UNDER THE OAK

by ROBIN GREY

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

"I played in the sunny garden, amongst the thyme and rosemary, the climbing roses, the lilies, the sweet basil, and the scarlet anemones. I said my prayers in the dim chapel, and went to rest in my tiny cell.

"This lasted till I was ten years old. One day it rained heavily. As I have said, it was the only wet day that I remember. Soon after our midday dinner the great bell clanged at the gate, a very unusual occurrence. Sister Ursuline went to the gate, and I remember that one or two curious nuns and I were peeping through the grille when she came back, in evident agitation, and sought the mother superior. I was carried off by one of the nuns, my constant playfellow, a sweet woman of fifty, with the heart of a child. She kissed me lovingly as she held me in her arms. I remember it all so well!

"'Sister Desiree,' I whispered, 'thou art crying.'

"'No, no, Bebe,' she said; 'it is nothing! I am rightly punished. My affection for thee has grown too deep, beloved—it is earthly. I know that you will be taken from me; it is but just.'

"I did not understand—her then, was wonderfully childish for my ten years. But you cannot think how vividly I recall it—how I should remember every stone of the dear old convent, every path in the sunny garden!"

"You make me feel as if I could see it all myself—you interest me extremely," said Mr. Martineau. "Pray go on."

"Well, that was my last day with the nuns. It was the very last happy day of my life. They told me presently that my uncle had come for me. My uncle! The words conveyed no impression to my mind. Who was he? I did not want him, I declined, with thanks, the honor of relationship. When they made me understand that it was not a matter for my choice at all, that I must go with him, it was terrible. I threw myself into such a passion as the nuns had never seen me in. But there was no help for it. I never asked who or what was my uncle; but he must have come vested with full authority, for the nuns never hesitated to resign me to him. I remember how I clung round the neck of each, and promised to come back soon. My distress was unbounded, but it changed to terror when I beheld my uncle.

"I had never seen a man but the old confessor and Jean Baptiste Leroux, who dug the garden. This new arrival was not at all calculated to impress a child favorably. He was a stout man with a short red beard, red hair, and very small, twinkling, pig-like black eyes. His expression was cunning and cruel; and, to make matters worse, I could not understand a word he said. He was English. I was to all intents and purposes French. He did not consider it at all worth his while to attempt to cajole me in any way. He packed me into a carriage, heedless of my screams and tears; and so we drove away in the dusk, the pelting rain descending in a blinding mist and hiding the beloved convent walls from my poor aching eyes.

"I have very faint recollections of my journey to England; but the one thing which I distinctly remember is that we always traveled by night. I remember, too, that my uncle twice boxed my ears—once when he told me to leave off crying and I did not, once when I stumbled over his foot; but, what with being always in tears, and always traveling in the dark, my idea of our route is very indistinct.

"I remember at last starting from sleep at the sound of bolts and bars being withdrawn, and seeing a glare of lamplight and a woman's face, middle-aged and rather kindly. My uncle dragged me out of the carriage and handed me over to her, blinking with sleep, dusty with travel, half crying with fatigue. I think she put me to bed at once. At first, any conversation between us was very difficult, as I could not understand anything she said, and I was quite determined not to learn English, which stood condemned in my eyes as the language of my uncle. At last, however, I had of course to give in, and to acquire by slow degrees, a knowledge of colloquial English.

"It was a dilapidated house, and, I am sure, in a most out-of-the-way place—there was no railway for several miles. There was a small village, and a tiny church in a very bad state of repair. I did not even remember the name of the clergyman."

"Pardon me," interrupted Mr. Martineau; "but, from the way you were talking, you lead me to imagine that you don't know where this place is. Is that so?"

"That is so, unfortunately," she answered, with drooping eyelids.

"How long did you live there?"

"From the time I was ten till about the time that I was sixteen."

"And you don't know where the place is?" His tone expressed the most absolute incredulity.

"No, I don't," she admitted shamefacedly.

