No, that she felt to be impossible, then she remembered all that the child herself might be enduring-her little sister, whom she had prayed to and blessed as an appel in heaven! Even her she could not seek-there was a barrier between them impassable as that which separated her from Sears. There was no help, no hope, nothing only endure, to bear on unto the end and trust in the mercy of God.

The days passed in her northern dwelling; she was not waiting or expecting anything, but she felt that the end was not yet, she was to meet Sears once more; how or when she knew not, but she was to look upon his face again this side eternity.

The year ended, and she returned to Paris, not for herself, but to make some settlements for her faithful Janet, in case that her own death should occur unexpectedly.

One evening she felt unusually depressed and a strange sort of anxiety came over her, for which she was unable to account. She could almost have believed that something was about to happen; formerly those presentiments had never failed to be the premonition of some ill tidings, but what could occur now-even death to herself or the one afar could have nothing of terror

As she sat there the door opened, and a visitor entered. Janet was out, and Catharine had not even given orders to deny callers, believing that her arrival in Paris was unknown to her acquaintances. She looked up, not even surprised or moving from her seat-nothing startled her now.

She recognized the intruder-it was

"Are you surprised to see me, Mrs. Grant?" he said, advancing toward her. " No." and she motioned him to a seat ;

"I believe almost I was expecting you." "I meant you to be so, for you are troubled to-night! You do not know the

"There can be none-nothing can trouble me now."

"One thing might." "What do you mean? What have you

heard ?" "Where is Sears ?"

"I believe it," returned Duval. "But I do not know where he is !"

"That is it ! he is ill."

"America-he sailed not long since." "I must go too-I will leave to-morrow."

"You are right-I came for that-farewell !"

He left the room. Catharine hardly perceived his absence, she only knew that the time had come. Stronger than ever came back that strange thrill! She knew what it portended-it was a warning-Sears had need of her!

Catharine trusted so implicitly to that presentiment and to Duval's words, that on the morrow she sailed, following in the track of him for whom she had lived and suffered so long.

In a chamber of the hotel at which he had descended on landing, William lay feeble and wasted from a long protracted

The past year had changed him so much that he was scarcely to be recognized. He lay back upon his pillows, with his hair falling in damp masses over his foreheadthe temples hollow, and the eyes beneath burning with an unnatural brilliancy, which gave sure evidence of the disease that preyed upon his frame.

He had landed only the day before, and was not yet able to quit his chamber, or even the bed upon which he had thrown himself for a little rest.

As he looked back upon the past year, he believed that he had been wholly mad -the fabled wanderer of all time had not held a more restless course than he.

But there was no refuge-no change earth had no cure, and no voice came from the beyond to bid him hope.

There he lay, not sleeping, but unable to rise, though he was not conscious of physical pain, and he had so long counted the pulsations of his heart that their added beating was unheeded.

The door opened, but he did not move ; a woman stole across the room and knelt by the bed. He opened his eyes and looked

"I am mad then," he said, aloud, "utterly mad! I see Catharine's face close to my own-I can almost feel her breath upon my cheek."

"It is Catharine," she whispered; "it is no dream William, no frenzy-it is I, Catharine !"

He raised himself, evincing no surprise,

"Catharine, Catharine! Then it is not a dream-I am not crazed! Oh i this will be too terrible if it prove unreal! Speak again-that voice-I cannot believe it. "It is I, William, it is I! You called me

and I came !" "Ay, every night while on those stormy waters I called upon your name—I bade my spirit seek yours and summon it-once there was a spell upon my soul, which made me believe that you had heard."

"I did. William, it was no delusion, I heard and I obeyed."

"Let me sleep, Catharine, I have not closed my eyes for many nights-I am ill, I think! Let me lean my head upon your shoulder-I can sleep so.'

She lifted his head, wrapped his dressing-gown more closely about his form and sat supporting him, while he dropped gradually away into a tranquil slumber.

"I shall find you when I wake Catha-"Here while you need my care, be-

loved." "Perhaps I may die here," he said, after pause ; "that would be too great a blessing-but let us hope it."

