LOVE'S LABOR

by ROBIN GREY

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

"I am glad you are going to have a change," volunteered Marguerite timidly. "I hope you don't mind my saying so, but you look quite ill; I noticed directly I saw you."

"I am in trouble, Miss Lilbourne and that's the truth; I'm afraid change of air won't cure it."

"Oh, how sorry I am." Her eyes filled with sympathy. "What a world of trouble it is! You in trouble, too? You ought not to vex yourself so about my affairs, if you have trouble of your own."

"My trouble is harder to bear than yours," he said, "because it is of my own making. It is the shadow of a fault committed long ago."

"And repented of?" she asked shyly.

"Heaven only knows how deeply!"

"Ah, then it will be all right," she asserted brightly, "if you are ready to atone!"

"Ah," he cried pitiully, "but suppose one can't atone? That is the hardest lesson the world teaches, Miss Lilbourne. It is so easy to wrong another, but so hard—so terribly hard to set the wrong right again."

She looked at him earnestly. He was the last man from whom she would have expected words like these. Proud, self-contained, a man of the world he had hitherto appeared; yet, now it seemed as if he were asking her—little Marguerite—for pity and counsel.

"Have you asked the person whom you wronged to forgive you?" she questioned with a certain solemnity.

"No," was the almost inaudible reply.

"Ah!" she said softly, "that's what I would do! Please don't think me impertinent—I know I am not at all competent to advise you."

"That is what you would have me do?" he asked. "You would have me say, 'I did you a grevious wrong—I cannot undo it now, but I repent. Forgive me!'"

"Yes," she replied, with a nod of her pretty head. I would say that."

"And suppose by that confession I lowered myself in the eyes of the person whom before all others in the world I desired to stand well with?"

"I think," she answered shyly, wondering at the strange intensity with which he questioned her—"I think you would have to bear that as a penance for your fault."

His strange eyes looked down at her sweet, ingenuous face with a gaze she could not understand.

"I shall think over your advice," he said earnestly, "and try to follow it. Will you give me your best wishes?"

"Yes," she replied, her face suddenly flushing. He moved away from her—he felt that his self-control was deserting him; he must go—and instantly.

"Goodby," he said hastily, unable to raise his eyes to her face. "I must apologize for—for staying so long."

He left the room abruptly, before she had time to reply. Actuated by an indescribable impulse, she went to the window to see him pass. He glanced up, saw her, and raised his hat with a sudden smile of pleasure, indicating with one hand the marguerites in his button-hole. She drew back as he disappeared, holding her hands to her head.

"What did that remind me of?" she said slowly. "Oh, what did it remind me of? I feel as though I had gone through a similar experience before. It seemed quite natural to be looking out of the window and waving my hand to him." She broke into a little laugh. "I think I must be losing my senses, but for the moment the impression was wonderfully strong."

CHAPTER XII.

Two days later, on reaching home after a walk, she was told that a woman was waiting to see her.

Imagining it to be a patient come for liniment or cough-mixture, she went straight into the dining-room, and was at once confronted by a respectably-dressed woman, evidently provincial.

"There," said the woman triumphantly, the instant Marguerite appeared—"it's her—I knew it was. I knew I should know her the first minute I clapped eyes to her face. Well, miss, you and me's met before, ain't we?"

"Have we?" said Marguerite.

"Don't you remember me, my dear?" asked the woman, evidently disappointed.

"No; I don't remember you at all."

"Not Mrs. Acland?"

"No. Where do you come from, Mrs. Acland, please?" Marguerite asked the question with a certain vehemence, advancing toward her visitor, and looking earnestly at her face.

"My stars—she don't remember me!" said the woman again. "Why, my dear, 'tain't four years ago since you saw me every day of your life for six weeks."

"Did I—did I?" cried Marguerite, her head in a whirl of excitement. "Oh, Mrs. Acland, tell me about it—do! Do you come from Devonshire or Cornwall?"

"Torquay, my dear, to be sure. You mean to say you've been and forgot that, too?"

