

# CRUEL

## THE GRAVE,

### The Secret of Dunraven Castle.

BY ANNIE ASHMORE,

Author of "Faithful Margaret," Etc., Etc

#### CHAPTER VIII.—Continued.

Loveday started and turned a pained look upon the pair,—truly it seemed like it! Her heart swelled bitterly; it was hard to find herself in Auberon's way,—to see that all this sweet, loving intimacy was but a lover's ruse to bring Miss Rae to terms!

She followed Accrington's guidance without a doubt; she felt as if she could never meet Auberon again.

Accrington knew every foot of the locality; five years ago he had spent many a day with his sporting companions, beating those glades for game.

He did not at once disturb the painful reverie of his companion, but to his advantage of her preoccupation to lead her so many turns and twists that when at length she looked round, she felt completely at fault. Accrington confidently assured her that they were on the route for home, and drew her into a conversation with such tact that she gradually yielded herself to his influence, and listened, responded, and became interested, while time flew, and the miles stretched behind them.

Never had Richard Accrington exerted himself so earnestly; he was talking against time, and each half hour they lingered together—each mile they left behind them—was another link to the chain he was forging for the capture of Miss Dellamere!

He wooed her thoughts far from herself and her present surroundings, to follow him from hand to hand where he had been; when marvels might begin to pall upon her, he caught her anew with a pathetic version of his own history, specially adapted to attract her tender and innocent sympathies; she lent herself to his charm willingly, for her own thoughts were very bitter, and escape from them was welcome.

They reached the margin of a wide moor; not another human being was visible on all the broad expanse, only the bleak October sky loomed over it, and a low wind moaned across the heather.

Loveday looked around her with a shiver.

"I don't in the least know where we are," said she, blankly; "are you quite sure that you do?"

"Trust me, Miss Dellamere, you are quite safe," said Accrington, with a frank smile which almost reassured her; "do not look at your watch, I entreat you; let me take all care of you for this once; give me the delight of seeing that you have perfect faith in me."

"You treat the matter more seriously than it deserves," replied Loveday, somewhat startled; but she had no motive strong enough to bid her cross his mood, and slipped back her watch without glancing at it. However, as they crossed the moor, the only beings visible upon it, and her wandering eyes encountered not one familiar landmark, she began to own a secret uneasiness, and to chide herself for having left her friends so far behind as to be committed to such a prolonged tete-a-tete with the Colonel.

Accrington, observing the turn of her thoughts, gradually allowed the conversation to flag, and appeared to share her gravity, often turning in his saddle to watch the action of her mare for a minute at a time; and, indeed, she began to notice herself that both the animals seemed spent, and drooped their heads wearily.

At last Accrington said, with visibly assumed lightness:

"Will you allow me to have a look at your mare's hind shoe? To me she seems to wince at every step."

A chill misgiving swept over Loveday, a sudden shocked realization of her thoughtless imprudence. Without a word she drew rein and dropped lightly to the ground without waiting for assistance.

"I begin to fear that it is later, and that we are farther from home than we imagine," said she anxiously, and again drew out her watch. One glance, and a cry of dismay burst from her—it was hours past the time when the hunters were expected to reassemble at Dornmant. Bewildered, angered, and distrustful, she moved apart from her companion, without heeding his exclamations of surprise; she felt as if his proximity irritated her.

An ordinary admirer might have suffered a pang of sorrow or mortification at such a movement on his lady's part whenever her hour of need came upon her, but the Colonel only glanced after her with a keen smile, and bent over Ahmed's hoof while he performed a slight operation with a dexterity worthy of a professional farrier. He laid down the hoof with a look of ominous gloom.

"Come, Miss Dellamere, courage!" he cried, with a cetera cheerfulness; "there is nothing far wrong with Ahmed yet, but we must deal gently with her. A mere cut, which her shoe irritates; if we can reach a blacksmith in time, he can shift the shoe and preserve the wound from painful pressure. We cannot be far from the village of Blackrook, where we shall find help."

Loveday's crimson cheek and compressed lips showed her deep annoyance at such an adventure; how heartily she approached herself for the ill-timed pe-

occupation of mind which had placed her in such an unwelcome situation! To be separated from the general company was bad enough, even had her cavalier been an old and trusted friend, approved by her mother; but to be cast upon the courtesies of Richard Accrington for long hours—to exhibit in herself before the curious eyes of Blackrook with him for sole companion—was a mortification she could not endure.

