On Her Wedding Morn

By Charlotte M. Braeme. Continued from 1st Page.

of Hurst Green-all those on whose verdict social success depended had gravely pronounced it to be a most serious matter, adding gravely that "dear Mrs. Neville' had not shown her usual tact in poor, one hundred pounds; toward the admitting a mysterious lady into their eastern window fund, one hundred admitting a mysterious lady into their exclusive neighborhood. As there was generally around Daintree a dearth of topics for gossip, this one gave new life to our social meetings. Who was the lady? Why did she choose to live in that peculiar way? What was the mystery surrounding her? These problems con-tinued to be discussed until time showed

the utter futility of doing so. All inquiries and curiosity were baffled. Every week the confidential maid, Jane Lewis, went over to Daintree and gave her orders. They were such liberal ones as to prove that whatever else might be deficient at the River House, there was plenty of money there. From the tradesmen who executed these orders, it ws gleaned that beside Jane Lewis, or rather under her, there were two other women servants, and there was a gray-

From the servants no information could be gained—they knew nothing, except that their mistress was an invalid and declined all society. The servants appeared at church, the mistress neverindeed, Miss Vane herself might have

been a myth Time modified opinion. Lady Glendon said there was no doubt the poor lady suffered from spinal complaint, and was unable to leave her room. Mrs. Conyers was inclined to think it a case of melancholia—she had known a few such. Mist Hurst had a theory of her own, and it was that the strange tenant of the River | rowing myself, and not sitting still while House was a political refugee. But as time passed on, and new sources of interest arose in the neighborhood, the curiosity about my strange tenant died away. I myself never ceased to think of her—the very name, "Huldah Vane," had a charm for me.

One morning I was shopping in Daintree when I met Jane Lewis, and I stopped immediately to inquire about her mistress. The comely face was clouded and anxious; it seemed to me that she was even relieved by my addressing her She did not this time refuse to answer my question, but told me frankly that Miss Vane was not at all well "Has she long been ill?" I asked.

"No; she is not exactly ill, but she seems to be fading slowly away." and then seemed to regret her candor. "Can I do anything to help you?" I

asked, abruptly.

She sighed deeply.

"No; there is no help possible."

"I can do one thing, Mrs. Lewis," I said. "The summer is a very hot and exhausting one; at Neville's Cross we have some exquisite fruit - grapes, peaches, and apricots. I will send some-Miss Vane will find them refreshing." She shook her head doubtfully.

"You need not tell her that they have come from me," I said. "She will think you have provided them. "It is not that, Mrs. Neville-my mistress never notices what is set before her. I was only wondering if she would take the trouble to eat them.'

"I am quite sure she will when she sees how fine they are. I shall send them, and you can try.' Later on that same morning, having business at Daintree railway station, I out of the telegraph office. She looked so dismayed for the moment that I pretended not to have seen her. Afterward I heard that the eminent London physician, Sir John Emmett, had passed through Daintree, and I felt a certain conviction that he had been summoned

to the River House. I thought it time to break my promise, and go to the River House. I went one beautiful August day, when the heat seemed to lie like a golden haze to me no sight in the wide world so over the land, and the flowers drooped in sheer weariness, and the sky was so blue that one's eyes ached in looking at it. As I drew near I heard the rushing of the river and the low wash of the wavelets on the green bank, and they gladdened the heart within me. Once more

I stood under the shadow of the grand

old porch, and the world seemed far In answer to my ring, the gray-haired butler appeared. I told him it was Jane Lewis that I wanted to see. He looked surprised, bowed solemny, and ushered me into the library. There I waited for some time. Certainly rumor had not exaggerated the wonderful magnificence of the house. The carpets, hangings, pictures, statues, all amazed me. I detected a peculiar perfume, faint, sweet, and refreshing; but the silence - the deep, brooding stillness which nothing broke except the rushing of the river servants moved, they must have been and stood at a respectful distance from

Presently Jane Lewis came in. She looked pale and worn, yet seemed pleased some, Miss Vane," she said; "but I

"My mistress has been very ill," was the grave reply. "She is recovering slowly now; but, as I told you before, Mrs. | musical sound. It was not a laugh-Neville, you can not help her."