"I've forgotten everything," replied Marguerite, trembling with eagerness. "I've been very ill and forgotten all sorts of things; but I do believe you're the very person I've been wanting so long. Tell me—who are you?"

"The landlady of 5, Ponsdon Crescent, my dear, where your uncle brought you, four years ago come November. Ah, my dear, I remember it all so well! A poor, nervous thing you were, starting at every sound; and your uncle seemed so hard on you, it went to my heart, it did!"

Marguerite sank into a chair, her face turning so deadly pale that Mrs. Acland thought she was going to faint. Hurrying to the sideboard the woman seized the carafe of water and sprinkled some on the soft dark hair and cold forehead.

"Thanks—thanks; I am better," said Marguerite, rallying—"much better, thank you. I can listen. It was too much for me, just for a moment—the thought that I was to hear what I have longed and prayed to hear for so many months. Go on—tell me!"

"You mean to say you have forgot it all?"

"All—all! I had brain fever."

"Yes, my dear, it was a bad fever. Well, miss, I'll begin at the beginning, if you don't mind. Well, my dear, I was in service here, and he was to take you to him; but, when he put you in the carriage and drove off, my heart misgave me, for I see there was another man with him; and I'm morally pursuaded, my dear, that that other was Mr. Brandon himself all the time—disguised, you know. I shall never see you again, my dear, till this minute. But that afternoon, when Mr. Brandon came raging and shouting and wanting to know where you was, I thought directly that he was only putting it on, and knowed fast enough where you was all the time. Well, my dear, I s'pose if I'd 'a done my duty I'd 'a gone to the police; but I am a poor woman, with my living to get, and I don't want no scandals about my house; and then, you see, I hadn't nothing to say—no evidence, nor nothing of that kind. So I just kept quiet; but it's bin on my mind ever since."

"Mrs. Acland," said Marguerite, solemnly, her hands clasped under her chin, "you say I was in your house six weeks, and that you saw me every day."

"Yes, my dear."

"Did it ever strike you that there was anything odd about me? Did it ever occur to you that I was out of my mind?"

The woman's look of consternation was evidently genuine. No, she had never thought of that. "A poor little nervous thing," had been her idea, much cowed, subdued, and bullied by an overbearing uncle.

(To be continued.)

ART AND MORALS.

A Simple Verdict in the Much Discussed Case.

A work of art cannot in itself be immoral. If a book is well written it is good. If it is badly written it is bad. That is the final test in writing. A book is immoral only in the sense that the saddle which delivered the prince imperial to death when his life depended on its strength may be called immoral because it was badly made. As there is no evil in a healthy physical organism, no evil in any organ of a healthy body, though there may be evil in its use, so there is no evil in a book.

A man who has a clear finished style of workmanship, who writes well, displays a moral as well as an aesthetic beauty in his work, no matter what his subject; for to overcome the difficulties of language and to make of it his servant, his stool, his weapon, requires a magnifestation of will power which is itself moral, and the cry of "art for art's sake" is not so empty a shibboleth as the Philistines declare it.

To those who attribute to a book qualities belonging to the reader, who condemn the object for the weakness of the subject, the following fable which has for its highest virtue its truth, may bear no moral, but to me it meant much.

A woman with a passionate love for the beautiful in all forms, a love which expresses itself in her surroundings, was asked by a friend to whom "auld lang syne" had granted the privilege of impertinence, "Why have you so many pictures of the nude?" "Because," was her response, "to me pictures of the human figure speak so clearly of the divine in man that I sometimes forget there are those who have not yet risen above the animal."—Self Culture.

A Knotty Problem.

"Biscome is a peculiar fellow."

"I don't know him."

"You would find him amusing. He moved out on the lake shore for the summer and bought a Jersey cow. Then he hired a small boy to drive her up from the pasture every afternoon. One day the boy fell sick and Biscome didn't know what to do about the cow. He said to himself when he looked at her in the morning, 'She'll certainly forget to come home if the boy isn't there to call her attention to the fact that she has a home.' Then he looked at the cow some more and pretty soon he stumbled on what seemed to him a brilliant idea."