"I hope you will forgive me; but I can scarcely believe such a thing," he said, looking rather excited and pale. "Don't you know the name of the village? You must know that."

"But I don't," she faltered.

"But I can't understand it," he said.

"I used to know it, of course," she remarked.

"You used to know it?"

"Oh, yes; but I have forgotten it!" She blushed deeply while making this admission.

"I am hopelessly at sea," said Mr. Martineau. His grey eyes rested on her face with suspicion. It was easy to see that he thought she was trying to deceive him.

"May I go on," she said, "and try to explain how I came to forget all these things? I can offer you an explanation; but I don't know why I should expect you to believe it. I have often thought that no lawyer would believe my story. But what can I do?"

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Martineau was compelled to confess to himself that her sincerity was self-evident.

"Please go on," he said.

"It is a difficult thing to tell, I know so little about it myself," she resumed. "The woman whom I have mentioned was my uncle's housekeeper. She was kind to me, but I was afraid of her. She was a very reserved, silent woman—I think she spoke less than any woman I ever knew. Our house stood quite by itself, a good way from the high road, and three miles from the village. I was never allowed beyond the grounds without the housekeeper.

"Every day the old schoolmaster from the village came to give me lessons. It was, as you may imagine, a very old-fashioned education which I received; but I liked it. My uncle had a library—neither large nor valuable, but I read all the books on those shelves. Robinson Crusoe, Rasselas, Gulliver, the Pilgrim's Progress—that was my only idea of fiction. So the days and months crept slowly by. My uncle was often away, and I used to notice, at those times, a greater anxiety on the part of the housekeeper to have an eye on me, and that I should not go out of bounds. I was no doubt closely watched; but by degrees they grew to trust me more, for I was very tractable. Constant isolation made me dull, quiet, unlike other girls. I had absolutely no link with the outer world; I had been distinctly forbidden to write to the nuns—I knew no one in England. My uncle used to have visitors—always men—but these I never saw. I lived quite apart from him; his rooms were at the other end of the house. I always had my meals with the housekeeper."

"Pardon my interruption," said Mr. Martineau, in a low tone. "Did you say you never saw your uncle's guests?"

"Wait a minute; I am going to tell you," she replied. "When I was between sixteen and seventeen a change came about in my world. The old schoolmaster died. There was a pause in the regular routine of my days. Left entirely to my own devices, I used to wander all over the upper parts of the house. In one of the attics I found a box full of books. Some were dull and uninteresting, but some were—well, I do not think you can have any idea of what it was to me to become acquainted with Sir Walter Scott, Thackeray and Lord Lytton. My brain almost reeled with an accumulation of new ideas. I wondered how in the world I could have remained where I was so long in helpless, stupid ignorance of life. I soon resolved that I would bear it no longer. I would brave my uncle; I would demand my freedom; I would ask why I was mewed up thus in a corner, away from all companionship.

"I remember that night vividly. It was August, sultry and still, and both atmosphere and sky were beautifully clear. I had spent the afternoon under the willows by the brook, gloating over my novel till the facing light compelled me to close the book. The pastures, as I walked lingeringly back to the house, were heavy with dew, and discolored the hem of my white cotton dress. I must have been a strange looking girl; my hair floated all over my shoulders and down my back below my waist; nobody had ever told me that I was growing up, and that my locks should be arranged more neatly. I came with slow steps round the corner of the house, brushing my hand softly along the thick dark box trees; my lightly-shod feet made no noise on the gravel as I turned the corner of the clump of thick bushes which stood at each side of the entrance, and advanced toward the heavy, white columns of the porch.

"Then I started back and paused irresolutely, for there was a stranger, standing by the door—a young man with bare head and folded arms. I beg your pardon, Mr. Martineau, did I startle you?"

"Not in the least, thanks. You—you can't think how you interest me. Please don't pause."

"It seems a strange thing that up to that night I had never encountered any of my uncle's guests, but it is nevertheless quite true. As he turned and caught sight of me, he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"'You startled me,' he said.

