

## GOING TO THE BAD

BY EDMUND TAYLOR.

## CHAPTER X.—AN UNEXPECTED APPOINTMENT.

"You are not dreaming, doctor," she replied, in the old familiar tone, as sweet, but somewhat more melancholy than ever. "It is she whom you knew as Mrs. Moreton."

"Why, my dear, good creature," said the doctor, advancing and taking both her hands in his, "this is indeed a joyful surprise! We—we thought you were dead!"

"I sometimes think it were better if I had been," said Kitty, sorrowfully. "Better—nonsense, nothing of the sort," said Dr. Travers. "But don't let us stay in this cold room; come in at once to Lucy; you must have an immense amount to tell us, and she will be delighted to see you."

He took her by the hand as he spoke and led her towards the dining room. "Let me go in first," he said, when they reached the door, "and break the news to my wife; she is so much attached to you, and we have talked over your fate so often, that your sudden presence might upset her."

"Lucy, dear," said he, entering the room, "the lady who desired to see me is an old friend, one to whom we are both tenderly attached, but whom for some time we have mourned as taken from us."

"Good heavens, Walter!" cried Mrs. Travers. "You must mean Mrs. Moreton!"

"I do indeed," said the doctor, "she is restored to us—she is here!"

And the next moment Kitty was in her friend's arms.

"Now sit down at once," said the doctor, placing her in an arm-chair close by the fire. "Have you dined? No! well then you must have a glass of port wine. Nonsense, don't deny me; I insist. You know my way of old, if my patients don't take what I prescribe, I withdraw from the case. There, that's better," he added as she placed the glass to her lips, "and now, tell us all about yourself. That is, if it will not pain you to do so."

"No," said Kitty, with a slight struggle, "I came for that purpose; or, rather, I came to ask your advice and assistance and knew that I could not expect either without giving some account of what you must have considered my strange disappearance."

"My dear friend," said Dr. Travers, leaning forward and touching her lightly on the hand, "pray direct your mind of any such idea. In the intimate relations established between us and you last year, we conceived for you an attachment and esteem which nothing could shake. If you have anything to ask of me, and you prefer to be silent as to what has happened to you, with the past few months, ask—with a certain conviction that if it is possible, it will be granted."

"No," said Kitty, suddenly, "it is due to you that I should tell you all! And not merely that—I must speak. I must relieve my mind; I feel as if that silence would kill me, and I thank the merciful Providence that raised up for me such friends as you, to whom I can confide, in the perfect knowledge that my confidence will be respected, and that what I say will do no further harm."

"More than that, Kitty," said Mrs. Travers, calling her friend for the first time by her Christian name; "you will find us friends who will sympathize with your sufferings, and do all in our power to alleviate them."

"They have been somewhat great," said Kitty, pressing her hand. "It has often struck me you must have thought it strange, considering the intimate terms which you permitted to exist between us, that I never spoke to you of my antecedents, or indeed of my actual condition of life, at the time I was a resident in your house. You knew not whether I was wife or widow, and in your delicacy you asked me no questions. I ought to have spoken then, but my tongue was tied. There is no such restraint upon me now, and I will tell you my story."

"I was the only daughter of a small farmer in Surrey, a man who had been rich once, but had lost his means. He took pride in me and gave me an education above the average run of that given to girls in my position. When I was about the age of nineteen, I made the acquaintance of a man—a gentleman he seemed in appearance and manners—whom I had seen occasionally from my window passing across the fields. He told me he was staying with a shooting party at a neighboring country seat, and had been much struck with me. I in my turn was fascinated by him, and we used to meet frequently. He professed great love for me, and at length asked me to elope with him. I refused—I had more strength of mind than he thought—telling him I would never bring disgrace upon my father's name."

"Then he consented to my father's name. He was a man of some means, and a town some five-and-twenty miles away, where neither of us were known, on condition that my father pledged himself to secrecy. So it came about. I was madly in love, and my father, who would have done anything to secure what he imagined to be my happiness, agreed."

"The plea which my husband offered for the course was, that his uncle, whose fortune and title—for he was a man of rank—he expected to inherit, was a woman-hater, and never would forgive his nephew if he married."

"My husband's name is the only thing I shall conceal from you in this story; there is no necessity for me to mention it, and I have striven, as far as possible, to forget it."

"He was a bad man, shifty, thriftless and dissolute. We lived together for a few months, sometimes in London, sometimes in odd country places, precarious, hand-to-mouth existence, for he was a gambler, and had no resources save his winnings at betting and at cards."

