

THE GRAPE-VINE SWING.

When I was a boy on the old plantation,
Down by the deep bayou—
The far rest spot of all creation
Under the arching blue—
When the wind came over the cotton and corn,
To the long simon loop I'd spring.
With brown feet bare, and a hat-brim torn,
And swing in the grape-vine swing.

Swinging in the grape-vine swing,
Laughing where the wild birds sing—
I dream and sigh
For the days gone by,
Swinging in the grape-vine swing.

Out—o'er the water lilies bonnie and bright,
Back to the moss-grown trees;
I shouted and laughed with a heart as light
As a wild rose tossed by the breeze.
The mocking-bird joined in my reckless glee,
Longed for no angel's wing;
I was just as near Heaven as I wanted to be,
Swinging in the grape-vine swing.

Swinging in the grape-vine swing,
Laughing where the wild birds sing—
Oh, to be a boy.
With a heart full of joy,
Swinging in the grape-vine swing.

I'm weary at morn, I'm weary at night,
I'm fretted and sore of heart;
And care is sowing my locks with mart.
As I wend through the fevered mart.
I'm tired of the world, with its pride and pomp;
And time seems a worthless thing;
I'd rather all for one day's rump;
And a swing in the grape-vine swing.

Swinging in the grape-vine swing,
Laughing where the wild birds sing—
I would I were away
From the world to-day,
Swinging in the grape-vine swing.

—Samuel M. Peck, in N. O. Times-Democrat.

MIRIAM.

The Romance of Heatherleigh Hall.

By MANDA L. CROCKER.

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CHAPTER XV.—CONTINUED.

The winter came on, and during its dreary hours Sir Rupert was obliged to keep his apartments the greater portion of the time, and grew accustomed to depending on the servants entirely. In consequence they learned to watch over him as one would over a troublesome child, "only they didn't dare to punish him," as Miriam remarked somewhat spitefully at the close of a very trying day. But with the breath of spring again his spirits seemed to revive a little. He walked out occasionally, leaning on the arm of one of the servants, and breathed the sweet air that lassèd the tender buds and silky leaflets forth.

Sometimes wheeled about the grounds in his chair, resting here and there in some favorite spot, intent on watching the birds in the tufted elms, or gazing wistfully high up the ivy-wreathed gables. The grand old Hall had seemed so much like a magnificent mansions, nor the interior seemed so much like a tomb, as it did this sunny springtime.

CHAPTER XVI.

In these last days of his unlucky life, these last weary days, every thing conducive to a lingering remorse had united against the proud soul of Sir Rupert, even the old facade suggested a tomb.

It only needed a little something more to tip the balance, and in favor of a hastening demise Sir Rupert could say: "I am ready. Oh! Charon, I stand waiting on the treacherous sands."

Pevish and restless he finally grew, spending hours in climbing up and down the silent staircases, echoing only to his faltering steps.

Sometimes resting on the landings, he could mutter to himself of the deceased Lady Percival, and of Miriam, and often of the little grandson.

Then there came a time when he risked the staircase no longer alone; and in these wretched days he strayed about the dark, gloomy corridors above during the long, monotonous summer afternoons, but often in the midnight watches.

The whole household were daily growing nervous and uneasy, and were obliged to occupy rooms near those of their master in order that his many strange fancies might be the easier looked after.

One great hallucination of these desperate days was Sir Rupert imagined that Miriam was secreted in the Hall somewhere, and he caught her peeping through the half-open doors, and waking him so often from his afternoon naps, he said. For hours and hours he would search along the halls and corridors, going with stealthy step and unwearying patience. Often he would pause in these searches and listen long and anxiously for the sound of her footstep and the music of her voice. Sometimes he would start up at dead of night and cry out, eagerly: "Oh! she is coming now; Miriam, my beautiful daughter, is coming; I can hear her steps on the stairs!"

Groaning contented after these outbursts and glad flights of expectation, he would

leigh was all that would pacify him, and with many misgivings and superstitious fears crowding their courage to the wall the servants led him into the chamber of sorrow and bitter memories. Ancil and James guided Sir Rupert's feeble steps, and the trembling Peggy went ahead with a lighted taper.

