

# IRENE'S VOW

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.

## CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued.)

"Oh, my vengeance! My vengeance! It has stained my hands with the heart's blood of the man I once loved so dearly!" Her brain burned; her head seemed to be on fire. The night wind was cool and soothing to her. She bowed her head against the window frame and thought of him. The leaves of the roses, the sprays of the passion flower which encircled the window touched her face and her hair. She was thinking of him, thinking of their first meeting at the brook side, and the handsome, eager face which had looked at her there, of the sunny mornings and the dewy evenings when she had wandered with him through shady woods and green lanes; of her so-called marriage day, with its delirium of love, of the happy months she had spent with him, and then of the tragedy at Beechgrove, where he had told her she was not his wife.

Oh, dark, handsome face, lying upraised with the damp of death upon it, never more would its comeliness and beauty lead anyone to love. The moonlight seemed to speak to her of the times she had rested her head on his breast—oh, false and cruel love that had slain her.

She heard the great clock at the stables ring out one. "One." She knew how the moonbeams fell, and she could, in imagination, hear the faint, hoarse cry for help.

"Two." And he still lay dying in the blood; the moon was at its brightest, and rode with queenly grace in the sky. The ferns would be shining with dew, and the grass wet with it. The wind had fallen and sighed as it shivered through the leaves.

Three o'clock. He had lain there another hour—an hour which she had spent in steadfast watching and he had spent in crying for help, and trying to crawl even one inch on the ground. Four o'clock struck. And the strokes fell, one by one, like strokes of doom on the quivering air.

Five o'clock. Oh, heaven! how long the night went! how the weary hours dragged! It seemed to her that she had been there for weeks. The moonlight had changed with the golden light of the morn. She knew just how the birds were singing in the trees around him, peeping from between the branches with bright eyes. The wild flowers would shrink with horror from the object that lay there, and he, hearing the songs of the birds, would perhaps remember the time when he had been good and stainless.

Six. All nature seemed awake. She could hear the lowing of the cattle in the meadows, and the chorus of the birds in the trees. The air was fresh and sweet. The flowers all awakened to another day of sweet autumn bliss. And he—would he close his eyes with weariness and pain, or would they wear that tired, worn expression that was like the shadow of pain?

Seven o'clock struck, and she shivered as with mortal cold; her eyes burned, and she longed for rest. She thought of the noble, beautiful woman lady who watched the whole night through while the man she loved was broken on the wheel.

She was taking her just revenge, she said to herself; and yet she could not have rested her head for one moment on the white pillows; she could not have slept while he lay dying so near.

Eight o'clock, and the busy household began to stir. Was he living or dead? Soon as she could she would go to him. Ah, there was the voice of Lady Estmere, asking to be admitted.

Carefully opening her door, the duchess took Lady Estmere's hand and led her back to her own room.

"I will come with you," she said. "You look very ill. You should not have risen. What is the matter?"

When they were in Lady Estmere's room she threw her arms round the stately figure of the duchess, and laid her head on her neck.

"Be kind to me," she said, wistfully. "I am very ill and very unhappy. Sir Hulbert has not returned yet; and I am quite at a loss what to do."

"No; nor would he ever return; for his struggle must have ebbed away with his life blood. She might surely say some words of comfort to this weeping woman whose beautiful heart would never more rest on her husband's breast."

"The duke sent the keepers last night to Durston, and they have been at work all night, but they could find no trace of him."

Irene, touched to the very heart by the sad face and pathetic voice, bent down and kissed her.

"If I knew what to say, my dear, I would say it; but I do not. You must go to my husband."

"You are sorry for me?" said Lady Estmere.

"Yes," said the duchess, with a sudden flush and a sudden trembling. "Yes, I am sorry for you."

She hastened back to her own room and was soon dressed in the most exquisite taste. As she stood before the mirror watching Marcia arrange the rich laces and beautiful folds of her morning dress, she said to herself, over and over again: "He is dying now; and one word from me might save him; one word, only one word, and they would fly to him; they would raise him and pour wine between his lips; they would surround him with love and care; they would send for the most clever doctors; they would spare no pains to restore him. His wife would devote herself to him; she would nurse him by night and by day, and he would be so grateful to her she would love him doubly. Ah, no, this one word I will never speak. He tried to kill my fair name, my innocent soul—let him die."

At the breakfast table—all the faces were much graver and great anxiety was expressed when it was known that Sir Hulbert had not been heard of—evidently there was something more serious than a love adventure. But looking at the pale, distressed face of his young wife, they would not give expression to any of the doubts they felt. It would be all right; they would hear of him by noon, they said.