"Then he told me it would be necessary for me to leave him for a while, and bade me settle myself in some retired place, where he would send me, from time to time, such money as he could, and come to see me when he had the opportunity. I chose Brauxholme, and settled myself there, as you know, but he sent me very little money, and up to the time when I knew you, he had never been to see me."

"His uncle was dead, and he had inherited the title; but the old man, suspicious of his nephew's character, left his money elsewhere."

"My husband still wished, for some reason or other—I never could make out exactly what—that our marriage should be kept a secret; and though I repeatedly urged him to make it known, and let me live with him as his wife, he always refused."

"One day—I shall never forget it—the very evening after you left Brauxholme, he appeared at the cottage. He had been away for some time on the Continent, and had returned, he said, poorer and more pressed by debt than ever; but there was a way by which he could get rid of all his difficulties. He named it to me, but I scarcely have the courage to mention it to you, so base, so shameful was it. Well, then he proposed that I should renounce my position as his wife, in order that he might marry again—marry a girl with riches, who was devoted to him!"

"How horrible!" cried Mrs. Travers. "What an infernal scoundrel!" said the doctor.

"I need scarcely say that I refused the proposition with contempt," continued Kitty; "and directly I did so, he changed his course, pretending that he had merely asked me as a joke, and to try whether I still cared about him, adding, that in a very short time he would return and take me from Brauxholme to live with him as his acknowledged wife."

"Fool that I was to believe him. He came back; finding that he could not rid himself of me by fair means, he must, during his absence, have conceived a most diabolical plan, which he at once, on the very day of his arrival, proceeded to carry into execution."

"He lured me to the edge of the cliff, and, under pretence of calling my attention to something below, he—I can scarcely say the words—thrust me over the cliff!"

"As she spoke these last words, a strong shuddering fit swept across her, and she covered her face with her hands."

"Mrs. Travers rose from her chair, and, facing round to Kitty, took her in her arms."

"Be comforted, dear," she whispered; "you are safe here, now."

"Yes," said the doctor; "but how on earth did she get here after that act of murder on that villain's part?"

"From the time I felt the thrust which precipitated me over the cliff," said Kitty, "I knew nothing more; found myself lying in bed in a small but neat room, overlooking a portion of a pretty town, built on the sea-shore. A grave, elderly man and a motherly-looking woman stood by the bedside, watching me with some anxiety. After looking at them a little time, I strove to speak, but the gentleman held up his hand in admonition, and the woman smiled and laid her finger on her lips, and after I had heard the gentleman say, 'She will recover now; I will write and tell him so to-night,' I relapsed into unconsciousness."

"When my senses returned to me I was in the same place, but the woman only was present."

"From her, at various intervals, I learned that I had been brought to her house in a senseless, and, as it was thought, almost dying condition. I had been borne there in a litter by some sailors belonging to a yacht, the owner of which, an American gentleman, had desired that every care should be taken of me, paying the woman liberally, and giving an address at the Yacht Club, Torquay, where he desired her to write to him frequently and inform him of my condition."

"As soon as my strength permitted, I questioned the woman as to the state in which I was found. She knew nothing of it, she said; but she gathered, from what the gentleman said, that I must have fallen from some height, and after the examination by the surgeon, who was sent for immediately, he expressed some surprise that no bones were broken; my nervous system, however, had experienced a severe shock, and brain fever set in. I lay ill for weeks, hovering between life and death; and during this period the American gentleman came over, it appears, several times from Torquay to make enquiry after me, and see that I was properly attended to."

"From the time of my recovering consciousness, my strength slowly returned, and in a few days I was able to sit up. One morning the woman told me that the American gentleman was below, and wished to know if I would see him."

"Of course I said 'yes,' and he came up. A tall, good-looking man, about thirty years of age, with the kindest face and sweetest voice imaginable. After five minutes we seemed to be friends of long standing. He told me that as he was sailing round the coast, just off Brauxholme, he had discovered, through his glass, something hanging midway down the cliff; that eventually this something had proved to be my helpless body, which he and his sailors managed, with much difficulty, to rescue from its perilous position, and that he had had me conveyed to the rooms where I found myself."

"I can not describe to you the manner with which all this was told, nor the delicacy with which this was told, nor the light of the obligation under which he had laid me, nor could I describe to you the curiously instinctive way in which he gathered that there was something in my story which I faint would hide, and how quietly he accepted my position, as it then was, without inquiring for any details of my previous life."

"He begged me not to think of quitting the apartment; and, indeed, it would have been impossible, for my strength had but very partially returned. He supplied me with books and fruit and flowers, and came over several times to see me, always treating me with the greatest respect, as though I had been a friend of his family who had been confined to his care."

"At length, one day, I told him that, now that my strength was sufficiently recovered, I must no longer be a burden on his kindness."