"Was it?"

"You must judge for yourself. He tied a knot in the cow's tail to remind her that there was something she mustn't forget."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

"God Bless Our Home."

"In a home in the country, not far from town," says the Cattlesburg (Ky.) Independent, "there may be seen quite a pile of sewing lying on the floor, nearly in the middle of the room, that has been undisturbed for more than six months. At that time the head of the family occupied a chair, and, seeing but one handy, he dropped to the floor the sewing which lay upon it. His wife asked him to pick it up. He said he wouldn't do it. She told him, as he threw it there, it could remain until he got ready to pick it up. She would never touch it. And there it remains, a memorial to an incompatibility of disposition."

Candor of a Dublin Surgeon.

Dr. Colles, an eminent surgeon of Dublin, who died in 1843, was remarkable for his plain dealing with himself. In his fee book he had many such candid entries as the following: "For giving ineffectual advice for deafness, 1 guinea." "For telling him he was no more ill than I was, 1 guinea." "For nothing that I know of except that he probably thought he did not pay me enough last time, 1 guinea."

Not His Kind.

From the Philadelphia Record: Abner Haycede—Ye say this is a combination bed an' sofa.

Clerk—It is, sir.

Abner Haycede—Wal let me look at one that ain't made by a combination. I'm opposed ter encouraging them air trusts by purchasin' their goods, I'gosh.

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

"THE IVORY PALACES," LAST SUNDAY'S SUBJECT.

"All the Garments Smell of Myrrh, and Aloes, and Cassia, Out of the Ivory Palaces"—From the Book of Psalms, Chapter xl, Verse 8.

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Among the grand adornments of the city of Paris is the Church of Notre Dame, with its great towers and elaborate rose windows, and sculpturing of the last judgment, with the trumpeting angels and rising dead; its battlements of quatre-foil; its sacristy, with ribbed ceiling and statues of saints. But there was nothing in all that building which more vividly appealed to my plain republican tastes than the costly vestments which lay in oaken presses—robes that had been embroidered with gold, and been worn by popes and archbishops on great occasions. There was a robe that had been worn by Pius VII. at the crowning of the first Napoleon. There was also a vestment that had been worn at the baptism of Napoleon II. As our guide opened the oaken presses, and brought out these vestments of fabulous cost, and lifted them up, the fragrance of the pungent aromatics in which they had been preserved filled the place with a sweetness that was almost oppressive. Nothing that had been done in stone more vividly impressed me than these things that had been in cloth, and embroidery and perfume. But today I open the drawer of this text, and I look upon the kingly robes of Christ and as I lift them, flashing with eternal jewels, the whole house is filled with the aroma of these garments, which "smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces."

In my text the king steps forth. His robes rustle and blaze as he advances. His pomp and power and glory overmaster the spectator. More brilliant is he than Queen Vashti, moving amid the Persian princes; than Marie Antoinette, on the day when Louis XVI. put upon her the necklace of 500 diamonds; than Anne Boleyn, the day when Henry VIII. welcomed her to his palace—all beauty and all pomp forgotten while we stand in the presence of this imperial glory, king of Zion, king of earth, king of heaven, king forever! His garments not worn out, not dust-bedraggled; but radiant and jeweled and redolent. It seems as if they must have been pressed a hundred years amid the flowers of heaven. The wardrobes from which they have been taken must have been sweet with clusters of camphire, and frankincense, and all manner of precious wood. Do you not inhale the odors? Ay, ay, "They smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces."

Your first curiosity is to know why the robes of Christ are odorous with myrrh. This was a bright-leafed Abyssinian plant. It was trifoliated. The Greeks, Egyptians, Romans and Jews bought and sold it at a high price. The first present that was ever given to Christ was a sprig of myrrh thrown on his infantile bed in Bethlehem, and the last gift that Christ ever had was myrrh pressed into the cup of his crucifixion. The natives would take a stone and bruise the tree, and then it would exude a gum that would saturate all the ground beneath. This gum was used for purposes of merchandise. One piece of it, no larger than a chestnut, would whelm a whole room with odors. It was put in closets, in chests, in drawers, in rooms and its perfume adhered almost interminably to anything that was anywhere near it. So when in my text I read that Christ's garments smell of myrrh, I immediately conclude the exquisite sweetness of Jesus.

