

MISCELLANEOUS.

EMILY, OR THE GOLDEN BRIDAL ROBE

[L. L. G. R.]

CHAPTER I.

"Well, Mr. Cristo, I have said and done all that lays in my power to help you. If you will not listen to me, I cannot save you. Evidently, you are not long for this life. A few hours at most, and your soul will be weltering in that awful lake of fire and brimstone from which there is no escape, worlds without end. Try to see this terrible condition, Mr. Cristo; try to understand the dreadfulness of not being saved from it! Once more I beseech you to let me save you from such a fate. Only say you are sorry for the wicked life you have led; that you repent of your sinfulness in not having professed religion; and let me rescue your soul, before it is too late; let me, I pray you, sprinkle two or three drops of the saving water upon your brow!"

The minister paused to take breath; and the dying man turned his head feebly upon his pillow, and faintly murmured, "No, I cannot see what you see, Parson Moray. I cannot confess to having led a sinful life, when from my earliest recollection, the only desire of my heart has been to do good; and when, during my whole life, my hand has never been raised to do an injury to any thing my God has created. I have not always done that which proved to be for the best; I have made many mistakes; but my intentions have been right, and I have always repented of any wrong doing as soon as I have discovered my error. My mother taught me to trust in God, and to pray to Him as a kind and merciful Father, before I could talk plain. I have proved her teachings to be god, and know that the Lord always has been my friend. I have tried never to offend Him, and am not afraid of the sentence I shall receive at His hands; it will be just—it will be kind."

The falling voice sank to a whisper and the dying man's eyes closed calmly. The minister thought that death had already seized its victim, and arose very solemnly and left the house.

During the visit of Parson Moray, and his conversation with the unconcerned Mr. Cristo, the wife and little daughter of the latter had stood at the foot of the bed, watching anxiously the changes which passed over the invalid's face.

Emily, the little girl, wept and sobbed incessantly; mostly through grief because the approaching death of her beloved father; yet partly in anger at what she considered the cruelty of the awful things the parson was saying to him. She wondered, too, that her mother could bear to have such indignities heaped upon the husband she had almost idolized, and not resent them.

Poor child! She did not realize at that time that the poignancy of her mother's grief deadened every other sense; that she did not even hear the voice of the reverend gentleman, much less notice the absurd things he was saying.

Mrs. Cristo aroused herself from the sort of stupor which had been creeping over her, as the door closed behind the minister, and both she and Emily knelt at the bedside of the dear one whose earthly life was fast departing. The wife laid her hand softly upon the cold forehead, and the daughter gently clasped the motionless hand. A deep drawn breath came slowly from the colorless lips, and again, for the last time in mortality, Mr. Cristo opened his eyes. Again, too, he spoke feebly.

"My darlings!" he said, "hear, and

remember this. These ministers will be after you sometime, when I am gone. Do not give heed to them, they are wrong. They are pulling a lot of strings, but not one of them will lift the latch to the door of heaven. Avoid them all. But—remember—this, that I tell you, for it is true, is true! And it will remain—forever—all the rest will pass away—but this that I tell you of will continue on—and on—and on—there will be no end to it—no end! It is a key that will be given to man on the earth, which will open the door of Heaven—the door—the doors! There is a ring of keys, an endless circle! The doors of heaven will be unlocked, and the inhabitants of earth will be shown the path and the way of entrance. The key for the first door will be brought here—listen to those who bring it, and follow where it is taken—remember—that I tell you—I have seen it—it is true—is true!"

Mr. Cristo's last breath went out with the utterance of the last word. His life had closed without a struggle.

Friends came in and attended to the necessary preparations for burial; Mrs. Cristo moved about here and there so calmly that many marveled, and none suspected how keenly she sensed the blow of her husband's death.

Little Emily, unable to endure the sight of her mother's white face, shut herself up, and spent the first wild storms of this, her first great sorrow, alone.