"'You startled me, too,' I answered vaguely, as I looked at him, there came floating into my mind reminiscences of the romances with which I had lately filled my head. I thought of the first meeting between Ivanhoe and Rebecca as I looked up at him. He took my hand, drew me to his side, and patted my hair kindly.

"'Whose dear little girl are you?' he said.

"I felt cruelly wounded and hurt! There was every excuse for him—you see how small I am, no taller than a child, my hair was all down my back, and the light was fading! But I never thought of that. Picture to yourself a girl, with a mind just awakened to a consciousness of womanhood and its possibilities, brought face to face with the first young man she had ever met, and greeted as I was greeted then! He must have thought me mad. I burst into indignant tears, and tore myself away from him.

"'How dare you—oh, how dare you speak to me like that?' I cried. 'I can't think how you can insult me so!'

"I think he saw then that he had made a mistake, for he said, 'By George, I beg your pardon!' But I would not stay another moment. I ran upstairs to my own room. There I cried as if my heart would break. I had deeply realized how neglected I was, and there was no one to help me to gain redress!"

(To be continued.)

"YOU STARTLED ME," HE SAID.

CLIMBING STAIRS

Just the Thing to Strengthen the Lungs and Cure Dyspepsia.

New York Times: The average landlady of the average lodging-house is nothing if not resourceful and original. When it comes to the question of the merits of her particular house, the unoccupied rooms of which are open to inspection at all reasonable hours, her vocabulary is practically unlimited, and while her English may not always be without reproach, it is sufficiently lucid and forcible to give a good idea of the many excellencies of her domain. It has remained, however, for a landlady living not 1,000 miles from West Eighteenth street to make, with the assistance of a number of unknown medical men, the astounding discovery that climbing up numerous flights of stairs is not only not injurious, but is actually beneficial to the health. "Why, bless you," she said to a young man, an unfortunate seeker after rooms, who protested that the fourth floor was too high up for him because of the weary and hurtful stair climbing, "why, bless you, it's the best thing in the world for you. The doctors all around here are recommending stair climbing for dyspepsia and lung trouble! They say it's the best thing in the world for either of these complaints. If you'll only walk up stairs often enough and always be sure to throw your shoulders well back." The seeker protested that he was troubled with none of these complaints. "Oh, well," said the obliging landlady, "that doesn't matter. It's good for the general health. You don't care to try it? Very well. Good-day," and the door closed firmly behind the outcast young man, who was wondering what tale would confront him in the next house.

REGULAR EXODUS.

Of Mohammedans Has Set In from the Island of Crete.

A regular exodus of Mohammedans from Crete has set in, and, as there seems to be no way of stopping it, it is believed that the Porte will soon make a virtue of necessity and pass the word for all true Mussulmans to quit the island. Although large sums of money have been distributed at Candia among those willing to stay, besides free gifts of timber for the reconstruction of their houses, boats continue to leave crowded with emigrants. The news of Prince George's visit to Candia only gave fresh stimulus to the exodus, and, at latest accounts, the prospect was that the whole Mussulman population would soon be gone. The Turks are much distressed at this state of affairs, and accuse England of being principally to blame, since she, of the four powers, has nearly always been foremost in assuring Turkey that her rights would be safeguarded. It is not denied that England has endeavored, in a certain measure, to fulfill her promises, but, as the Christian Cretans seem to have deliberately adopted the policy of making the island uninhabitable for Moslems, it is practically impossible for any outside influence to induce them to remain. It is generally admitted that each family is worth a considerable sum per annum to the island in taxes and industry, but the Christians, having obtained the upper hand, are resolved to pursue their advantage to the uttermost, and to drive all Moslems out of the country, so far as it lies within their power to do so. This is, at all events, an effective way of putting an end to religious differences.

More than 50,000 Frenchmen belong to the Legion of Honor.

GRADUATING DRESSES AND ACADEMIC GOWNS.

Mother's Influence and the Black Robe—A Junior's Idea for an Angel Commencement Frock.