"If we are near Blackrook, we are not five miles from home," said she coldly, "and I would infinitely prefer walking the whole way to making any stop. But since this mischance has befallen me in Colonel Accrington's company, I am sure he will not refuse to give me all the assistance I may ask of him."

Accrington bowed, murmuring his devotion.

"Lend me your horse, then, and allow me to hasten home at once and send him back with a servant, who will attend to my poor Ahmed," said Loveday, with her innocent eyes on Accrington's impenetrable face, upon which an expression of the utmost regret instantly appeared.

"How can I disappoint you, Miss Dellamere?" exclaimed he; "yet I dare not risk your life up in this fierce brute, who has never carried a lady in his life. And alone! No, no, that plan will not do. Ahmed may be able to take you home, with a little care; come, let me remount you; we must at least get out of this desolate place."

Loveday mounted her own animal without another word; but Accrington observed, with chagrin, that she would barely allow him to touch her, springing from his hand to her saddle with the merest touch on his shoulder to poise herself, and giving him a formal bow of acknowledgment.

They resumed the way, Accrington walking by her mare's head, and his own animal following with a docility which scarcely coincided with the character which his master had given him. In rapidly mounting impatience, Loveday watched the slow advance, while the sky darkened drearily, and the minutes fled; yet she dared not urge the pace, for now, indeed, she detected the lameness of her mare, which gradually increased with every step she took, until at last, when the spire of the long looked-for village appeared in sight, she started and winced in agony whenever the woad of hoof touched the ground.

"I see that we must find relief for my poor Ahmed," said Loveday, tremulously, for her favorite's suffering tried her sorely, and she weened the chance now which had seemed so intolerable before; the tears stood in her eyes, and she scarcely realized her own disagreeable position, and was in no mood to detect the artifices of her companion.

They approached still nearer to the village, and Accrington remounted his own horse for appearance sake; roused by the diversion Loveday, for the first time, gazed round her in search of familiar objects in the scene.

She had expected to see a rough little hamlet built under the shelter of a cliff; what she did see was a pretty village clustering about the banks of a wide flowing river.

She grew pale with astonishment—

with rising anger.

"Colonel Accrington, this is not Blackrook, it is Silverstream!" she cried. "Why, we are twenty miles from home!"

Accrington uttered an exclamation of deep remorse; the expression of his well-tutored features terrified her.

"I've ruined her!" he muttered, but not so low but that she heard the words and quailed. "Oh, Miss Dellamere!" he cried, flinging himself again from his horse to seize her hands, reins and all, and press them convulsively, "how can you ever forgive me for this fatal mistake? I must have been dreaming—bewitched, to forget my path; I who thought that I knew every rod of land between Salford and Lynn! I was bewitched," he exclaimed, with a sudden change to mournful tenderness, while he fixed his strange compelling eyes on hers; "I was for once happy—all that I prized of earth was at my side. I forgot that we two had fellow-creatures! My poor child, I would have died to spare you a moment's annoyance—I have been the first to cry, 'w the world's suspicious eyes upon you!'"

"Colonel Accrington, what do you mean?" she demanded, haughtily, wresting her hands from his grasp with a sudden fierce union.

"I dare not—dare not insult you with a clear explanation," said he "oh, that I had resisted the too well-ome spell which your presence cast over me, which made hours to fly as minutes, and thrust every thought of consequence out of my mind! But now, now—what can I say to this wailing, sneering world? Who does not know that Richard Accrington loved Miss Dellamere?"

"Colonel Accrington!" interrupted Loveday with flashing eyes, and she would have left him had he not sprung to catch her bridle with a burst of grief and deprecation.

"Dear Miss Dellamere, I entreat you to be calm and to listen to me, for your own sake," he urged. "I dare not let you go in your defenseless innocence straight into the snare which slanders will spread for your overthrow. We must take counsel; you must be saved at any cost."

"You insult me! I will not hear your disgraceful insinuations. Let me go at once," cried she, with indignation and incredulity, though a sickening apprehension lurked beneath, in spite of her defiance.