The gentlemen were walking about, some alone, some talking busily over what seemed to be a tragedy, when they

were all startled by the bark of a dog—a pretty white dog, who came leaping and barking in the midst of the circle, with less respect than had they had been so many pheasants. Some laughed, some moved away, but the Duchess of Bayard sank back in her seat, pale as death and trembling in every limb. She knew the dog; it was her own, a beautiful, petted little animal, given to her by the duke; and she had missed it since morning; and now it was here with, sure, a blood-stained handkerchief tied round his neck. Oh, heaven, what could it mean? In an instant, and like a flash of lightning, it came home to her, that wonderful truth, the dog must have followed her into the woods, and have found Sir Hulbert. She remembered how often she had seen him fondling the animal. It must have gone to the wounded, helpless man, who had found strength to tie this round his neck, and send him home.

Pale, breathless, her heart beating almost to suffocation, Irene listened. In her heart she cried out that it was unfair, Heaven had not interfered to save her; but it had interfered to help the man who had betrayed her. In that one minute a hundred thoughts rushed through her mind, and the picture that dwelt there longest was of the duke's as he asked her the name of the man who practiced this vile fraud upon her—asked her as they were standing by the sunlit fountain in Rome.

There was a rush—a great stir—a cry. She looked up. Lady Estmere lay fainting on the terrace, with a group of electrified ladies around her, and the gentlemen all bending over the dog, the duke foremost among them.

"Irene," he called, excitedly, "come here."

She rose, though her limbs trembled so that she could hardly walk. Tall, stately, with her rich dress and trailing laces, with her diamonds and her white face, she hastened to him. The group of men made way for her.

Col. Leighton held the dog in his arms, and the duke held a white pocket handkerchief stained with blood.

"See, Irene," he cried; "I am sure I am right. Sir Hulbert is lying somewhere wounded in the woods, and this dog has found him. He has managed to tie this round his neck, and send him a messenger to us."

He stopped abruptly, for the ghastly pallor of his wife's face startled him.

"Do not be afraid, my darling," he cried; "the man is living or he could not have done this."

But in her heart she was crying out that heaven had helped him—had taken her vengeance from her.

"It must be so," "The duke is quite right," "Messengers should be sent at once," were the cries she heard all round her; and the duke opened the handkerchief, that all might see it. There was his name plainly worked in one corner, and near the work was a great crimson stain. It was quite evident that someone had tied it round the dog's neck.

There was great excitement among the group; some of the women were weeping like children, and strong men had grown pale. The duchess stood by, cold, silent, motionless as stone.

The duke went up to Lady Estmere.

"Take courage, my dear," he said, kindly; "I feel sure now that all will well. Hulbert has certainly met with some accident, but we shall find him and bring him home for you to nurse. Cheer up, and get well for his sake. Irene," he continued, "see, my darling, that Lady Estmere is attended to;" but the duchess stood by motionless—she neither moved nor spoke.

Then the duke ordered all the keepers, all the men servants in the house to be called together, and a regular, orderly search to be instituted.

They found him, although more than once the men, with the coolies at their head, had been tempted to give up the chase.

They followed the little dog, although it seemed useless. Sir Hulbert, they said to each other, would never be able to wander through this tangle.

But they found him, and when Col. Leighton tried to raise him his head fell like a dead weight on his arm.

"He is dead," cried the coolies; "we have come too late."

But one of the men laid his hand on Sir Hulbert's breast.

"He is not dead; his heart beats," he said.

The accident was patent to all—in falling the trigger of his gun had caught in the branches of a tree, and the whole contents were lodged in his side; they could see, also, that his ankle had been broken. How long they asked each other, had he been lying here so cruelly wounded—here—alone?

He could hardly live until they reached home. His face was ghastly white, and his lips burned with cruel thirst. But what seemed the most strange was this—that they found on one of his bruised, cold hands a woman's wedding ring.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Sir Hulbert was lying between life and death, while nurses watched him and listened for the faint, low breath. The silence of night had fallen over that luxurious mansion when he opened his eyes and asked for the Duchess of Bayard.

The women looked aghast at each other. The Duchess of Bayard was in her room, and asleep; they believed. They did not like to call her.

"I believe that I am dying," he said, "and I must see her."

They heard him murmur something to himself that he had been saved by a dog, and it occurred to them that he wished to speak to her about the dog. So, in the silence of the night, they went to her room in search of her, to say that the dying man wanted her. In the silence of the night she rose to go.

She found him lying quite calm, waiting for her. She went up to him.

"You wanted to speak to me," she said, gently. "I am here."