"Howly mother of Christ!" she ejaculated, as she stepped aside for Miriam to unlock the apartment, "an' if this ghostly wud only coom to an ind Oid Falde relaxed immensely."

The key grated in the unused lock, the heavy door swung open, and the party entered the midnight gloom of the musty, close atmosphere of the gallery.

On entering, Sir Rupert cast a quick, inquiring glance around him, as if really expecting to see Miriam somewhere in the gloom, but nothing save the empty silence of the shadows rewarded his anxious vision.

He stood perplexed and disappointed for some time, and the white-faced, frightened servants watched him with bated breath. What next? The question was plain in each face of the much-tormented household.

But the question was answered without delay, for Sir Rupert, as if recollecting himself, suddenly stretched out his arms toward the row of reversed portraits opposite him, and while a light of recognition gladdened his old face he exclaimed, almost gleefully: "Ah! now Miriam is here after all."

They assisted his eager steps across to the portraits indicated by his unnaturally bright eyes, and instinctively paused beneath Miriam's picture. James turned over the portrait, at a look from Sir Rupert, and Peggy held the taper up close to the beautiful face looking lankly, proudly down from its heavy black drapery on the midnight visitors.

And Sir Rupert exclaimed eagerly, clasping his thin fingers in rapture: "Oh! Miriam, my daughter, you are here; the old merciless tradition of our house is at fault at last! There is love—love, instead of hate, existing between us; between Sir Rupert, Percival and child. Is it not so, Miriam?" and his face lighted up wonderfully with love's wistful questioning.

Peggy hid her face in her apron and sobbed convulsively, while Ancil and James brushed the unbidden tears from their overflowing eyes in silence.

Oh! the eager, hopeless questioning of an affection that came too late!

"Lord! what a pass it has come to," moaned the sobbing housekeeper, and James made answer in a choked voice: "Yes, too late is the only certainty of the Hall."

Sir Rupert caught at their meaning, especially the lament of the honest butler, on whose faithful arm he rested. A shadow of deep disappointment crossed his features as he looked from one weeping servant to another, and then, as if realizing something of the cause of their grief, he dropped his hands nerveless by his side, and murmured in a blank, uncertain way: "Ah! I see how it is at last."

Then standing quietly as if revolving the matter more thoroughly in his mind, he burst out with: "Merciful God! I had forgotten. Miriam is indeed here; but she only is here to gaze on her aged father.

She walked the length of the bit of beach below the rocks where she had been sitting out the morning. A great white gull circled over her head and sped away as free as air. The morning sun danced on the calm waters, and a few white drifting clouds lay lazily above the downs stretching away toward the city.

It was nearly so perfect, that she and Arthur were married; but not with sanction and merry-making which would smile a God-speed for Patricia.

What was that? Was it Patty's wedding chime? She hardly thought she could hear the bells of St. Martin from where she stood. But, yes; it must be them. Miriam put her hands quickly to her ears to shut out the sound, and sat down by an overturned boat to think. Was she selfish-hearted, that she could not bear to hear the ringing of the bells even? No; but some way it brought it all back so vividly—her own wedding night. Not like Patty's marriage, celebrated in the glow of the beautiful morning, amid friends and music and flowers; no, in the shadows and quiet, somber interior of lonely little All Saints' she was given away by a stranger, and as a wife she crossed the gloomy porch and walked by the dead, out to the portals of the quiet church-yard, without a song, without a flower, or a smile.

Well, it was fitting, after all; the ceremony was only a type of the rest. Not all for Arthur, dear, dead Arthur was true and affectionate, but she meant the dark side of the after years. She had only the shadows of death in view this morning; they were always trailing across her pathway; their dank denseness had grown second nature to her soul, for she had become moribund on shadows.

But it wouldn't do, this moping forever in the mists; she would go up to the house, and be glad for Patricia. About now the fair village ladies were a-strewing flowers in Patty's way—happy Patty!

Drawing the soft, rich wrap about her frail shoulders, Miriam toiled wearily up over the rugged path toward the Rest, trying to feel happy for dear sister Patty's sake. Where a turn came in the path, a rock jutting out from among its hoary roots, Miriam paused for rest.

She might have had the carriage and have driven down the beach road, but she chose to be alone. The presence of even the boy in livery would have disturbed her to-day, she thought, so she had descended the bridle-path alone for her morning walk on the shore.