"Haven't you known that I would rather die than see you in such a position?" returned Accrington. "It is a terrible necessity which I must perform, or else you will have cause to curse my cowardice your whole life long. Permit me, then, to speak. Am I not devoted to you, heart and soul? Through my inadvertence I have placed you in a cruel position. Slander will say that our flight was premeditated; no one will credit the simple truth. You will be made a mark for every jeering impertinence—"

"Since," exclaimed Loveday in burning indignation, "how dare you apply such words to me? If I have been somewhat unfortunate in my adventures to-day, who shall presume to accuse me of imbecility?"

"As a poor innocent!" groaned Ac-

crington in a tone of poignant grief, "how shall I screen her? What reparation shall I offer for the wrong I have done her? You little know how evil are the thoughts of those who seem our friends, Miss Dellamere," resumed he, tenderly; "a simple impropriety like this of to-day has often doomed the innocent to the suspicion and scorn of society."

"Oh, you are cruel! you have no pity!" faltered Loveday, suddenly bursting into an agony of tears, as her girlish sensibility at last succumbed to his repeated attacks and her fears overwhelmed her; "if you had been worthy of the trust you asked of me I should not have been in this false position now."

"I deserve your reproaches," said Accrington, humbly; "but not for venturing to show you the edge of the precipice upon which you are standing. This I am obliged to do to prevent you from committing yourself to the destruction which awaits you. For there is prevention."

He paused to allow her terrors to rack her into a mood for his purpose; she crushed back her agitation and endeavored to follow his meaning, her mute glance bidding him continue.

Accrington once more took her reluctant hand in his, and fixed his fiery eyes upon hers; she could not escape him, and in spite of the fierce repulsion she felt toward him the imperious power of will subdued her raging spirit to listen passively to that which he now was ready to say.

"Miss Dellamere," began he, with soft, respectful tenderness, "this is not the time to descend upon my love for you; you have long seen it, and the future will prove its sincerity. In this, your hour of need, my love gives me a right to say to you, 'Make me your protector and you are safe from every whisper.' Accept me for your future husband, betroth yourself to me, and the world has nothing left to say."

For a few moments Loveday remained speechless, returning her lover's passionate gaze with a look of fear and amazement; it seemed to her that he had suddenly opened a door through which she could see into a dark country, filled with shadowy forms of horror. A host of vague suspicions beset her; it needed not the passing memory of Auberon to make her shrink back from this man as if he had been a serpent.

"I do not ask your answer now," Accrington hastened to add, as he saw the stern refusal on her lips; "but think of what I have said; think of how much depends upon your decision; and, above all, realize the fact that I am your loyal friend, whatever may befall. And now I shall conduct you to a place where you may take some rest while I attend to your mare."

Without giving her a chance to utter a dissenting word he hurried her forward to the pretty rustic village inn, and the prospect of being relieved from his presence for even a short time went far to reconcile her to the dreaded necessity of appearing before the public in the company of Colonel Accrington.

Content to leave the case thus for the present, since, deprived of her horse, she would be completely in his power, he murmured a few last tender reassurances and they were before the "Silverstream Arms," the cynosure of all the admiring loungers about the inn court.

The landlord advanced to receive his distinguished company, and Accrington spoke loudly, for the benefit of the curious listeners:

"Can this lady obtain a private room for a short time, while her pony's hurt hoof is being examined? We have been detained behind our party by the accident and wish to follow them as soon as possible."

The portly landlady instantly appeared to take care of the young lady, and Accrington presented his hand to assist Loveday to dismount, but she, coldly waving him aside, rode to the mounting block and alighted unassisted, vaunting with the woman with a formal bow to her escort. When he turned from watching her departure, moodily, he was just in time to see an ostler in the act of extracting a sharp flint from the unlucky Ahmed's hoof.

"If ye had cast half a glance ye would have seen it yourself, master," grinned the man, holding it up for inspection; "it's a wonder the poor brute walked a step."

Accrington impatiently hurried him off with the horses casting a nervous look toward the open window near. Doubtless he feared that Miss Dellamere would be needlessly pained if she overheard the cause of her favorite's sufferings.

His whole object now was to spin out the time till it would be too late for Loveday to take the road for such a long journey that night. He had proposed her betrothal to him; he meant to propose an elopement now; he was ready for it. His whole day had been governed by that intention.

Having sent in some tea to Miss Dellamere and refreshed himself, he quietly locked the stable door upon the two horses and walked away to perfect some arrangements. This business took him to the river bank, to a boat-house of which he possessed the key, having unlocked this place he launched a beautiful little skiff which lay in rowed it along the stream until it came under the inn and calling it under a clump of trees, he returned to request an interview with Miss Dellamere.