Looking down the vista of years, as the girl graduate expresses it, we may see her kind universally garbed in cap and gown. In many institutions of learning academicals are the senior wear for all great occasions, and the traditional white is never so much as considered for graduating apparel.

At certain other schools and colleges choice annually is made between white muslin and black alpaca for use at the closing exercises. Fierce struggles between the pride of gown and cap and the joy of ruffled organdie goes on for months. Classes are divided against themselves on the dress question, just as mere women without academic instruction disagree about clothes. The breach usually is closed by a vote, in which the majority decide the extremely important question.

The academic gown is the emblem of civil power as opposed to that of the sword. With certain modifications it is worn by clergymen, judges, lawyers, university professors and students. In men's colleges, as well as women's, the wearing of the gown is favored more and more. Women have been permitted by university sanction and public opinion to adorn academicals only a few years. A hullabaloo, such as meets every innotation where women are concerned, greeted her first appearance in "men's" clothes.

It was prophesied that she would lose all her attractiveness if she wore graduating clothes like a man's. Gibson has been a good friend to the graduating girl. He has shown her and her gown to be beautiful, and that settles it for man's eyes, as the same argument finally clears up any masculine objection to feminine advancement.

Curiously enough, in some instances it is the mother's vote which decides against the gown. In a certain woman's college, not a hundred miles from New York city, where the attendance is largely by girls living at home, they admit among friends that maternal influence weighs in favor of organdie—"it is so much prettier."

Up to that time her graduation is the greatest event in a girl's life. More than a few women rear their daughters in the anticipation of that pretty happening. And they've always pictured the girl in a gown of white, laboriously stitched by maternal fingers. It is therefore the graceful thing for the girls to consider their mothers' feelings in respect of gowns.

But the day seems to be coming when the black flowing robe and the mortar-board hat, a regular shadow-box to the face, may appear more attractive even to mothers' eyes than the fanciful or fussy frock of white.

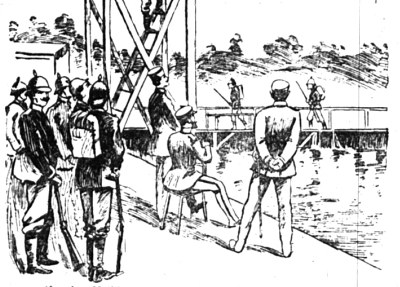
To speak sweepingly, the academic gowns of students are of black wool stuff, and those of the professors of silk. Bars of colored silk or velvet indicate the degree won by the wearer. The hood is a mark of distinction. And the color of the lining of a hood signifies. Fortunately we have an illustration of a feminine graduate of the law school of the New York university. The gown is of black alpaca, held in place by narrow ribbons, which fasten invisibly around the waist. Purple ribbons, depending one from either shoulder, are this particular graduate's rightful wear.

It is not a disgrace to borrow a cap and gown, though women prefer to own them when they can. They are made by firms who furnish ecclesiastical raiment. The prices are rather high, as a tailor-made finish is given to the garments. There is no reason why they may not be done at home by skilled fingers. The best pattern-makers provide a variety of styles in academic gowns, and charge only a few dimes for them. The academic robe usually is worn over a dress of black, that there may be no violent contrast in the costume. There is no rule about it, however, except as a class agrees upon some color in dress or another. Nor about the neckwear, nor the color in gloves. Some classes prefer stiff linen collars and white ties, while others like ribbons. And there are precedents for a class choice of black, white or gray gloves. These matters are determined by vote in plenty of time before the exercises.

Of course, in numbers those who will wear white frocks in which to make their leave of school and their bows to the world are vastly greater than the count of the academics. And if

THE SWEET GIRL GRADUATE.

THE GERMAN "TOMMIES."



(London Mail.)

