

An Old Maid's Tragedy

By A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK.

I.
HAVING had the whole day in which to reflect and prepare herself, Miss Gurney had got her feelings so well under control that she was able to hand the photograph to Hester across the tea table and say without a tremor in her voice, "I picked this up on the floor, Hester, after you were gone this morning."

The girl took it from her eagerly; she had been in trouble about it all day, wondering where she had lost it, and, in a flutter of relief and embarrassment, slipped it into her pocket without a word; but Miss Gurney noticed that her cheeks flushed, and then a rosier red surged back and overflowed them.

The silence between them became too strained not to be broken. "You did not tell me, Hester, that you knew—" Miss Gurney hesitated. "Is he—a friend of yours, dear?"

"Yes, aunt."

"How long have you known him?"

"Not very long. Not more than three months."

This explained to Miss Gurney the change it had puzzled her to observe in Hester lately; her placid, subdued habit of mind had seemed altogether disturbed, so that sometimes she sang for very happiness, with a strange, new light in her eyes, and sometimes she was saddened and pre-occupied with pensive dreamings.

"I hope, Hester," Miss Gurney forced herself to say in her prim, decisive fashion, "there has been no talk of love betwixt you and this gentleman."

Hester flashed an answering glance on her and looked down, without speaking, but the answer was so clear to Miss Gurney as if it had been put into actual words.

"My dear," she went on, striving against her increasing agitation, "I am very, very sorry. I wish it had been any other man—"

"But, aunt," Hester interrupted, astonished, "you do not know him!"

"I know," Miss Gurney faltered—"I knew a man so like him—so exactly like him, that the moment I saw his photograph I was afraid for you, dear. It is impossible for that man to bring you anything but misery. Hard, and false, and cruel—"

"Oh, but, aunt," cried Hester, tearfully indignant, "he is not! If you knew him you could never say that again."

"But why have you never told me about him?"

"I have been wanting to," Hester flushed again with a pretty shyness that appealed irresistibly to all the tenderness and affection of the gentle, little old lady's nature. "I meant to, aunt, but I—did not quite know how to. I meant to show you his photograph—he only gave it to me yesterday—and tell you them."

"And of course," Miss Gurney assumed a severity of manner she found it difficult to maintain—"he tells you that he loves you?"

"He has asked me to marry him, aunt."

"And you fancy that you love him?"

With this question and her earnest, passionate reply, Hester broke down utterly. She flung herself on her knees, and, covering her face with her hands, laid it in Miss Gurney's lap, and sobbed all her heart out thus, as she had done years ago when it had been laden with more childish griefs.

Miss Gurney herself was scarcely less agitated.

"There, dearie, you mustn't cry so. I did not mean to be unkind," she said, her eyes dimmed and her thin hands shaking as she passed them reassessing over the fair, bowed head.

"But I have seen more of the world than you have, dear, and—I have never told you yet—the man I loved spoilt my life, and made me the poor, broken-spirited creature I am; and this portrait is so like what he used to be—so exactly like, that ever since I saw it I have been dreaming—oh, I don't know what! I believe I could kill him, Hester, if I thought he would cause you half the suffering I have endured through him—"

But there, it is too late for me to say anything now. If you love him, I know whatever I can say would make no difference." She added presently, in the calm, even tones that were habitual to her: "You have not told me his name, Hester. What is his name?"

She had to wait and ask a second time before Hester had regained sufficient composure to reply.

"Richard Harwood," Miss Gurney repeated mechanically, nodding thoughtfully, as if she had only been confirmed in what she knew already. "And where does he live?"

Hester mentioned an address at Kensington.

"He is a gentleman—and rich?" pursued Miss Gurney.

"Yes; his father is rich."

"And does he know how poor we are?"

"Oh, yes, aunt; he knows I am working for my living."

"How was it you first happened to meet him?"

"He is distantly related to Madame Faber." Madame Faber was the fashionable milliner at whose large

establishment in Oxford Street Hester had been engaged these last twelve months or more. "He came in one day with some message from his sister, I think, and he has called on me or twice since, and then—he met me as I was coming home, and walked with me, and—"

"And he has happened to meet you more than once?" Miss Gurney smiled, but became serious again. "You should have told me, dear, and have brought him to see me. Why didn't you? You were not ashamed of his seeing what a poor sort of home we lived in?"

"Oh, no, no, aunt!" Hester protested. "He would have come—I would have brought him, but I wanted to tell you about him first."

And she told her about him now, and it was all only that she loved him, and she loved him more than all the world, and she had promised to be his wife, but—

"There was bound to be a 'but,' it was what Miss Gurney had been listening for.