"At least let me try," I said, persuas- laugh. "It is quite useless. You do not understand. You are very kind; but, if I were to kneel for an hour begging of Miss Vane to see you she would not. She would simply be very angry with

"Then let me help her, unknown to her, in some fashion or other." "You can not. You do not understand,

Mrs. Neville. You are very good and kind, but help is out of the question."

I laid my hand on the woman's arm.
"Jane Lewis," I said, solemnly, "I do not know whether your mistress is old or young, but I do know that it is wrong of her to shut herself out of the pale of

all human sympathy and kindness."
"So do I," was the unexpected rejoinder; "but as a servant, it is not my place either to criticise or disobey my

"You are right; but has it never oc-curred to you that you share the wrong in aiding and abetting her?"

"It may be so, Mrs. Neville. I can not say. I only know that while I am in Miss Vane's service I must obey her orders. Suppose I disobeyed her, and did what she has forbidden me to do brought her into communication with the outer world—do you imagine it would influence her? She would change neither her resoluions nor her ways, but she would dismiss me, and find some one more obedient in my place. I love my mistress, Mrs. Neville," she continued, with a flush on her face, "and I have every reason to love her. I nursed her

when she was a baby." She stopped suddenly, as though frightened at what she had said. It occurred to me immediately that, if she spoke truly, Miss Vane must still be quite young. I felt for the woman's em-

"Never mind. You are regretting what you have said; but you need not do so-there is no cause. I shall never repeat it. I can see that your position is a delicate one. I am desirous of helping not injuring you.'

"Thank you, Mrs. Neville," she said.
"You are, indeed, kind. I ought not to have said that. My mistress would not

like it, I am sure.' "Then we will consider it unsaid, and, if I can really be of no use to you, I will not detain you." So I went away, having learned nothing of the secret of the house. I had, in-

deed, gathered one fact. Miss Vane was young; she could not possibly be more than twenty-two or twenty-three if Jane Lewis had been her nurse. Old, and tired of the world, I could have understood her desire for retirement, her seclusion from mankind-but young!

What could it all mean?

CHAPTER III. - "HAPPINESS! IS THERE SUCH A WORD?"

I did not go to the River House again -it seemed perfectly useless-and I heard no more for some time of Miss Vane. I concluded that she had recovered. Surely Mrs. Lewis would have told me if any

Jot then strange circumstances happened in the parish of Daintree. Dr. Rawson called on me one morning, his manner more than usually excited. "My dear Mrs. Neville, such a strange thing has happened. You remember, perhaps, that last Sunday, in my sermon,

I said something about my earnest wish to restore the eastern window of the church; at the same time I said that I did not wish to divert from the poor the money usually given in charity." "I remember it perfectly well, Dr.

"This morning I received an envelope directed to myself, containing four banknotes for fifty pounds each. The envelope contained only these words: 'For the pounds.' Who can my unknown bene factor be, Mrs. Neville?'

I could not tell him. Another singular circumstance happened. Outside Daintree stood a small cottage, inhabited by a laundress, a widow woman, with a family of little children. How it happened no one seemed to know, but one summer night the cottage was burned to the ground. All the furniture, with th) clothes that had been intrusted to hereverything was destroyed; and the par widow, surrounded by her children, woke to the conviction that there was nothing before her except ruin and the workhouse. We proposed a subscription for her; but, before anything was even decided upon, the rector came over to Ne-

"This parish of mine must be blessed with some unknown saint," he said: "look at these, Mrs. Neville." He showed me an envelope containing bank-notes to the amount of three hundred pounds-the sender merely requesting that they might be used to supply the poor woman's loss. It was strange; we exhausted all conjecture, but could not decided upon any one likely to have done so generous a deed.