He had delayed to the last minute he dared. He was now ready to prove to Loveday that her only safety lay in marrying him at once.

The landlord met him with a very puzzled face.

"Your lady's been wanting to start off by horse, sir, she wasn't for waiting a minute after you went," said he. "In what?" muttered Accrington, scowling in his mortification. "Well, you didn't see her go without me, did you?"

"No, sir, surely not, since you were to be right back again. I believe you to be the stable key with you anyhow, did it you sir? Though of course I don't say so to her."

"I'll mix my horses to eat in peace," said the Colonel, calling back the key and a guinea with a "You gave some decent coin I suppose, for not fetching round her mare?"

"Trust me for that, sir; both horses

was off to the blacksmith's getting their shoes looked to. She then wanted to hire a team with a driver, but I put her off till you would come, sir."

"Very good; you have done right," said Accrington; but this continued resistance was unexpected and chafed him much.

The honest landlord, supposing that he had stumbled upon a pretty lovers' quarrel, went on to narrate that the lady asked particularly after her horse's hurt, and was much pleased to hear that it was a mere pebble in the hoof and that the animal would be as fit for the road as ever after a feed.

"Worse and worse," thought Accrington; "this bungling fool has made her independent of me, if she has the courage to shake me off; perhaps she even suspects—pshaw! nothing venture nothing win!"

He strode to her room and knocked; she instantly opened, but he did not walk in as he expected, for she held the door open a little way and looked out with a white, rather fierce face.

"I've come for your answer, dear," he said, gently; "let me in, won't you?" He smiled at her, as if amused, but his heart was chilled.

"No, you must not come in," said she, quickly. "You must go away and let me get home by myself."

"Oh, Loveday!" he mournfully exclaimed.

"Yes! yes! I must go home to mamma—I will!" she burst out with fiery impetuosity. "How could you bribe these people to detain me against my will?"

"My poor child! you have chafed yourself into a fever," murmured he, tenderly, "and are allowing miserable suspicions to enter your mind. You shall go home, my precious girl, this very moment; come, your slightest wish is law to me, even though it breaks my heart."

Surprised at this complete submission and rather ashamed of the ugly suspicions which had been torturing her, she came forth with downcast eyes and stooped head.

"You will let me go quite by myself?" said she, slowly.

"Assuredly, since it is your wish."

"And not even follow me at a distance, but stay here?"

"I shall not vex you by one sight of my hated face, my only love!"

"It—it is not that I hate you," she faltered humbly, "but that I—oh, if only I had not come!" she burst out with a sob.

"Hush! Appearances!" he whispered, earnestly; "the people here know nothing whatever, and think nothing."

This assurance went far toward calming the sensitive young creature, who had been, as Accrington suspected, chafing herself into a fever of wild fancies, among them the thought that the inn-people were in collusion with Accrington to detain her there. She had only one burning desire now, and that was to flee to her mother for protection and concealment from the scolding, sneering world. Poor, frightened thing! she was in no condition to plan wisely, and was about to make a journey of twenty miles along roads traversed by all sorts of people, shaking off the protecting presence of her one friend. She did not even ask for a servant to ride behind her, lest she might be detained a few minutes longer. And when she thought she had got Accrington's consent to her wild scheme, she was grateful to him.

Accrington retired to order her horse; devoted friend! he even examined the animal himself, and went over all her shoes with his own pocket wrench—no doubt to test their security. Ahmed pranced as gayly up to the door as though she had never known the anguish of a sharp-pointed stone treacherously wedged between her shoe and her hoof, and innocent Loveday caressed her sole remaining friend and hope with delight.

"You darling," she whispered in Ahmed's silken ear; "you will not fail me in my need, will you?"

Miss Dellamere said "Good-by" to Colonel Accrington before all the inn-people and rode away alone.

The Colonel made no comment, but sauntered down to the river bank.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

"NO ONE SHALL PART US NOW!"

A low sigh went through the October wood as Loveday rode along, leaving the last thatched roof of Silverstream far behind her. The clouds had been gathering all day long, and now lowered threateningly over the quiet one, along which the white road wound up hill and down dale, with the deep strong Silverstream running far beneath in the ravine.