"Irene," he said, "I want you. Send these women away, that I may speak to you."

She did so, under some pretext, and they were alone.

"Irene, I have not mentioned your

name," he said. "They have asked me all kinds of questions about my accident, but no one knows that you left me—there to die—no one ever will know. I have been spared. I want to ask you something," he said. "I did a grievous wrong to you—a wrong for which I know now there is neither excuse nor pardon. Believe me that, when I lay dying, as I thought, in yonder woods, that was my greatest trouble. I am sorry, through to my heart's cure, for all I have done to hurt you. If I could I would crave that pardon on my knees. Irene, will you forgive me? Forgive me, my dear, for heaven's sake."

She made no answer, and he went on: "You swore to be avenged upon me, my dear; you have taken terrible vengeance. I have suffered all the pains of death—all its pains, its desolation, its abandonment. Do you not think that I have suffered enough? No death could ever be so terrible again. I have suffered more than death, Irene, therefore, your vengeance is complete. You have slain me, Irene—all the youth, the manhood, the strength in me—slain me. I suffered so much lying there that this world and this life can never be much to me again, and I-I heard the doctors say if ever I recovered I should be lame for life—never able to walk erect again. Oh, Irene, have I not suffered enough? You have taken the rest from your hands."

"Yes," she said, slowly; "you have suffered enough in all conscience, and my revenge suffices. As you say, it is even who took you from me."

"And you will forgive?" he said.

"She was silent and thoughtful for a minute, then she said, gently: "Yes, I have fulfilled my vow, and I will forgive you."

She looked at him in wonder, for he was crying like a child; great tears rained down his face and bitter sobs shook his frame.

"I am broken down," he said. "Irene, I have no strength left; it is like a light from heaven on me, the peace that came with your words. You quite forgive me, Irene."

She laid her hand with a kindly caressing touch on his forehead.

"Yes, I pardon you, Hulbert; you ruined my life, but I forgive you, as I pray the good God to forgive me."

"Shall we bury the horrible past and be friends?" he asked.

"That can never be," she said, quietly. "I will speak quite frankly to you. I can never be indifferent to you. I must either love you or hate you. There can be no medium, no friendship for us. I forgive you, but we must be as strangers. You must promise me gradually to break off your friendship with the duke, to decline his invitations, always to avoid meeting me, for there can be no friendship between us—the two who have loved each other so dearly and have sought each other's lives—on this condition we part, and I forgive you."

"You are right, as you always are," he said, humbly. "I thank heaven and I thank you for my pardon. Let me kiss your hand once before you go, Irene."

And then he laid his hand on his lips lightly, and then went away.

That night she slept the soundest sleep that had ever visited her eyes since the day at Beechgrove on which he had first told her that she was not his wife.

"Vengeance is mine, and I will repay," said the Lord.

These words haunted her until she slept. Assuredly if ever heaven had wreaked vengeance from any human hands it had from hers.

He was better in the morning, and Lady Estmere was beside herself with joy. He told the story of his accident to her then, and how, when he was dying almost of despair, the little white dog that had belonged to the duchess came up to him and began to lick his hand.

"Then the idea came to me," he said, "to tie my handkerchief round his neck; I felt a certain hope that it would be seen."

"But," said his wife, "I cannot think why you wear that ring on your finger, or where it came from."

"I-I found it in the woods," he said, "and I mean to keep it. It will remind me of all I thought about while I imagined myself to be lying there."

"What did you think about, Hulbert?" she asked, curiously.

"That if heaven would but spare me, my darling, I would be a better man all my life long," he said.

"You are a good man now," she said, with the faith so natural to a loving wife.

"But I will be better, darling," he said, with a long shuddering cry; "I learned my lesson when I lay all night in the lonely woods. Kiss me, Lira—I am going to sleep."

The duchess told her husband that her accident had been terribly shaken by the accident, and that she should like to go to the south of France for some months. They could leave Saxtonhurst at the disposal of Sir Hulbert and Lady Estmere until he recovered.

Sir Hulbert kept his word faithfully to the duchess; although the duke demurred at first, and was hurt at his coolness, he refused every invitation sent to him. He never saw beautiful Saxtonhurst again. Whenever he could avoid meeting the duchess he did so; but there were times when the exigencies of society compelled them to meet. Then they exchanged but few words, they never shook hands, they never looked into each other's faces; each knew of the other a secret more binding than death.

To Sir Hulbert and Lady Estmere came blooming sons and fair-faced daughters, in the midst of whom Lord Gerant, the great statesman, grew young again.