I know that to many he is only like any historical person; another John Howard; another philanthropic Oberlin; another Confucius; a grand subject for a painting, a heroic theme for a poem; a beautiful form for a statue; but to those who have heard his voice, and felt his pardon, and received his benediction, he is music and light, and warmth, and thrill, and eternal fragrance—sweet as a friend sticking to you when all else betray; lifting you up while others try to push you down; not so much like morning-glories, that bloom only when the sun is coming up, nor like "four-o'clocks," that bloom only when the sun is going down, but like myrrh, perpetually aromatic—the same morning, noon and night; yesterday, today, forever. It seems as if we cannot wear him out. We put on him all our burdens, and afflict him with all our griefs, and set him foremost in all our battles; and yet he is ready to lift, and to sympathize and to help. We have so imposed upon him that one would think in eternal affront he would quit our soul, and yet today he addresses us with the same tenderness, dawns upon us with the same smile, pities us with the same compassion.

There is no name like his for us. It is more imperial than Caesar's, more musical than Apollo's, more conquering than Charlemagne's, more eloquent than Cicero's. It throbs with all life. It weeps with all pathos. It groans with all pain. It stoops with all condescension. It breathes with all perfume. Who like Jesus to set a broken bone, to pity a homeless orphan, to nurse a sick man, to take a prodigal back without any scolding, to illumine a cemetery all ploughed with graves, to make a queen unto God out of the lost woman, to catch the tears of human sorrow in a lachrymatory that shall never be broken? Who has such an eye to see our need, such a lip to kiss away our sorrow, such a hand to snatch us out of the fire, such a foot to trample our enemies, such a heart to embrace all our necessities? I struggle for some metaphor with which to express him; he is not like the bursting forth of a full orchestra; that is too loud. He is not like the sea when lashed to rage by the tempest; that is too boisterous. He is not like the mountain, its brow wreathed with the lightnings; that is too solitary. Give us a softer type, a gentler comparison. We have seemed to see him with our eyes, and to hear him with our ears, and to touch him with our hands. Oh, that today he might appear to some other one of our five senses! Ay, the nostril shall discover his presence. He comes upon us like spice gales from heaven. Yea, his garments smell of lasting and all-pervasive myrrh.

Would that you all knew his sweetness! how soon you would turn from all other attractions! If the philosopher leaped out of his bath in a frenzy of joy, and clapped his hands and rushed through the streets, because he had found the solution of a mathematical problem, how will you feel leaping from the fountain of a savior's mercy and pardon, washed clean and made white as snow, when the question has been solved: "How can my soul be saved?" Naked, frost-bitten, stormlashed soul, let Jesus this hour throw around thee the "garments that smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia out of ivory palaces."

Your second curiosity is to know why the robes of Jesus are odorous with aloes. There is some difference of opinion about where these aloes grow, what is the particular appearance of the herb. Suffice it for you and me to know that aloes mean bitterness the world over, and when Christ comes with garments bearing that particular odor, they suggest to me the bitterness of a Savior's sufferings. Were there ever such nights as Jesus lived through—nights on the mountains, nights on the sea, nights in the desert? Who ever had such a hard reception as Jesus had? A hostelry the first, an unjust trial in dyer and terminer another, a foul mouthed, yelling mob the last. Was there a space on his back as wide as your two fingers where he was not whipped? Was there a space on his brow an inch square where he was not cut of the briers? When the spike struck at the instep, did it not go clear through to the hollow of the foot? Oh, long deep, bitter pilgrimage! Aloes! aloes!

