THE RETURN.

Five minutes ago I drew the window curtain aside and let the mellow sunset light contend with the glare from the Tavern Garth, rich in heartly flowered pot, not a quince. As my eyes, unaccustomed to the day, blinked rapidly, the recollection came of a scene forty-five years past, and once more beneath the oldest tree stood the girl I loved, mischievously plucking yarrow, and despite its evil omen twining the every clusters in her black hair.

Again her coquettish words rang in my ears: "Will you be my lady? Make me the richest woman in England, and I promise thee, Rupert, we shall be the happiest of God's creatures." And I remembered how the mad thirst for gold filled me; how I trusted in her fidelity, and without remaining or even telling her that I would conquer fortune for her sake I kissed her easily and passed into the world. Then followed a complete silence until the Star of Europe, the greatest diamond discovered in modern times, lay in my hand—a rough, unpolished stone, not unlike the lumps of spar I had often seen lying on the sandy lanes of my native country.

This should be Rose's own, and all the others that clacked so maliciously in their leather holes should go toward fulfilling her ambition. Rich and happy I should be soon, and should I not marry an entitled gentlewoman, sweet in her prime? The twenty years' interval of work and sleep was like a falling dream, for I was going home. The knowledge thrilled me so that my nerves were strung tight as iron ropes, and I laughed like a young boy. And it was all because my home was to be in Rose Pascal's arms.

I crossed the sea and pointed straight for Bolton village. The old hostelry was crowded. Jane Hopgarth, whom I remembered as a ruddy faced child, stood on the low edged terrace, courtesying in matronly fashion to the departing mail coach. An alteration in the sign board attracted my attention; the white lilies had been painted over with a miter and the name changed from the Fiscal Arms to the Lord Bishop. Angrily, aghast at this desecrating, I cross questioned the ostlers, who hitched to and fro, but failing to obtain any coherent reply I was fain to content myself with a mental denunciation of the times.

Twilight had fallen before I reached the cottage at the entrance of the park. The was in a ruinous condition; here and there shutters in the thatched roof had parted and formed crevices through which moths flitted. Some of the tiny windows had been walled up, and even where the glass remained snakes like ivy hindered any light falling into their dark recesses.

The door stood open, although the evening was chilly. As I approached the heavy autumnal dew shook down from the fir and fell upon my shoulders. A bat, swooping in an undulation, struck between my eyes and fell to the grass moaning querulously. I entered. A withered woman sat beside the peat fire. She held a pair of steel knitting needles which she moved without cessation. There was no thread upon them, and when they clicked her lips twitched as if she had counted.

Some time passed before I recognized Rose's foster mother, Elizabeth Carlton. The rosier colors of her cheeks had faded and left a sickly gray; those sunken, dimmed eyes were utterly unlike the bright, black orbs that had danced so mirthfully. Her stature, too, had shrunk. I was struck with wonder. Elizabeth could not be more than fifty-six years old. I had been away twenty years; Rose was fifteen when I left her and I had heard Elizabeth say that she was only twenty-one at the time of her darling's wooing. But what a change! She had sunk an air of weary grief that my heart grew sick.

Advancing to her side I touched her arm. She turned, but neither spoke nor seemed aware of my presence. Rose, however, she arose and helping herself along by grasping the scanty furniture, tottered to a window and peered out. Her right hand had crept to her throat; she untied the string of her gown and took from her bosom a pomander set in a battered silver case. I cried out. Rose had loved that toy in her childhood. Thousands of times had we played ball with it. Elizabeth held it to her mouth and mumbled it as if it were a baby's hank.

Maddened with impatience, I caught her shoulder and roughly bade her say where I should find Rose. But something awoke in her eyes, and she shrank away to the other side of the house place. I followed. She cowered on the floor, looking at me with a strange horror. Her lips began to move, but no sound issued. Only when I crossed to the threshold did she rise, and then her head moved wildly from side to side, and her hands pressed close to her breast, as if the pain there were too great to endure.

I ran from the place, not daring to look back. In a few minutes I had reached the balustraded wall of the hall garden. The house looked as if no careful hand had touched it for years. The elements had played havoc with its tiles, and many of the latticed frames hung on single hinges. The curtain of the blue parlor hung cottable, draggled and faded and half hidden by a thick growth of lifeless.

With an almost savage force I raised my arm high above my head and brought my fist down upon the central panel of the door. There was no need for such violence, for the decayed fastenings made no resistance, and some of the rotten boards fell to the ground. As I entered the hall and saw the ancient furniture, once so fondly kept, now mildewed and crumbling to dust, quick sobs burst from my throat. Rose's spinet stood beside the door of the withdrawing room. How many carols had we sung to its music! As I passed my foot struck one of the legs, and the rickety structure groaned as if it were coming to pieces. I threw out my hand to steady it, but at my touch the velvet covering of the lid came off and the tiny gilt ornaments rattled downward.