The duke had no children at his death, which did not happen until many years after Sir Hulbert's accident. Lord and Lady Waldo succeeded to the title and estates. Irene was still in the very pride of her peerless beauty when she became one of the richest widows in England, and then her life became a poem. She did more good than any woman in England. Her father went to live with her on the beautiful estate of Glenfield, which was one part of her rich inheritance. Irene's wishes were granted to her. She helped the needy, she nursed the sick, she taught the ignorant, she comforted the sorrowful.

She must, however, have married again, for in the Royal Academy of this year hangs her portrait and underneath it one reads the name of "Irene, Marchioness of Weston."

And the Marchioness of Weston is at this day one of the most popular, beautiful and beloved women in England. (The end.)

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### ODD ILLUSTRATED VILLAGE.

#### An Artist Amused Himself by Painting the Houses.

When next you go to the Lake of Geneva by all means pay a visit to the little known village of St. Legier, near the road between Vevey and Flonay—one of the quaintest villages in Europe, and one of the proudest, on account of its extraordinary adornments. St. Legier, and also the adjoining village of La Chiesaz, are nothing more or less than illustrated villages. They are as profusely illustrated as the modern magazine, for nearly all the houses bear on their outside walls some striking picture or comical caricature from the brush of a great man in the village. M. Alfred Beguin, a painter of local renown, and not unknown in Paris.

A house in St. Legier has no use for a garb to tell the world that it is an inn, a cycle shop, a forge or a dairy. M. Beguin's picture does that. On a stable he draws a picture of a spirited runaway horse, knocking down men as it leaps for freedom; on the white wall of the little village forge are pictures of men making horseshoes for dear life and shooting a frisky steed; on the wall of a dairy, a dairymaid balances a pail of milk on her head, while scenes of local life, as pictures of the annual summer exodus to the mountain pastures with the cows and goats, and caricatures of the local big-wigs, make a bright picture gallery of the village.

M. Beguin lives in one of the most imposing houses in St. Legier, whence he obtains a full view of the crooked little village street and of the Dent du Jaman towering up in the distance. For many years past he has amused himself by painting the houses, and in the last place he acquired most of his skill and boldness in painting in this way.—*Corson's Magazine.*

### MOODY SQUELCHED HER.

#### New Secretary of the Navy Came to Conductor's Rescue.

They are telling a story in Washington about the new Secretary of the Navy. Mr. Moody was riding on one of the Boston-surface cars and was standing on the platform at the side next the gate that protected passengers from cars coming on the other track. A lady—a Boston lady—came to the door of the car and as it stopped started to move toward the gate, which was hidden from her by the men standing before it.

"Other side, please, lady," said the conductor. He was ignored as only a born and bred Bostonian can ignore a man. The lady took another step toward the gate.

"You must get off the other side," said the conductor.

"I wish to get off on this side," came the answer, in tones that congealed the official into momentary silence. Before he could either explain or expostulate Mr. Moody came to his assistance.

"Stand to one side, gentlemen," he remarked, quietly, according to the New York Times. "The lady wants to climb over the gate."

**Trusts Must Bow to Law.**

United States Consul W. Schumann, stationed at Mainz, informs the State Department that the Prussian government has lately taken steps to investigate the trusts and syndicates located in the kingdom, and a circular has been sent to the presidents of the various gubernatorial districts asking their names and memberships of trusts located in the several districts, the nature and value of the production, the reasons for forming the trusts, their objects, the regulation of price and output and division of spheres of operation, their statutes; what agreements have been made with other trusts, what effect their formation has had on other trusts and industries, on the cost of production and on prices; how the sale is regulated; how export prices compare with those asked in the home markets; if export premiums are granted; if the dividends, value of stocks etc., of the various companies forming the trusts have increased or not; what methods are employed to fight the competition of concerns outside of the trusts; what contracts are made with customers; the influence of the trusts on wages of workmen and on trade unions.

**A Statesman's Jokes.**

Some excellent bon mots are ascribed to Lord North. "I am obliged to you for introducing me to some old acquaintances," he said to his physician after an illness which had reduced his corpulence. "Who are they, my lord?" asked the doctor; and the Prime Minister replied: "My ribs, which I have not felt for many years until now." Oddly enough, though never so happy as when in society or at home, Lord North had no love for music. A friend who begged him to subscribe for a series of concerts urged as a reason the fact that Lord North's brother did so. "Yes," said North, "and if I were as deaf as my brother I would subscribe too." George III. once asked the Premier the character of a well-known office-seeker. "He is, your Majesty," said North, "Chief Secretary for Ireland—a man on whom, if your Majesty were pleased to bestow the United Kingdom, he would ask for the Isle of Man as a potato garden."