Mr. Cristo had a maiden sister, his father's, not his mother's, child, who had inherited great wealth from maternal relatives. This lady's sister came to the bereaved wife and child, with consoling words for their loss, and generous propositions for their future. Miss Catharine Cristo was a good business woman as well as a rich one; and she did not wait until the funeral rites were over before opening a conversation with her sister-in-law and niece concerning their plans for days to come.

After expressing a desire to take charge of her brother's funeral, have all conducted in her own way, and to bear all expenses, (which Mrs. Cristo of necessity readily agreed to,) Miss Catharine quietly approached the other part of the subject she had under contemplation.

"You can't keep up your house, Polly, now that your head is taken away. You had better close everything up at once, and you and Emily come home with me. My brother's child shall be to me as if she were my own from this time on." And Miss Catharine stroked the shining golden hair of the little girl caressingly.

A thrill of pleasure almost stopped the pain in Emily's heart for an instant, at the thought of living in the grand, beautiful home of her aunt, of which she had heard much but which she had never seen. Her father had been only a grocer in Essex, England, with but moderate success in business; and Emily was only thirteen, so she may be excused for the feeling of gratification which came to her at the suggestion of her aunt, although her father had been dead but three days. Again her mother caused her to wonder by gravely shaking her head, and answering decidedly:

"No sister Catharine; you are more than kind, but Emily and I will not give up our home at present."

Miss Catharine was not used to being said "nay," and her face flushed slightly as she urged the matter.

"Emily is capable of receiving a high education, every opportunity for which she shall have if you accept my proposals, Mrs. Cristo," she said.

Still Mrs. Cristo was firm, and no amount of persuasion could turn her, much to Emily's surprise.

At the funeral, a glimmer of light crossed the girl's mind in regard to what seemed to her the strange course her mother, of late, was taking.

Parson Moray, by the arrangements of Miss Catharine, delivered the funeral discourse. And as the child listened to his consignment of her pure minded and noble hearted father to eternal punishment, she concluded that her mother must have declined her aunt's proffered hospitality because of the probability there was of their being obliged to hear such things frequently if the new home were accepted.

The little ray of light was a true one, as Emily discovered afterwards, when, left to themselves, the mother and daughter talked over the whole affair, and became more intimately acquainted with each other than ever before.

"Emily," Mrs. Cristo said more than once, as the two sat together clasping each others hands, "I want you always to bear in mind the last words your father said to us. Never forget what he said, and remember that the things he told us are true!"

Poor little Emily! It was well that many important things were considered between her and her mother, and riveted on the child's memory in good time.

For a year had not passed since the death of her husband, when Mrs. Cristo followed him. There was no alternative for Emily now, her aun's home must be accepted as her own, and her wishes, to a great degree, must be of a secondary consideration when conflicting with those of Miss Catharine.

Yet Emily found her aunt a very kind and consistent woman in most respects. And after the sorrow for the loss of her parents had somewhat subsided, she found herself gradually growing into the ways and ideas of Miss Catherine, and becoming more and more attracted to her every day.

Gratitude first, and then love, made it easy and natural for the girl to yield unhesitatingly to the stronger and more matured mental powers of the woman.

Ten years passed, mostly blissful, happy years for Emily. The high education which her aunt had designed should obtain had been successfully conducted under the best teachers that wealth could procure. And besides proficiency in learning, Emily also possessed a full share of both wit and beauty. So there is nothing wonderful in the fact that she soon became the center of attraction in the refined and elegant circle of society into which she was introduced as the adopted child and heiress of her wealthy and amiable aunt.

Happy days, oh! happy days were those for Emily Cristo. Often she sat at her harp or her piano and sang to the dulcet sounds her skillful fingers brought forth from the strings or keys which, but for her loving touch, would have remained inanimate.

"Oh, youth is so bright, and love is so sweet!

Bring, bring not to me the dread burdens of care;
My heart is so light, my life so complete,

And the world, oh, the world, is so fair, so fair!

Who would ask that more treasures or pleasures be given?

Who would venture to whisper a prayer,
To procure and secure a hieft mansion in heaven,

While the world, oh, the world is so fair, so fair?"

The worldly sentiments expressed in those lines were an index to Emily's heart at twenty-three. Remembering her father's dying testimony, she gave