"But it will not be for a long while, because he is going away—"

"Going away, child! Why? Where to?"

"He has spoken to his father about me," said Hester, her lips quivering, "and he refuses to see me, and threatens to turn Richard into the street if he will not give me up."

"They are rich, you see, dear," murmured Miss Gurney, bitterly, "and we are poor. Probably his mother—"

"She has been dead several years," "Then it is his father. He probably intends his son to marry money, or social influence—"

"But Richard won't. He says he will never marry any one but me. If I will wait for him."

"Why is he going away?"

"His father is sending him to manage a large branch of his business in Ceylon. He is to be out there three years—perhaps longer. His father is only sending him, he says, so as to separate him from me, and he can't refuse to go without ruining his prospects, and for my sake he does not want to do that. I don't care whether he is rich or poor, but Richard says if his father turns him adrift he would have nothing—and so it is best to wait, because he will never change, and I shall never change. And so he is going away at the end of this week. I can't bear him to go. I might never see him again; but if he lives, he will come back to me."

She said it half defiantly, half despairingly, and laid her head on Miss Gurney's lap again to hide her tears.

For fully ten minutes neither of them spoke; then, rousing herself with a heavy sigh, Miss Gurney said, hesitatingly:

"I might do something. I don't know what I can do—but bring him home with you to-morrow evening, and let me see him, dear. If he is all you think he is—but let me see him for myself. Bring him with you to-morrow evening."

II.
And the following evening, when Richard Harwood came, Miss Gurney was easily converted to Hester's opinion of him. His frank, honest eyes, his unaffected simplicity of speech and manner, his diffidence, his shy adoration of Hester, his unconcealable love of her—all conspired to win Miss Gurney's confidence and approval, and won them in spite of herself.

Again and again, while he was there, and after he was gone, she owned, grudgingly at first, but with a growing satisfaction, that he realized her girlhood's ideal of the man she had loved years ago, and was not, as she had feared, a reincarnation of that man as she saw him now in the light of bitter remembrances—cruel, heartless, faithless.

She lay awake that night living through again in thought the long past happiness and misery that the sight of Richard Harwood had brought back upon her with renewed intensity. She had loved, and was to have married, but seemed predestined to misfortune. First it was her mother's death, that postponed the marriage; then, a year later, her father's; and her father dying bankrupt, the man she loved had ultimately yielded to the wishes of his family and broken his engagement with her, through her blind love of him, and could leave her to bear alone a shame whose memory was not buried in that little grave in the far off country churchyard, but lived to haunt her yet, and sear her very soul as often as it returned to her. She had never seen the man since, or written to him; she was too proud to ask anything of his pity, and all the love she had felt for him had died within her.

She left her old home and came to her living in London among people who knew nothing of her history. Being clever with her needle, she was soon able to support herself in reasonable comfort, but the hard work and the solitary, loveless life were fast aging and hardening and embittering her, when Hester came with her childish needs and sympathies to melt the frost that had gathered about her heart and reconcile

her to humanity and make the world habitable again.

Hester was the orphaned child of Miss Gurney's younger sister, and it was not strange that the two, each left desolate, should grow to be all in all to each other. If Miss Gurney's love was the deeper, the more self-sacrificing, that was not strange either. She was no longer young, and had not hoped that her forlorn heart hunger would ever be satisfied, but Hester had come and satisfied it. It was enough for her now that there was one living creature whom she could love and who loved her, and her love for Hester was such that to insure her happiness she would gladly have endured rebuffs and humiliations that she would sooner have died than have submitted to for any advantage to herself.

No self-interest could have annihilated her pride and urged her to such lengths as she went unhesitatingly for Hester's sake.

She rose the morning after Richard Harwood's visit with a great resolve already fixed in her mind. She dared not reflect too much upon it or upon all its fulfillment must mean to her, for her fear her courage should fail her; but early in the evening she traveled westward, and for the first time, realized her intention to the utmost, and was alarmed at her own temerity when she found herself knocking at the door of the stately house in Kensington.

If her knock had not been heard she felt she would not have dared to repeat it; but it was heard, and a supercilious footman presently opened the door.

"Is Mr. Harwood at home?" she asked, shrinking.

The man eyed her dubiously; she made a rather shabby, quite insignificant little figure standing there on the doorstep.

"Well—yes—he's at home. What might you want him for?"

His lofty condescension roused her to resentment, and so stiffened her drooping pride and at once restored her self-control.

"Will you tell Mr. Harwood, my man, that Miss Gurney wishes to see him? Say Miss Gurney, formerly of Bardene, please."