**The Rector's Daughter.**

"My father feels it very much, Mrs. Barker, that you should leave the church every Sunday just before the sermon. Don't you think you might try and stay in future?"

"Mrs. Barker—I don't do it, miss. I do snore that dreadful when I'm asleep!"—Punch.

We have noticed that the man whose credit isn't good, is the last man in the world to take a hint.

### THE POPULAR PULPIT

A model of the parthenon of Athens. The inscription is from Lowell: "As one lamp lights another, nor grows less, so nobleness enkindleth nobleness." Philosophy is a grave figure with downcast eyes, carrying a book in her hand. Its inscription is from Bacon: "The inquiry, knowledge and belief of truth is the sovereign good of human nature." Poetry has for a motto a sentence by Milton:

Hither, as to their fountain, other stars Repairing, in their golden crues draw Light.

Above the figure of Law are Hooker's words: "Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her voice is the harmony of the world." Science is peering with searching gaze on all things, and holds a hand glass, not like that of History, but held forward, so that all may perceive the image of Truth. The choice of its inscription must have been very perplexing. After searching long these words from the Psalmist were selected: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." I call your attention to the fact that the two most difficult inscriptions, that of Religion and that of Science, were taken from the Bible.

Here, then, we have a magnificent structure, emblematical of the whole circle of our national ideals; its elevated and corridors reserved for no heathen divinities or doctrines, but for the living thoughts of living men. May it stand forever as the symbol of a state and society on which the reformers of coming ages may work, each removing some obstruction, adding some smooth stone, or bringing some image of beauty to grace its niches and adorn its spires till at last it shall stand in the light of heaven, the model temple of the world. Let us strive in the willingness of our great patriots to realize the hope that here the free spirit of mankind at length shall throw its last fetters off.

### MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

By Rev. Minot J. Savage.

I believe with my whole soul that what God hath put together man has no right to put asunder. I believe that in the cases where God has joined them together no man can put asunder, no man ever does or ever can or will; but I have too much respect for God to feel willing to hold him responsible for all the marriages that have taken place since the beginning of the world. I believe we have a right to turn that saying around.

Where God has put people asunder no man has a right to force them to stay together.

If the husband and wife have both ceased to love each other and there are no children, they should be permitted to separate. Suppose there are children; suppose husband and wife have lost their love for the other. If the children's welfare would be subserved by their maintaining a home, then they are under the highest kind of obligation to maintain that home.

I would make divorce difficult. I would compel people to take at least one year in the process of divorce. They should not be able to get through in one month or three months or six, and perhaps by the time a year was ended they might have had time to think it over and reconsider their intention. I would not allow them to remarry the next day or the next week or the next year. I would have it at least two years, and perhaps three.

There is no place in the world where divorces are so easily obtained as in the United States, and there is no place in the world where women stand so high, where women are granted so many liberties and rights, no place where they are so free to seek the highest and best things, where they are surrounded by so much care, such courtesy, such sympathy, such respect.

The great cause why there are so many more divorces in this country than any other is that here, for the first time in history, women are granted freedom to throw off a thousand intolerable burdens under which they have been borne down and crushed from the beginning of the world.

I believe that if a careful investigation were made we should find that a large proportion of the divorces granted in this country means kindness and consideration toward woman, readiness on her part from crushing burdens, set her free, give her an opportunity to retrieve a so far wasted life.

### BLUNDERS OF LIFE.

By Rev. Polemus H. Swift.

Some of the blunders of young people are "to rush into the arena of life without the best possible preparation for the battle of the giants, especially such as a good education, and take up a business, trade or profession in a haphazard way or to make choice of a life-work without due consideration of the question of fitness or adaptation; insane matrimonial alliances; disregard of the eternal laws of fitness and compatibility; the mistake of starting where the fathers left off; extravagance and living beyond one's means; the subordination of the future to the present; short cuts to wealth, especially yielding to the insane craze of gambling; the exclusive cultivation of one department of nature; living as if the making of money were the supreme thing and the failure to make choice of Christ in early years."

Speaking to the second point, every man is fitted to do some one thing better than he can anything else. In that he can succeed splendidly. In anything else he will be a comparative failure. The world is full of people who simply drift and make no honest effort to get out of the current. They are cast by the waves of chance upon some shore of opportunity, and there they content themselves with mediocrity when they might have won distinction in some other field.

There is no sense in trying to make a minister out of a boy who is fit only to plow corn. A man will not succeed in law if his whole soul goes out to music. What kind of a mechanic would Longfellow have made? Charles Darwin could not have been a first-class poet, nor could Edison have made an actor.