"He looked up suddenly, somewhat pained, as I thought, and begged me to explain my plans."

"Then I spoke out frankly, telling him that my past life must be a blank, even to him who had preserved it; that I was destitute, and could in no way hope to repay him for all that he had done for me, but that for the future I had kind friends in London who would help me on. Meanwhile he had won, and must be content with my eternal gratitude."

"Mr. Hoyt was silent for a moment after I had ceased speaking."

"Then he said: 'He accepted the position, perfectly; that he had never attempted, by word or deed, to intrude upon my confidence, imagining, he scarcely knew why, that there was something in my story which I desired to conceal, and expressing, in the kindest words, his full conviction that whatever I might have suffered was owing to no fault of mine. He was only too delighted,' he said, 'to have had the opportunity of being of service to me, and all he would ask of me in return was to tell him the names of my friends in London, and to let him hear, from time to time, of my welfare.'"

"I ventured to name you, dear friends. I thought there was no harm in that; and Mr. Hoyt said that the doctor's name and fame were quite familiar to him."

"Then he took his leave; and the next day he wrote me a delicately-worded letter, enclosing a bank-note for my expenses to London, and begging me to consider that in him Providence had raised up for me a friend only too glad to be of service to me on and in every possible occasion."

"What a noble fellow!" said the doctor, jumping up, and rubbing his hands."

Mrs. Travers said nothing, but sat gazing intently on Kitty, the tears streaming down her face."

"Well," said the doctor, "then you came straight away here!"

"Only by very slow degrees," replied Kitty, "for I had over-estimated my strength. I made short journeys, resting by the way, and only arrived in London this afternoon. I need scarcely say that I came to you as soon as I had secured a lodging, and unpacked my things."

"Secured a lodging!" cried the doctor, looking round in indignant amazement. "What does the woman mean! These are your lodgings—this is your home—you are never going to move again from here, I can tell you."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Travers, putting her arm around her friend; "the rest of your life will be passed with us."

"We will talk of that presently, dear friends," said Kitty, with a grave smile; "but now, tell me what you had heard of me. Of course Mr. Harvey had written to you?"

"Of course he had," said the doctor, "and written to us in the most agonizing state of mind. He and all the villagers thought you had been murdered, and your body thrown into the sea; for when Hannah, your dumb servant returned from Pollington, whither, it appears, you had sent her for a holiday, she found the cottage in a state of the greatest confusion—boxes and drawers ransacked, and their contents thrown out on the floor, and no traces of you to be discovered. The neighbors searched the shore and the cliffs for days, and at last were compelled to give in to the general belief, and mourned you as dead. However, here you are safe and sound, thank God, and here you will remain. I will just ring and send out for your baggage; this lodging must be given up at once."

But Kitty laid her hand upon his arm and looked up into his face."

"You used to say I was a very obstinate woman," said she, "and in that respect I am just the same since my illness. Those lodgings must not be given up, and I am not coming to live here to be a burden on your bounty."

"Our bounty?" cried the doctor. "Don't we owe you more than we can ever repay?"

"Is not my recovery due to your nursing?" cried Lucy.

"I know all your kindness," said Kitty; "but I wish to be independent, and to earn my own living."

"Earn your own living?" repeated the doctor; "earn your own fiddlers'! Do you want to be a governess at a shilling an hour, or buy a sewing machine and take in plain needlework?"

"Neither one nor the other," said Kitty; "but I think I know of a position in which I may support myself, and be of some good to others. When I was in attendance on Mrs. Travers, at Brauxholme, she confided in me, turning to the doctor, 'you were pleased to speak approvingly of the way in which I discharged my duty.'"

"Approvingly," cried the doctor. "I should think so indeed; the softest step, the lightest hand, the sweetest manner, the most unvarying attention I have ever found in all my experience!"

"I really possess these qualifications," said Kitty; "why should I not earn my bread by undertaking the professional duties of a nurse in your practice, you will have many opportunities of recommending me to patients."

"The doctor was silent for a moment. 'Have you considered this fully, dear?' he asked, she replied, 'Most positively,' she replied."

"Then," he said, "I think you are a noble woman about to enter on a noble career—we will talk of it further in the morning. Now you must retire to bed. I will walk with you to your lodgings."

"You will do nothing of the sort," she said. "They are quite close here, in a small, quiet street, at the back."

"You shall not go by yourself," said the doctor. "I will send James with you, and to-morrow we will discuss your future."

Before Kitty retired to her rest that night, she fell on her knees, and thanked the Almighty Father who had preserved her life to be, as she hoped, of use and benefit to her suffering fellow-creatures.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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