As is well known, a very high standard of efficiency in nearly every branch of athletics is maintained in the army. Next to the British army there probably no force in Europe so well trained in this respect as the soldiers of Germany, and without depreciating in the least the systems in vogue in our military centers, it may be said that in certain respects the training of the German soldier is of a more practical and useful kind. In the matter of swimming, for instance, the Germans are pre-eminently practical. It is self-evident that a thorough facility in swimming under the most difficult conditions would be of the greatest advantage to a soldier in war times. This advantage the German "Tommy" is enabled to gain by a course of exercise designed for that purpose. When he is proficient in the art of natation in ordinary circumstances, he is made to learn to swim in his clothes, afterwards with all his trappings on, and finally while carrying his rifle. This illustration shows a soldier fully equipped with a rifle in hand taking a dive. This picture is from a photograph of the actual incident.

Oldest Rose Tree.

In the crypt of the cathedral of Hildesheim grows a wild rose tree said to be 1,000 years old; whereas it is the root only, not the stem, which is eight centuries old, according to accurate information derived from original documents. A legend connects this rose tree with a vow made by the founder of the cathedral, Ludwig the Pious, and a document of the eleventh century states that when Bishop Hezilo rebuilt the cathedral, which had been burned down, he inclosed the roots of the rose tree within a vault, which still exists, raised upon this vault the crypt, and spread out the branches of the rose tree upon the walls. The stem was in 1849 twenty-six and a half feet high, and the branches covered about thirty-two feet of the external crypt wall. This is said to be the oldest rose tree in the world.

A Tongue Tangler.

"What was Mr. Stammerly trying to tell you, Mamie?" "Oh, he wanted to say that he heard that 'eighty-eight ate at a late tete-a-tete,' and he couldn't."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

TRICKS THAT ARE LIGHT.

And Cause Objects to Shine Forth When All About Is Dark.

Many seemingly wonderful tricks can be performed with the use of a few simple chemicals. One of them is the ball of fire. Take for this barium sulphate (CS), one part; magnesium carbonate (CP), one part; gum tragacanth, q. s. This should be mixed and rolled into marbles and kept at a red heat for about an hour, then allowed to cool slowly and placed in a glass-stoppered bottle. A few hours before using place in the sun, and the marbles at once become luminous. At the entertainment ordinary marbles are passed among the audience, one or more of the luminous marbles being concealed in the hand. The exhibitor then takes a marble from some one in the audience, holds it between his thumb and forefinger, blows upon it, and asks to have the lights turned down. As this is done he substitutes the luminous marble, and the mysterious light is seen. This is handed around, and changes again as the light is turned on, when the magician presents to the audience several of the ordinary marbles as souvenirs. Another trick is very effective. Take two similar bunches of artificial flowers; brush one over with glue or mucilage and powder it with the dust from one of the marbles described; then place in the sun. When taken into a darkened room luminous flowers are seen. The magician exhibits the flowers that have not been prepared and shows that there is nothing peculiar about them; then, as the light is turned down, he substitutes the concealed bunch, blows upon the flowers, and, presto! displays to the astonished observers a luminous bunch, each flower of which stands out as if at white heat. Luminous letters can be written and exhibited in the dark to the wonder of the audience. Luminous ink is made by placing a piece of phosphorus about the size of a pea in a test tube with a little olive oil. Place the tube in a water bath until the oil becomes heated and the phosphorus dissolved. Shake well and pour into a bottle with a glass stopper. Admit air just previous to using it, and the liquid will become luminous tracery in the dark. Water can be rendered luminous in a very simple manner. Dissolve a small piece of phosphorus in ether for several days in a glass-stoppered bottle. In this place a lump of sugar, then drop the sugar in water, which will at once become luminous. Luminous paints can be made any color—green, yellow, violet or blue—and if applied to various objects make a wonderful display at night.

RESCUING THE BABY.

A house on fire is apt to so upset the inmates that they throw the looking-glass out of the window and carry the mattress down the stairs. Miss Kingsley describes, in "West African Studies," a scene in which she herself and a native family were turned topsy-turvy by an invasion of the terrible driver-ants. She writes:

I was in a little village, and out of a hut came the owner and his family, and all the household parasites pell-mell, leaving the drivers in possession, but the mother and father of the family, when they recovered from this unwonted burst of activity, showed such a lively concern and such unmistakable signs of anguish at having left something behind them in the hut, that I thought it must be the baby.