* * *

According to my text, he comes "out of the ivory palaces." You know, or, if you do not know, I will tell you now, that some of the palaces of olden time were adorned with ivory. Ahab and Solomon built their homes furnished with it. The tusks of African and Asiatic elephants were twisted into all manners of shapes, and there were stairs of ivory, and chairs of ivory, and tables of ivory, and floors of ivory, and pillars of ivory, and windows of ivory, and fountains that dropped into basins of ivory, and rooms that had ceilings of ivory. Oh, white and overmastering beauty! Green tree branches sweeping the white curbs. Tapestry trailing the snowy floors. Brackets of light flashing on the lustrous surroundings. Silvery music rippling on the beach of the arches. The mere thought of it almost stuns my brain, and you say: "Oh, if I could only have walked over such floors! If I could have thrown myself into such a chair! If I could have heard the drip and dash of those fountains!" You shall have something better than that if you only let Christ introduce you. From that place he came, and to that place he proposes to transport you, for his "garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." What a place heaven must be! The Tuileries of the French, the Windsor castle of the English, the Spanish Alhambra, the Russian Kremlin, are mere dungeons compared with it! Not so many castles on either side the Rhine as on both sides of the river of God—the ivory palaces! One for the angels, insufferably bright, winged, fire-eyed, tempest-charioted; one for the martyrs, with blood-red robes from under the altar; one for the King, the steps of his palace the crown of the church militant; one for the singers, who lead the one hundred and forty and four thousand; one for you, ransomed from sin; one for me, plucked from the burning. Oh, the ivory palaces!

Today it seems to me as if the windows of those palaces were illumined for some great victory, and I look and see, climbing the stairs of ivory, and walking on floors of ivory, and looking from the windows of ivory, some whom we knew and loved on earth. Yes, I know them. There are father and mother, not eighty-two years and seventy-nine years, as when they left us, but blithe and young as when on their marriage day. And there are brothers and sisters, merrier than when we used to romp across the meadows together. The cough gone. The canker of the erysipelas healed. The heartbreak over. Oh, how fair they are in the ivory palaces! And your dear little children that went out from you—Christ did not let one of them drop as he lifted them. He did not wrench one of them from you. No. They went as from one they loved well to One whom they loved better. If I should take your little child and press its soft face against my rough cheek, I might keep it a little while; but when you, the mother, came along it would struggle to go with you. And so you stood holding your dying child when Jesus passed by in the room, and the little one sprang out to greet him. That is all. Your Christian dead did not go down into the dust, and the gravel, and the mud. Though it rained all that funeral day, and the water came up to the wheel's hub as you drove out to the cemetery, it made no difference to them, for they stepped from the home here to the home there, right into the ivory palaces. All is well with them. All is well.

It is not a dead weight that you lift when you carry a Christian out. Jesus makes the bed up soft with velvet promises, and he says, "Put her down here very gently. Put that head which will never ache again on this pillow of hallelujahs. Send up word that the procession is coming. Ring the bells! Ring! Open your gates, ye ivory palaces!" And so your loved ones are there. They are just as certainly there, having died in Christ, as that you are here. There is only one thing more they want. Indeed, there is one thing in heaven they have not got. They want it. What is it? Your company. But, oh, my brother, unless you change your tack you cannot reach that harbor. You might as well take the Southern Pacific railroad, expecting in that direction to reach Toronto, as to go on in the way some of you are going, and yet expect to reach the ivory palaces. Your loved ones are looking out of the windows of heaven now, and yet you seem to turn your back upon them. You do not seem to know the sound of their voices as well as you used to, or to be moved by the sight of their dear faces. Yonder, yonder, ye departed ones! Call loader from the ivory palaces!"

When I think of that place, and think of my entering it, I feel awkward; I feel as sometimes when I have been exposed to the weather, and my shoes have been bemired, and my coat is soiled, and my hair is disheveled, and I stop in front of some fine residence where I have an errand. I feel not fit to go in as I am, and sit among the guests. So some of us feel about heaven. We need to be washed; we need to be rehabilitated before we go into the ivory palaces. Eternal God, let the surges of thy pardoning mercy roll over us! I want not only to wash my hands and my feet, but, like some skilled diver, standing on the pier-head, who leaps into a wave and comes up at a far distant point from where he went in, so I want to go down, and so I want to come up. O Jesus, wash me in the waves of thy salvation!