He sullenly obeyed, and after an interval, returned to her in the hall with a perplexed expression darkening his countenance.

"Mr. Harwood will see you. This way, please."

She followed him into a spacious, elegantly appointed drawing room, and sat down there, feeling curiously out of place and bewildered.

And a minute later a gray, elderly gentleman entered and advanced toward her. Altered as he was she knew him, and was aware that he recognized her as readily. He offered her his hand with an obvious embarrassment, but she bowed distantly without appearing to notice it.

"I am pleased to see you, Miss Gurney," he began lamely, and then sat down and looked at her, and seemed waiting for her to speak.

But she could not trust herself yet; her heart was fluttering suffocatingly, and she felt that if she attempted to answer him she was so unnerved she must burst into tears, and the very thought of thus humbling herself in his presence helped to strengthen her.

"It is a very long while," he made an effort, and resumed inanely, "since we saw each other, Miss Gurney."

"A very long while!" His halting words had an unintentional sting in them, and all at once she had flung her weakness from her. "I would not have troubled you now on my own account—"

"Please don't say that." She was vaguely conscious of a wistful eagerness in his tone. "If there is anything I can do for you—"

"There is nothing you can do for me," she said, with quiet decision. "You should know me better than to think I would ask any, even the smallest, favor of you for myself."

He quailed under her indignant glance, and threw out his hands with a gesture of despair.

"Forgive me. I know what you say is true," he returned sadly. "You must not think, Ruth," the name rose involuntarily to his lips, "that I have forgiven myself, or forgotten, or that I have been altogether happy. I know I wronged you—terribly—and the memory of it has come between me and happiness more and more as I have grown older and had time to think. I have been punished—"

"And I!" she interposed harshly. "But I did not come to talk of what is past mending. You did me a great wrong, and I never dreamt till yesterday of seeing you again, or that there was any way in which I might be brought to forgive you—"

"And is there? Tell me what it is," he cried. "I would give a great deal to make some reparation for what I have done. I am not the reckless, selfish fool I was in those days."

He was strongly moved, but not more so than was Miss Gurney herself; it was as much as she could do to steady her voice and keep her emotion hidden from him.

"Your son is engaged to my niece—my dead sister's child. I did not know anything of it until two days ago," she said, gathering confidence as she proceeded, and speaking with a detached air as if what she discussed did not concern herself personally. "You have forbidden your son to see her again, and are sending him away with some idea of parting them for ever. She is everything to me now. I care more for her happiness than my own. If I had not loved her so, my pride would never have allowed me to come to you. I came only to save her from such a life as mine has been. I couldn't

think, if you knew, that you would break her heart as you have broken mine."

She stopped abruptly, and he gazed at her with a sort of terror in his eyes.

"I did not know who she was," he said huskily.

"I came to tell you."

He sat looking at her, stricken dumb, for even in his most repentant moments he had not thought the consequences of his sin could spread a blight so far reaching and so irremediable; he sat looking at her, and read in her thin, white hair and in her worn, furrowed features the pitiful story of what her life had been since he had seen her last. He had no words for his shame and his remorse, and in some subtle fashion the poignancy of his emotion communicated itself to her. She would not trust herself to look at him or address him again, and though he twice made as if he would speak, each time his voice broke like a sob in his throat and he fell silent.

The tension was becoming so painful that it was an ineffable relief to both of them when a knock sounded on the door, and the footman entered apologetically.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said. "Carrier at the gate, sir, for Mr. Richard's boxes. They're all corded in his room, but he isn't home yet, and hasn't labelled which he wants for use during the voyage, and I thought 'p'ls you'd know, sir—"

"It won't matter, James," cried Mr. Harwood, himself again instantly in face of this dignified domestic. "You can tell the carrier there are no boxes to be taken now. Mr. Richard has altered his arrangements—he will not be going."—The King.

WORDS OF WISDOM.

Everybody would want to be poor if it was a scandal.

Unless a man is abused a lot he never amounts to much.

Being engaged is almost as profitable as betting on the races.

There is mighty little money in spending it to show you have it.

You can make a good citizen out of a politician by having him die.

A man has a lot of fun being a pessimist if he is rich and healthy and happy.

A woman's shirt waist would be terribly immodest if it were a bathing suit.

The only woman a man seems to be ashamed to make love to in public is his wife.

The only people who get very much fun out of saving money are their heirs.

The college graduates who delivered addresses on how to succeed are now trying to.

There is hardly anybody who doesn't like to think he's a martyr unless it really hurts.

If a girl's waist isn't so tight it's mighty funny why it was made such a good fit to a man's arm.