Although not a family man myself, the idea of that innocent infant perishing in such an unpalatable manner roused me to action, and I joined the frenzied group, crying, "Where him live?" "In him far corner fee floor!" shrieked the distracted parents, and into that hut I charged.

Too true! There in the corner lay the poor little thing, a mere inert black mass with hundreds of cruel drivers already swarming upon it. To seize it and give it to the distracted mother was, as the reporter would say, "the work of an instant."

She gave a cry of joy and dropped it instantly into the water-barrel, where her husband held it down with a hoe, chuckling contentedly. Shiver not, my friend, at the callousness of the Ethiopian; that there thing wasn't an infant—it was a ham!

Charming Custom.

The surroundings of a home should be made lovely and attractive to those who dwell there. If there be paths designed for comforting strolls, every step should be pleasing. A charming custom is that of planting snowdrops and crocuses singly and scattered through the grass of a lawn, from which they peep in the early spring. It should not be regularly planted, like a calico print, but scattered in natural profusion.

An Evasion.

Mrs. Teller—"She told me the whole story, word for word, just as I have repeated it to you, and she made me promise not to whisper a word of it to anybody." Mr. Teller—"But you told em, my dear." Mrs. Teller—"Yes, of course; but I didn't whisper, did I?"

Death Penalty.

The death penalty is rarely enforced in Germany, Austria, Denmark or Sweden. In New York eleven out of twelve murderers escape without any punishment, and in the United States only one murderer in fifty suffers capital punishment.

A $9.00 Dinner.

The bill for the Bradley Martin dinner in New York for 86 persons footed up $9,525, of which $52 was olives, caviare, celery, radishes and bread, which shows that the Bradley Martins do not overlook the little luxuries of a dinner.

A Close Sweep.

"Somebody broke into my stable last night and stole my best harness."

"Didn't he leave any trace?"

"None. He took the traces and all."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

FEET GROW SMALLER.

After a Girl Reaches Mature, Woman hood They Diminish.

"Girls between the ages of 1 and 13 have big feet," said a fashionable shoemaker, "and they are rather fat and flabby, too, but at about 22 a remarkable change comes about. The foot then completely subsides, the flabbiness disappears, the flesh becomes firmer, the muscles and tendons get stronger and the bones become well set. Altogether a great difference is seen. Yes, we have great difficulty with girls of 17 or thereabouts, for they now require a boot or shoe as large as a full-grown woman's. When they get older and the foot becomes settled, new boots made on the old last will be found too large, and it is only when the young ladies complain that their new shoes are too big that we know the foot has undergone the change just described. Then explanations have to be given, but the shoemaker doesn't mind this so much, for a woman, as she grows older, likes to be told that her foot is getting smaller. After 40 the feet of a woman go back to the fat and flabby state, and herein grows trouble for the bootmaker, who has to state in explanation why the last pair of shoes do not fit that the cause lies in the fact that her feet are getting bigger. No, I don't think that cycling increases the size of a girl's foot. True, one or two of our lady cycling customers have asked us to make their new boots a shade larger, but this difficulty is got over by making them 'full.' We have never altered the length."—Boston Journal.

A Good Word for Satan.

An old Scotch woman was famous for speaking kindly. No sheep was so dark but she could discover some white spot to point out to those who could see only its blackness. One day a gossiping neighbor lost patience with her and said angrily: "Wumman, ye'll has a guid word to say for the deevil himself!" Instantly came the reply: "Weel, he's a vera industreeous body!"

Can This Be True?

Hix—I wonder why a doctor never prescribes for himself when he is ill? Dix—Don't know, unless it's because he can't send himself a bill.

Small, but Active.

Given a man and a woman of equal size and weight, then the tongue of the woman is smaller than that of the man.

Nearly 20,000 pounds of bread are daily eaten in the sultan of Turkey's household.