Relieved from the agitating presence of Accrington, she began to review her situation more rationally; hope entered her young breast. What if she could get home to mamma unseen by every one, and confiding the whole dreadful affair to that faithful heart, be comforted, and hear no more of it?

But oh! but oh! there were too many greivous ingredients in the cup to be able to forget its bitter tang like that.

There was Auberon's cement to Merriam Rae, if he was engaged; and Col. Accrington's strange, oppressive love for herself—no; there could be little comfort for poor Loveday, even if she was so blessed as to escape the busy-bodies to-day.

How dark it was growing! and oh! what sound was that? the mournful hoot of an owl in the far recesses of the forest. What if she were to meet some rough people, gypsies, or tramps, or sporting cads from the town, half drunk, and disorderly as usual? Love's eyes began to glance hither and thither in scared presentiment and her heart throbbed thickly, when a sound more terrible than any imaginary ones smote upon her horrified ear. It was the loose clink of her horse's feet. The road was rough and flinty, her barb was tender footed as a lark; what was to be done if it came oh? And how could this have happened, when no host had said that both the horses were having their feet examined by a blacksmith?

She choked down her distress sternly, and slaking her thirst, patiently ambled along mile after mile.

Several people had passed her; but although ever one started in a astonishment at the elegantly appointed eque-

trienne plodding along without the usual apparition of a trim groom some twenty paces behind, nobody accosted her.

And the wind roared, and the storm-cloud darkened, while the clink of the loose shoe grew louder and looser. Suddenly she caught the gallop of a horse's hoofs coming behind her; she drew up to listen—yes, above the roar of the wind it came distinctly to her ears; and she knew that across a little ravine which she had been rounding, some man was riding furiously after her, and must be at her side in less than five minutes.

"He has followed me, then!" thought she, with a great plunge of the heart, and now for the first time awoke a wild, thrilling terror—terror of Col. Accrington.

He had played her false and had followed her, oh why, why?

She urged her horse forward, faster—faster, heedless of the final clatter and clang of the thrown shoe, and of her fine animal's wincings and stumblings as the flints wounded her tender foot; she heard the far shout of her pursuer, who had likely caught the sound of her galloping; and now she plied the whip on her horse's sensitive flank, for the first time in her life forgetful of a living creature's pain, and Ahmed bounded ten feet at a spring, and then flew, ears laid back, eyes laming and bulging, and white foam floating from her red nostrils.

Away! away! while the trees whirled by, and the road swam under them, and the fury of the race drained the life blood from Loveday's lips and cheek; and her brain seemed bursting with excess of throbbing, and her fear rose to frenzy!

And yet the pursuer was gaining on her every moment.

Suddenly the road dipped into a hollow where the river crossed their course, with a bridge thrown over it.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

#### The One Thing Needful.

The Real Estate Agent—Now this house is complete in every detail. Even the laundry is perfect, with stationary tubs, etc.

Von Bibulus—Never mind about the wash tubs. What I want is a stationary key-hole in the front door.

If the New York politicians would quit their wrangling over the question of "Who killed the Fair" and go to work building the Grant monument relief would come to a weary public. In the meantime the Fair is the liveliest sort of an institution.

It is a sensible decision the cadets at West Point have come to, to abandon hazing. It is a foolish custom anywhere and particularly unworthy of the academy. For hazing, if you think of it, violates the obligations of hospitality toward strangers and the duty of the stronger to protect the weak, observes the Philadelphia Times. It is not quite gentlemanlike, and that ought to be enough to condemn it. The decision to give up hazing appears not to have been entirely voluntary. The superintendent has been punishing offenders so remorselessly that he has made good behavior compulsory, and after a number of cadets had been summarily dismissed the rest concluded that hazing did not pay. This shows that the suppression of hazing was not, after all, impossible.

#### Registration Notice.

The office of the Supervisor of registration will be opened on the first Monday in every month and the two days immediately following, for the purpose of the registering of any person who is qualified as follows:

Who shall have been a resident of the State for two years, of the county one year and of the polling precinct in which the elector offers to vote four months before the day of election, and shall have paid, six months before any poll tax then due and payable, and who can both read and write any section of the Constitution of 1895 submitted to him by the supervisors of registration, or can show that he owns, and has paid all taxes collectable during the present year on property in this State assessed at three hundred dollars or more. J. J. EADY, Clerk of Board.

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