Far away she caught sight of sail gleaming in the sunlight; some pure white, some cream and rose-tinted, and a great wave of something like homesickness crept over her. The letter which a white-winged messenger had sped away with months ago had been answered. And that dear friend of her mother's had said: "Come;" but only a few days after the receipt of the friendly epistle a raging fever had seized her and she had hovered between this world and the next for days. Since then she had not been strong enough to undertake a voyage, especially unattended.

In those uncertain days of her severe illness Patricia had never left her bedside. Devoted and kind, she had nursed her through until the physician said: "She will live." Why she had not been permitted to cross over and enter into rest beside her beloved ones was to Miriam a dark problem.

But now, as soon as she was strong enough to warrant starting, she was going to her mother's friend on the shores of the Narragansett, to cozy Little Bay View, as the place had been described to her by letter.

A party of rosy-cheeked children passed her, scampering down the path, their prim, pretty nurse bringing up the rear with the lunch basket on one plump arm, while over the other she had swung her hat with its wreath of wild autumn flowers she had gathered by the roadside. They made a pretty picture. One of the children ran up to her, offering her bouquet of yellow fall flowers it had crushed into a withered condition in its chubby palms. She took the blossoms with a "thank you" to please the little one, while the rosy nurse curtsied respectfully and passed by.

They were from The Cliffs, a pleasant, roomy mansion some two miles farther up the shore; doubtless the family carriage had been left up at Atherton Place, a few rods from The Rest, and the children had been sent down to the beach for a half-day's outing in charge of Erma, the bright-eyed foreign nurse-girl.

Miriam recognized them instantly, having met them on the beach quite often during

the summer, and the Athertons, she had learned, were relatives.

"What a happy little party," mused Miriam, looking after them and watching rather regretfully each little head pass down and out of sight. "What a merry, sunny home The Cliffs must be," she added, thoughtfully.

A merry shout from one of the children below arrested her attention and she, forgetting her sorrows for a moment, arose with a smile, and went on toward home. The purple ivy clusters showed rich and dark against the gray stone of the old wall by which she passed, while here and there a great leaf of the luxuriant vine flamed into scarlet. Ah! yes, it was autumn; autumn of the cycling year once more and dreary, desolate autumn of her heart and aimless life; and she looked up through the tree-dotted park and saw through hot tears the silent grandeur of the Rest. The curtains were drawn, and rooms filled with a desolation that made her heart sink.

But the windows must be thrown open, the knotted裁 removed, and the merry sunshine must be admitted, for Patty was

"I am so glad that it happens to be such a perfect day, it portends a happy life, you know."

Mme. Montcalm was speaking to one of the guests in the handsomely decorated rooms at the Fairfax home.

"Yes," answered the one addressed. "I sincerely hope the second marriage of the Fairfax house will prove a happier one than the first; though that one was happy enough had not its first years been clouded with hard, grinding toil, and the last by the failing health, and finally the death of the husband."

"I understood they were very much devoted to one another," said Mme. Montcalm, avoiding the mention of toll which graced on her aristocratic ears, and devoting herself to the heart-side of the subject.

"Oh! certainly," was the rejoinder. "Arthur Fairfax was a devoted husband to a most devoted wife. By the bye, his widow will not be here at Patricia's wedding. She is just recovering from a long illness; and although able to be about, will not undertake the trip."

And other guests having arrived, came to claim the attention of the speaker and get an introduction to the very aristocratic madame, the mother of the groom, whose vanity was very much flattered by the attention she was receiving from Patricia's friends.

No, Miriam could not go over to attend Patty's wedding; she felt that she had no part in happiness now; but the day was beautiful, and Patty, sister Patty, would be very happy. It was not far to Fairfax Place, a lonely country seat, just outside a dreamy, quiet village, nestled among the hills, some few miles up the shore. Patty had wanted her to come, but had not urged, knowing that her heart was sore over her loss.

She walked the length of the bit of beach below the rocks where she had been sitting out the morning. A great white gull circled over her head and sped away as free as air. The morning sun danced on the calm waters, and a few white drifting clouds lay lazily above the downs stretching away toward the city.

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