By now the full moonlight pierced the window and quivered on the floor. As I gazed on the hexagonal pattern it changed into opaque devices of hearts, daggers, rings and a thousand other tokens. All suddenly another object glided among them so quickly that I wondered whether my eyes had a fault—a tiny satin shoe, stained crimson across the tappets. A revulsion of feeling came to me and drove away all my fear. I had seen that self same shoe white and moulded twenty years before, when vain, vain Rose danced among her reapers at the harvest home. And my voice cried out in ecstacy: "Rose, heart of mine! Delight of all the world's delights!"

She stood before me, wondering, amazed. Alas, so changed! The red and yellow silk shawl still covered her shoulders; her hair still hung in those oblivious curls. But the beautiful face had grown wan and tired, and across the forehead were drawn lines like silver threads. She threw her arms around my neck, and pressing her bosom heavily on mine sobbed so piteously that I grew afraid for her and drew back the long masses of hair which had fallen forward, and kissed again and again those lips that were too lovely for words. Never came a word of chiding from them. "Love," she said, when she had regained her breath, "the past struggle was keen and torturing—the future struggle will be crueler still. What a great love yours was to wait and trust for so long! Would that mine had been as powerful! Poor, weak heart that I could not endure!"

The tones of a wild fear throbbed through all her speech strongly, but yet with insufficient power to prevent her from feeling the tenderness of these moments. Often timorously raising her head from my shoulder she looked around, and then turned with a soft, inarticulate and glad murmur to hide her face on my bosom. I spoke fervently, told of the years spent away from her; how, when working in the diamond fields, she had ever been present in my fancy; how at night her name had fallen from my lips in my only prayer; how I had dreamed of her among the greatest in the land—the richest and I dare swear the loveliest woman in the world.

I grew warmer still. All the gladness which had been constrained for so long now burst wildly from my lips a myriad of rich ideas resolved into words which, being spoken, wove one long and delicious fit of passion. As we stood together the moon brightened and filled the chamber with a light like the day's. The ridges of the surrounding moorland stood out in sharp relief.

Rose drank in my declarations thirstily, but soon interrupted me with a faint sigh. "Come away," she said softly. "I no longer live in this house. You must stay with me tonight. This place is so wretched now, for time, that in you and me has only strengthened love, has wrought much ruin here."

Half leaning on me she led me from the precincts of Bretton hall. We walked in silence over the waste that crowns the valley of the Whitelands, and being near the verge of the rocks saw the great pine wood sloping downward, lighted near us by the moon, but soon lost in obscurity. Along the mysterious line where the light changed into gloom, intricate shadows of withered summer bracken struck and receded in a mimic battle. Before us lay the Priests' cliff. The moon was veiled here by a grove of elms, whose ever swaying branches alternately increased and lessened her brightness. This was a place of notoriety—a veritable Golgotha—a haunt it only for demons. Murder and theft had been punished here, and to this day fireside stories are told of evil women dancing around that Druids' circle, carrying hearts plucked from globated bodies.

"Rose," I whispered, "why have you brought me here?"

She made no reply, but pressed her head more closely to my shoulder. Scarcely had my lips ceased then a sound like a hiss of a half strangled snake wheeled among the trees. It grew louder and louder. A monstrous shadow hovered above.

Rose from my bosom murmured "Love is strong as death! Love is strong as death!"

I locked her in my arms so tightly that she grew breathless. "Hold me," she panted. "You are strong."

A cold hand touched our foreheads, so that beamsteed we sank together to the ground, to fall instantly into a dreamless slumber.

When I awoke the clear gray light of the early morning had spread over the country. Beyond the hall garden the sun was just bursting through the clouds and had already spread a long golden haze along the horizon. The babbling of the streamlet that rose down to Halkton was so distinct that it seemed almost at my side. Rose sweetly the wild thyme smelled! Filled with the tender recollections of the night, without turning I called Rose Pascal from her sleep.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart, waken! waken! waken! See how glad the world looks—see the omens of a happy future!"

No answer came. I sat up, and looking around me saw that I was alone. A square stone lay near. When the sun was high I crept to read the inscription carved thereon. "Here, at four cross paths, lieth, with a stake through the bosom, the body of Rose Pascal, who in her sixteenth year willfully cast away the life God gave."—R. Murray Gilchrist in National Observer.

The Sweat of His Brow.

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From Ogden and Barnes ... 6:15 p. m.
From Terminus and Tooele ... 4:00 p. m.

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No. 3—For Ogden and West ... 11:00 p.m.
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