And here I ask you to solve a mystery that has been oppressing me for thirty years. I have been asking it of doctors of divinity who have been studying theology for half a century, and they have given me no satisfactory answer. I have turned over all the books in my library, but got no solution to the question, and today I come and ask you for an explanation. By what logic was Christ induced to exchange the ivory palaces of heaven for the crucifixion agonies of earth? I shall take the first thousand million years in heaven to study out that problem; meanwhile, and now, taking it as the tenderest, mightiest of all facts that Christ did come; that he came with spikes in his feet, came with thorns in his brow; came with spears in his heart, to save you and to save me, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Oh, Christ, whelm all our souls with thy compassion! Mow them down like summer grain with the harvesting sickle of thy grace! Ride through today the conqueror, thy garments smelling "of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces"!

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN.

Cyrus, the world-conqueror of the day, having hitherto depended largely on the Medes for his military strength, did not at once take the throne of Babylon, but veiled his final purpose by putting on it for the moment Darius the Mede, Cyrus himself being an Elamite.

The new empire was now divided into a hundred and twenty satrapies, with three presidents over their governors, Daniel being set over all as grand vizier. That an allen of a petty race like the Jews should thus be made vice-sultan, to whom the proudest dignitaries of the empire must yield precedence, kindled the bitterest jealousies, which culminated in intrigues and plots to get one so hated disgraced and put to death. The scene finally adopted was to trap the old king into making a decree that for thirty days no one was to "ask a petition" from any god or man, except from Darius himself.

The king of Babylon, like Oriental kings generally, and like the Pharaohs, claimed descent from the gods, and demanded divine honors as thus of their order, so that the monstrous pride of the despot readily permitted this servile and blasphemous flattery, and he issued the decree suggested. To refuse obedience was to die. Would Daniel save his life and high dignity by forswearing his fidelity in the past to Jehovah? They felt sure he would think there were worse things than death, and foremost of these, apostasy. And so it was.

There was no longer a temple at Jerusalem, but the spot where God had once sat between the cherubim was still sacred, and pious Jews prayed towards it, as Mahommedans still pray toward Mecca, and modern Jews towards the ark in their synagogues. On learning the decree, Daniel made no change in his worship, but opening his window as usual, in the sacred direction, prayed towards the holy hill of far-off Zion (I Kings, 8:42, 48; Psa. 5:7; Jonah, 2:4). His offense, at once reported to Darius, disclosed the trick played on the old king to get his favorite out of the way, but a fatal rule that no law once proclaimed could be changed left him no escape. Daniel must die.

Like the Assyrian king, those of Babylon had huge pits in which were kept the said lions, or lions for a lion hunt; and into these pits special criminals were thrown, to be gored or eaten. This we learn from the tablets. In Daniel's case the pit of lions was chosen, and into this the prophet, now at least eighty years old, was cast, the stone door of the pit being secured by the seal royal.

Sad at heart, Darius spent the hours till next morning in great trouble, and then hurried to the pit, and with a broken voice called down to Daniel, in case his God had been able to deliver him from the lions. To his great joy he found that Jehovah had stood by his servant (Heb. 11:33), and that he was unhurt. Then followed, with Oriental completeness, the royal vengeance on those who had overreached him. Not only they, but their wives and children, were dragged to the pit, and, while Daniel was taken out and reinstated in more than his former honor, they were flung to the wild beasts, with no hope of deliverance, for indeed they were instantly torn in pieces.—Dr. Cunningham Geikie in S. S. Times.

Poor Baronet.

Sir Thomas O'Connor Moore, Bart., has been ejected from the room he lived in with his family at Cork, because he could not pay the rent of 25 cents a week. He is the eleventh holder of the title, which dates back to 1801.

French Soldiers Becoming Smaller.

At the semi-annual drawing in Paris of conscripts for the French army the number of recruits was 11 per cent smaller than one year ago.

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