If a woman can't find anything else to be miserable about she can always get up a fit of jealousy.

A woman calls it a breach of etiquette for you not to pretend you think her hair curls naturally.

The longer a man waits for his rich uncle to die the surer he is not to get anything when it happens.

What a woman likes about being sick abed is she can imagine how the flowers would look if she should die.

When a girl goes to a theatre with a man and likes everything about the play it's a sign he wasn't her brother.

The fun about betting on horse races is if you lose you don't have to tell anybody and if you win you brag about it.

Any woman is perfectly satisfied to have one husband, but mighty few girls are content with one engagement.—Reflections of a Bachelor, in the New York Press.

Our Little Brothers the Birds.
We came presently to another department, and here the angel hid his face and was silent, for the counter was covered with the stiff limbs and torn clothing of his little brothers the birds. There was a notice above the door: "Five hundred genuine ospreys much below cost to clear."

He said, "Do all women, then, love murder in July?"

I answered, "You are quite mistaken. We are very kind hearted and cannot bear to cause suffering, but we owe it as a duty to society to make ourselves as pretty as we can."

The angel was almost amused.

"That is really a very curious illusion!" he remarked. "How can the decaying body of a mutilated osprey add to the beauty of even the visual world?"—Evelyn Underhill, in London Outlook.

Found Cannon Ball of 1634.
A cannon ball which had lain buried since 1634 was yesterday recovered from a field on the farm of Mr. Hampson, of Acton, Nantwich. The ancient town of Nantwich played a considerable part in the civil war, as the headquarters in Cheshire of the Parliamentary Generals Fairfax and Brereton, and much fighting took place at Acton, where during a portion of the siege of Nantwich the royalist forces were located. On some of the masonry of both Acton and Nantwich churches there are still visible marks caused by cannon shot.

Mrs. A. A. Anderson, of New York, has given \$100,000 to Columbia University to start a suitable endowment to establish a pure science course, leading to the degree of bachelor of science in Barnard College.

With the Funny Fellows



A Nasty One.
Says Mrs. McSnob to Mrs. De Knocks, "I was called on to-day by Mrs. Van Rox." Says Mrs. De Knocks, "I knew she was coming." The papers all say that she loves to go slumming.

—Cleveland Leader.

Womanly.
Maid—"Are you at home to Mrs. Toney, mum? She's at the door."
Mistress—"I am if she has a new hat on, not otherwise."—Answers.

How the World Pays.
Knicker—"I think the world owes every man a living."
Bocker—"Perhaps, but he has to take it out in trade."—New York Sun.

The Acme.
Knicker—"Don't you hate the end-seat hog on the street car?"
Politician—"Yes; but the end-seat hog on the band wagon is worse."—New York Sun.

Not For Him.
"One to-day is worth two to-morrows," said the philosopher.
"You're another," replied Pat. "To-morrow's pay day."—Chicago Record-Herald.

His Awakening.
Knicker—"Did his friends know him when he came back to town?"
Bocker—"Yes, it was the girls he was with at the summer resort who didn't recognize him."—New York Sun.

Not Men Only.
"Oh," snapped Mrs. Nagget during their quarrel, "all men are fools."
"Yes," returned Mr. Nagget. "Well unfortunately for you, dear, the reverse isn't true."—Philadelphia Press.

Good-Hearted.
Boarder—"I'll pay you very soon—I am going to be married."
Landlady—"Oh, don't do that, Mr. Hardup, just on account of the few dollars you owe me!"—Meggendorfer Blaetter.

Thoroughly Fearless.
"That girl seems to be absolutely devoid of fear."
"Yes. I haven't any doubt that she'd even marry a Pittsburgh millionaire if she got the chance."—Chicago Record-Herald.

The Yellow Dog.
"Henpeck seems to keep that old dog just to abuse it."
"He does; he's got an ugly boss, and you know what Mrs. Henpeck is—if he didn't have that dog he'd bust."—Houston Post.

His Method.
Mae—"I notice she doesn't sign her name 'Mayme' any more."
Gracey—"No, her steady kidded her out of that. He had some cards engraved with his own name spelled 'Jaymes.'"—Cleveland Leader.

Then and Now.
"I understand that he is a confirmed Bibliophile," said the Boston maid.
"Well, he may have been," replied her Chicago cousin, "but he's on the water wagon now."—Columbus Dispatch.

Fulfilled.
Wilkie Collins had just finished "The Woman in White."
"She'll be very common some summer," declared he.