In the month of September I was at Neville's cross alone, without any visitors. I had just indulged in the purchase of a light boat, for I was passionately fond of rowing on the river. I liked another did the work.

One evening the idea came to me to row up the stream and let the boat float back with the tide. I should pass the River House, and perhaps in the gathering gloom I might see something of its strange occupant.

So, in my little boat, feeling happy and completely at my ease, I watched the sun set and great floods of crimson light die over the waters, and then, when the crimson had become grey, I let the boat drift idly down the stream. It was quite dusk when I reached the River House. I rested opposite the

smooth, green lawn and then I saw something at last. swiftly and gently between the trees, hand clinching a portion of the dress. I tired, wearied look. I could distinguish only the graceful outline and the black flowing garment, but lying listlessly on the black dress were the whitest and most beautiful hands I had ever seen in my life-white as polished ivory-perfect

as though carved by the most skillful I sat looking at them in silence. The face and head of the owner were hidden by a veil worn in the Spanish fashionbut the hands were eloquent enough. They never moved; they were neither clasped in thought, nor folded in patience, nor wrung in despair; but they lay listless and motionless, as the hands

of a dead woman might lie. The shades of night were falling quickly; it was time to go. The faint sound of the sculls in the water did not reach my neighbor, and I hastened away. It never struck me that in thus watching my mysterious tenant I was doing anything in the least degree unlady-like was surprised to see Jane Lewis coming or dishonorable. There could be no doubt but that at last I had seen Miss Vane. She was young and graceful, and had hands of marvelous whiteness and beauty. I knew no more.

I think from that evening a spell was laid on me. I could never forget her. What was she doing, young and fair, alone in that solitary house? I passed and repassed, but never saw her again. Some weeks afterward I went for a long ramble in Daintree Woods. There is beautiful as the woods in autumn, with their variety of foliage and splender of autumn coloring. I took a great liberty and went into the pine woods, saying to myself that even should I meet any one from the River House, it would be very

While walking slowly along, very busy gathering a peculiar kind of berry that ripens in September, I saw the same graceful figure, with the long, trailing black garments, and the white marvelous hands. I stood quite still, and in a few minutes she sat down in the same attitude as before at the foot of a tall tree, her head leaning against the huge trunk, the white restless hands lying on her black dress. I looked at her in silence. I would have given the world for courage to speak to her, but I dared not intrude-indeed, I hurried behind the clump of trees when I saw Lewis advancing toward her. I did not want her and the chirping of the birds-was to see me. After all, my being there was strange, deep, wonderful. If any doors | an accident, and she would have thought opened or closed, I never heard them; if I was spying. She came up to Miss Jane,

"I hope you will not think me tirethought you were coming to sit in this "I have broken my promise, Jane," I wood. You would be quite content to sit said. "The truth is that I feel sure Miss | here until the sun has set, but I can not Vane is very ill, and I want to help allow it, Miss Vane. You may be angry

if you will-remember what Sir John From under the veil came a low sweet nothing that could possibly be called a

"I am quite indifferent, Lawis, to all "Well, miss, that is an old subject of dispute between us. Whether it is right to be so utterly indifferent to life is another matter. I must do my duty,

and that is to take care of you." "You do take care of me," said the same sweet voice. It was certainly Miss Vane speaking, but all attempts at describing her voice

would be vain. It was low and soft, and there was something clear and vibrating, many things sweet and sad. "You sat on the lawn until past midnight not long ago, Miss Vane-that was bad enough; but this wood must be damp. The autumn mists will soon rise

from the river and pass over it, and then you will take cold and be in danger "Lewis," said the young voice, "you pretend to be very fond of me." "I am fond of you, Miss Vane," was the dignified rejoinder-"there is no pre-

tense. I beg of you to leave the woods, at least before the mist rises." "I will. Now leave me in peace." "Miss Vane," continued the maid, after a short pause, "you told me that you wished to be made acquainted with all the cases of distress that should come

to my knowledge." "Certainly I did, Lewis." "I know of one now-that of an elderly woman, whose living is derived from the produce of a small garden and from the sale of milk. Her cow has died, and she is asking for help toward buying

"How much does a cow cost, Lewis?" "I do not know, Miss Vane-fifteen pounds, I should imagine " "Fifteen pounds," repeated the sweet voice—"that is not much. Is it possible that one's happiness or misery may depend on fifteen pounds?"