His eyes closed, his breath came even and undisturbed, and still Catharine sat clasping him in her arms, breathing only a prayer of thanksgiving that the appointed moment had come, and that she had once more found the only companion which her soul had met upon its whole pilgrimage.

Nellie and her guardian made that hurried ride almost in allence. She asked no other questions, for the railway carriage was filled with people, and in her excitement it seemed that every eye was fixed upon her. Mr. James volunteered no remark, sitting upright and stern, still pale from the icy gost of passion which had swept over his features on first encountering the girl. There was a sert of steely glitter in his hard eyes, and a peculiar contraction of the thin lips, which to one To be continued.

who had studied his face would have given evidence of some unusual emotion. The deep-locked recesses of that heart were moved, but it could have been no general feeling which paled his countenance into that frozen hardness.

On descending at the station, they entered a carriage and drove away, but neither spoke until they drew up before the private entrance of a hotel. Nellie began to tremble as Mr. James gave her his arm. "Is it here?" she asked, "is it here?"

He led her into the house in silence, gave some directions to a servant, and they were left alone.

"Are we to wait for him here?" Nellie questioned, in the same frightened voice. "No, we will go to him in a few mo-

ments, but I have something to say to you "Let me sit down-I am very weak." He gave her a seat, said a few consoling

words, but there was no softness in his tones, no sympathy in his face. "I am ready," Nellie said, after a little,

"I can go now." She was trembling so violently that she could scarcely stand. Mr. James turned quickly upon her-

"This is not joy-you are not longing for this meeting?" "Joy, joy! Oh, Mr. James, why was

this thing done?-what is to become of us "Hush, child, don't be girlish now! Can you be strong enough for that which I

wish you to do?"

"What, what?" " Do you know who is with your husband at this moment-nursing him-fondling him?" he hissed from between his clenched teeth.

"Husband, my husband?" she gasped, only conscious that he had spoken those words.

"Yes, your husband, and with himhe broke off abruptly and turned from her, muttering in a tone which did not reach her ear; "we shall see now-oh, Catharine woman, I can crush you this time! This girl that you believed dead-this sister so long sought-meet her now-stand face to face with her-I oppose it no longer-meet -meet !"

That was a terrible face, but Nellie could not see it, and it was well; the sight of it would have haunted her for weeks like a nightmare. " Are you rested, Nellie, are you strong?

Will you be a child forever? Rouse up, it is time to prove yourself a woman and to net." "A child-would that I were! No. Mr.

James, you have taken my childhood from me-it is gone forever." "It was his work-all his, and he is here now to insult and outrage you-in his very chamber is the woman for whom he has

renounced you." She started back, looking in his face, scarcely able in her innocence to comprehend the meaning of his words.

"He is married again ?" she said, "and I-what is to become of me?" "Married-no, no, a lighter and a pleasanter tie! Can't you understand? I tell

you that he has forsaken you, his wedded wife, for a bad, miserable woman; that he loves her, and will bring shame on you to gratify her malice." "Mr. James !" The crimson rushed up to her forehead, and the horror, half un-

"Let me go, Mr. James, let me go! This is no place for me-why have you brought me here?" "Stop!" You must see him-stand face

derstood, broke from her dilated eyes.

to face with her." "And you married me to him-oh, Mr. James ! But no, no, I did not mean thatyou did not know him-you thought all for the best ! Only take me away-do take

me away, Mr. James!" "You must see him, you must cast them

both off forever." "Both! Who is this woman ?-what is she doing there?"

"Come look her in the face, and I will tell you her name-ay, I will tell you," and he ground his teeth like a wild animal crunching its prey. "But he was my husband-he swore it !

Tell me that it is not true, Mr. James, only prove that he is not my husband, and let me go away." "I tell you that you were lawfully mar-

ried-he can neither disown nor break the tie. You must go with me-come !" She struggled no longer-her eyes, pur-

ple with fear and pain, her bosom heaving with dry sobs, but she suffered him to draw her along until they reached the door.