Verily, the power of prophecy is a wonderful thing.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Modest.
"Rimer had a poem accepted by Scribner's Magazine."
"Yes, and he's taken to the backwoods."
"What for?"
"He says he hates like thunder to be lionized."

Dead Sure Case.
Pat—"Oi say, Moik, wuz yez iver struck by lightning?"
Mike—"Manny's th' toim, me by."
Pat—"Yez don't mane it!"
Mike—"Shure an Oi do. Haven't Oi been married these tin years?"—Chicago News.

One of the Also.
"How did Swift come out in the automobile race?"
"Oh, as well as he expected, I guess."
"One of the also-rans?"
"No, one of the also-broke-downs."—Cleveland Press.

Irresistible.
Summer Hotel Proprietor—"Gad! We never had so many men guests before. D'you suppose it was my advertisement of fine air that brought 'em?"
His Partner—"No; my advertisement of fine helresses."—Puck.

GOOD ROADS



Oil For County Roads.
Fulton County is making an enviable reputation through the whole country for the number and extent of its excellent roads. It has joined the Good Roads movement with enthusiasm and success. Of course the cost of building these roads has been great and the expense of maintenance for those already built is considerable. After a careful and thorough investigation of the subject, the Journal wishes to suggest to the county authorities the plan of using the crude oil process, to save the cost of sprinkling with water, to lay the dust more effectively than it can otherwise be done, and to save in great part the heavy expense of maintenance, due to wearing and washing. The automobiles now bowl along in every direction with a good degree of speed and the dust rises before them and trails behind them to the discomfort of the following vehicles, be they automobiles or carriages and to the annoyance of pedestrians. This fine dust is then washed off by the next heavy rain and the road has to be repaired to go through with the same process again.

The first experiment of oiling the roads was tried in California in 1899, with the view of laying the dust only, the contract being undertaken by the "Dustless Roads Company." Since the roads of southern California have been regularly treated with a sprinkling of oil for improvement and maintenance, of course, of rendering these roads practically dustless. The use of oil on macadam roads has been especially satisfactory, and the process is cheaper than on ordinary roads.

In fact, from the testimony of experience it would seem that the use of oil makes a macadam road the ideal highway for both summer and winter.

The process is much cheaper than would appear at first glance. Crude oil can be delivered in Atlanta at a cost of about 4 1/2 cents a gallon. The cost of the oil sprinklers is trifling. A good job would require the use of some 2000 gallons of oil to the mile, or, with a layer of sand to absorb it and make a hard, compact top dressing, of indefinitely lasting qualities, it would take 4000 gallons to the mile. It costs the property owners, on the extension of Peachtree street, beyond Fourteenth, a thousand dollars a season to sprinkle two miles of that road every summer, besides the cost to the county of maintenance.

At the largest estimate it would cost only \$680 worth of oil to sprinkle the whole distance of four miles from Fourteenth street to Atlanta Heights, and this would make an infinitely better road and with no other cost of maintenance for a year.

It is well worth the experiment on a short stretch of this road or some other in the county, and we offer the suggestion to the county commissioners. We feel sure that a fair trial of the oiling system will lead to its extension to the Fulton County roads generally, to their great improvement, to an enormous saving in the cost of maintenance and to the increased comfort of all who use these highways.

After the first application of oil, the first year, less and less is required with each succeeding year, and almost no other outlay is necessary to keep the road in perfect condition. The macadam road thus treated becomes finally as smooth as asphalt and its freedom from dust and the hardness of the surface has caused such roads frequently to be mistaken for the genuine asphalt itself.

It would seem to be clearly established that the next step forward for the improvement of our present splendid road system in Fulton County should be the oiling process.—Atlanta Journal.

Road Building a Science.
Everyone should be an advocate of good roads. The farmer who has his produce to market could haul larger loads and would also be able to do much of his teaming and running to town when the ground is too wet for general farming thus never losing a good day in the field. With good roads, riding for pleasure would be a delight rather than a source of discomfort.

There is a feeling among some that good roads are for the owners of automobiles and other "land crafts," but this is a grave mistake as ninety per cent. of the travel on our public highways is in line of business. Then, too, the success of the rural mail delivery depends largely upon the condition of the roads and routes are laid out along the best highways, with the same idea that prevails in cities where the mail carriers do not have to deliver mail on streets having no sidewalks. Then, too, land values are increased by improving the highways for who wishes to live in a community where there is not enterprise enough to secure good roads? So long as the tax is worked (?) out by the taxpayer so long will our roads be poor. Road building is a science.—National Fruit Grower.

Rats rarely can resist sunflower seeds. A trap baited with these seeds is most effective in catching them.