"Her's does, Miss Vane; it seems a trifle to you-it is everything to her. Shall I do anything toward assisting "Certainly-give her the money."

"Yes; but remember, it must be sent to her secretly, quite secretly—I do not wish any one to know what I waste." "It is not wasted, Miss Vane-it makes

dreary sadness and hopelessness which impressed me strongly. "Happiness! Is there such a word, Lewis?" "I can not discuss such matters with you, Miss Vane. I will send the money

as you wish, quite privately, to-night or "You have only to take care that the woman does not know from whom it comes. I should never expect thanks or gratitude-rather a curse than otherwise. | thought of such a thing." Who is always the first to prove treach "It would have been only natural eroug and ungrateful? The one you have most warmly befriended. Who is first ir the ranks of your bitterest foes? The one you have love! best "

"Heaven help you, my dear!" said the patient woman. "That is a bitter view saying 'my dear.' I wonder if you will crying to a fellow-creature for help." ever recognize the merciful goodness of heaven again."

about me-one that grows thicker, and anything rather than be pitied." deeper, and darker as time goes on. Now The woman turned away obediently, and the graceful head drooped against the tree, while once more the white

I knew now who had sent money to the rector. What else should I learn of this strange, eccentric Huldah Vane? CHAPTER IV .- "A FACE MARVEL-

OUS IN ITS LOVELINESS

AND ITS SADNESS."

hands fell listle sly on the black dress.

For many long months after my last glimpse of the tenant of the River Hous I haunted the banks of the stream it vain. I saw Jane L-wis in Daintree, bu beyond a brief reagnition, we exchange no word. Huldah Vane was again los to sight. Once, when the snow lay or the ground, I fancied that I saw he walking gently through the pine wooda tall, graceful figure, robed in black flowing draperies; but the winter passed and never a word of my mysterious ten ant was heard. Our neighbors had ceased to discuss her. In the spring of the fourt year of her residence at the River House I was destined to see more of her. I went one morning for a long row o the river. What a morning it was-th air clear, sweet, balmy, filled with th

odor of spring flowers, the hedges al blooming with rink and white haw thorn, the trees a tender green! I rowed down the stream, past th River House, to a favorite nook of min -a bank that was literally covered with wild hyacinths. I always had a passio ate liking for those pretty flowers and i a few minutes I had my hands full them. The river here reached the heigh of picturesque beauty; it ran between green banks, and then, suddenly curv ing, sped between white masses of rock

which were supposed at some far-distan

time to have fallen from the cliff.

I sat on one of the stones, looking a the picturesque waters, when I heard faint sound as of some one monning wit pain. I listened attentively, although thinking that I must be mistaken, and presently heard it again quite plainly Was it a wounded animal, or had some child fallen over the huge stones? I stood up and looked around. At first I could distinguish nothing, Lut, shading my eyes from the bright sunshine, I soon discovered, close to the water, what in the distance looked like a heap of black drapery. I . hastened toward it. A tall, slender, graceful figure moved My heart beat fast when I saw a white

knew the hand-I recognized the drapery. It was Huldah Vane. I stood quite still for a second or two, and then hastened to her. The graceful figure was bent as though in deadly pain-her face was turned from me, and drooped toward I knelt down by her side and touched her gently-the feeble moan changed

ato a startled cry. "Are you hurt? Are you ill?" I asked, To my intense surprise she turned om me and made no reply. "Do not turn from me, my dear hild," I said-"I may call you 'dear hild,' for I am many years older than

Still no answer came. "I do not wish to distress you, but mmen humanity will not allow me to o away and leave you here.' Still there was no word. Such strange, constrained silence it was that I raised her head, and saw she had fainted and lay in a deadly swoon. I threw back the black veil that covered her face, and was compelled to cry aloud in wonder at its marvelous loveliness. Great heavens! what did it all mean? This child, so young, so tender, so lovely, living alone, shut out from her kind, talking as I had once heard her talk of preferring death to life-what did it mean? She looked about twenty, certainly not more; and she was beautiful as a dream. I took off the bonnet with its long, disfiguring black veil, and then I laid the beautiful head with its wealth of shining dark hair on the cool grass. Presently I raised it again, and pillowed it on my breast. I kissed the lovely face in a perfect passion of yearning pity, and then dipped my handkerchief in the flowing water and moistened her brow. It revived her, and soon afterward two dark eyes were looking mournfully into mine,

so dark, so sweet, at once so proud and tender, with such deep sadness in their rich depths that they haunted me with their sweet imperiousness and proud beauty for days afterward. They were looking into mine for some They were looking into mine for some noments before I quite recovered my- From all parts of the World. self. I saw by their vague, dreamy ex-

pression that Miss Vane was only half "Was I almost dead?" she asked, in a strange whisper. "Not quite," I replied, hardly know-

ing what to answer. "Lay me down, turn my face to the river, and let me die," she said; and then fuller consciousness returned to her. "Who are you?" she asked. "I am Mrs. Neville, of Neville's Cross,

and you are my tenant." She lay quite still for a few minutes, and then she said to herself :-"It can not be helped." "Miss Vane?" I interrupted, "we will speak of you-never mind me. Have

you hurt yourself?" I saw that all at once she had awoke to full knowledge of where she was and what had happened. "Yes, I have injured my arm. I was sitting on one of those stones, and did

not notice that those above me were loose. I moved carelessly, and one of them fell on my arm. I managed to creep to the river-side, thinking that the cold water would ease the pain." "Will you let me see it?" I asked. She looked half timidly into my face.

"I need not trouble you," she said, shyly. "If you would go to the River House and tell my maid, Jane Lewis, that would be the greatest kindness you

could do for me.' "My dear young lady, I am sorry to refuse you, but I can not do any such yet hopeless in it. It produced a strange thing; I can not leave you here in this impression on me, making me think of state. Do not be afraid of me; I am Mrs. Neville. You have been my tenent for three years now, and you know how I have respected your desire for secrecy. Ask yourself if it is my wish to intrude on you now, Let me help you, let me do all I can for you, and then, when there is no more left for me to do, we can be strangers again."

Her face flushed, and she looked wist-"You do not know," she said, slowly. "Nor do I want to know. I want to your orders to

help you-nothing more. Let me look at "So you are Mrs. Neville," she said, wonderingly, and with somewhat of the simplicity of a child. "I have tried sometimes to think what you were like. Is that the sunshine on your bate. that the sunshine on your hair, or is it the natural color?" Though she talked lightly, I saw that

her lip was white and quivering with "It is the natural color," I replied.
"Yet you wear a widow's cap," she continued. 'You have a buried love?" "Yes, I have a buried love but when I think of the dark grave I think also of the blue sky smiling over it."

"How can people think death the greatest pain?" she said, musingly. "I fancy no one could be quite lonely who had a grave to weep over.' "These are morbid fancies for one so young as you are. Now, Miss Vane, let me see your arm."

"You forget that you are my tenant. How many documents have I seen signed by Huldah Vane? Now for your arm? "I can not move it," she said, and her lips grew so white that I feared she

"It is not wasted, Miss Vane—it makes people happy."

"Happy!" she repeated, and in the emphasis she laid on the word there was a volume of meaning; it indicated a gently. I found that the limb was not a volume of meaning; it indicated a only terribly bruised, but that it was "My dear Miss Vane, your arm is broken. I am afraid you will have a will meet at the Council Chamber, Newca tle, on Tuesday the 18th day of January inst., at I2 o'clock great deal to suffer. How long have you noon for the despatch of business.

been lying here?' "More than two hours," she said. "It is terrible to think of. But there are boats often passing; why did you "Call out?" she said. "I never to ask for help.

"It would have seemed easier to me to lie still and die," she replied, and a sudden hot finsh came over the pale face. "Those are terribly proud words," I said, laughingly. "There is no humiliato take of everything. I can not help tion, when we are hurt or wounded, in "I would rather creep away to suffer and die alone," she returned. "I do not "I fear not. There is a funeral pall like pity-it is weak. I could endure

"My poor child, when you are as old go away, Lewis. I shall be home long as I am you will know how sweet the pity of those who love us is." "Did you like people to pity you when your husband died-to say, 'Ah! poor thing, it is very shocking-very terrible!' and shake their heads about

"I must steal away in silence," I said "Yes; I think that it soothed me." "Ah!" she said, calmly, "then you have not a brave soul." I laughed aloud; I could not help it. "I know some one who has a very

proud soul; but we will talk about that another day Your arm is badly bruised and broken; what is best to be done" "If you would help me a little I could walk home." "No; you do not know the toture it would give you. I saw some men at work in the fields close by; I will send

one of them for my carriage-we are not

very far from Neville's Cross-and then we can drive you home by the high She did not object. I left her sitting there, so white, so still, so proud and defiant, that she look more like a marble statue than a living, breathing woman. | RON A man who declared himself to be a swift runner I chose for my errand. I sat by Miss Vane's side until he returned, but we said little. From the fixed, set expression of her face I felt sure that the pain was just as much as she could bear.

When the carriage came she sunk with an air of exhaustion on to the softcushioned seat. "Does your arm pain you very much?" asked. "No-not more than I can bear," she

"I believe you are too proud to complain," I said, and again a hot flush suffused her pallid face. Never once did the proud spirit yield; no murmur crossed her lips, although the motion of the carriage must have caused her intense anguish. Now and then I noticed a dazed expression in her eyes, and knew it was caused by the pain

Jane Lewis stood in the porch when the carriage drove up. She made me a distant courtesy, as though we were the greatest strangers; but I saw something like relief in her eyes as they met mine. "Miss Vane has had an accident," I said-"she has croken her arm." "Shall I be 12 for some time with it?"

asked the girl-and there was a tone of impatience in her musical voice. "Yes," I replied; "a broken bone takes some weeks to restore it." "Then, Lewis," she said, imperiously, "I will go to my own room." Afterward she looked at me, and, although her good breeding prevented her saying the words, I knew that she would have been pleased had I taken my departure; but I had resolved upon what I should do. She held out her hand to

"I am very grateful to you, Mrs. Ne-ville," she said, "for your kindness." "That is a polite form of dismissal, Miss Vane, but I shall not accept it. I have no wish to inconvenience you; but I most certainly intend to take care of you. When your arm is well, I will go away and forget you—I will do anything you like; but I refuse, absolutely and

me with a shy, half-wistful look.

decidedly, to leave you now." She looked confused and embarrassed. "Try to forget, my dear, that I am a stranger," I went on; "think of me as one anxious to help you. Believe me, l will respect your privacy. Let me-I ask it as a favor-help you just now, when you stand so desperately in need of help.' She grew agitated; her lips trembled. Most women would have indulged in an outburst of tears: she waited until the last trace of emotion had disappeared, "As you are so kind, I can not of course but be grateful to you."

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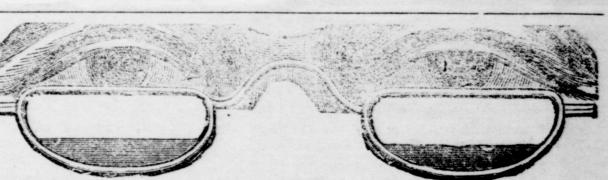
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