

## LITERATURE.

## MRS. KIRKHAM'S BOARDER

BY FAN FEATHERBIE.

(Continued.)

"I heard something at the village to-day, which interested me exceedingly," said Trelan to Mabel Lynn, as he sat with her one evening upon the porch.

"Indeed! what was it?" listly asked Mabel.

"An old tale to you, I presume; I refer to the drowning of Mrs. Kirkham's son, years ago."

A deep flush spread over Mabel Lynn's face, and her voice quivered as she spoke. "An old tale," indeed, and one full of misery.—Don't talk to me of Ned, Mr. Trelan; you don't know what heart-rending memories your remark has awakened."

"I am surprised, Miss Lynn; you talk as if you loved this Kirkham."

"Loved him! Yes, child as I was, I loved him dearly, sir; he was my cousin—my brother. Oh, Ned! Ned!" and Mabel Lynn wept bitterly.

Mr. Trelan looked troubled, earnest, and perplexed. "Pardon me; I knew not this subject was so painful to you."

"You might have known," quickly returned Mabel; then, checking herself, she added—"promise never to mention this subject in this house again, especially to my aunt; we never speak to her of Ned." Ere Trelan could reply they were summoned to tea.

As Mrs. Kirkham took her seat at the tea-tray, Mr. Trelan fixed his large blue eyes intently upon her. "Madam," he said, in a low thrilling tone, which caused Allie Dale to start, and Mabel to look imploringly upon him, "Madam, I heard to-day, for the first time, of your son being drowned near this village, many years ago." A quick contraction of the mouth, a deadly pallor of the cheek, and otherwise Mrs. Kirkham was calm.

"Talk not to me of Edward Kirkham," she said hoarsely; he went to the bar of his God, a wretched suicide!"

"And pray, Mrs. Kirkham, why did he commit suicide? had he just cause for it?—was he unhappy?" coolly asked Trelan.

Mrs. Kirkham's hand trembled violently, and she sat down the coffee-pot. Allie Dale burst into tears, and Mabel leaned back in her chair, and covered her eyes. Notwithstanding this, and the horror-stricken looks of the old servant who, fly-brush in hand, stood as if petrified, Trelan calmly repeated the question: "Had he cause?"

"Oh, misery! yes—but who are you, that you dare speak to me of Ned?" Mrs. Kirkham rose from the table with a sudden shudder, and Allie followed her. Sylvester Trelan's confused apology was lost upon Mabel; she seemed scarcely to hear it. Shortly after, when he took his hat and left the house, Mabel sought her aunt. That night, the first time for seventeen years, Mrs. Kirkham spoke to Allie and Mabel of Ned.

## CHAPTER III.

It was a stormy eve; fleeting clouds darkened the face of heaven, and wailing winds and dashing rain sounded mournfully together. Mrs. Kirkham sat alone in her parlor. The small lamp threw its rays full upon her face; it was pale, sad, and anxious. For a long while she was silent, and then the mother's heart throbbing wildly within her, she moaned forth her grief. "Oh, Ned, my precious lost boy, would that my tongue had been palsied, ere it spoke those bitter words! Oh, miserable child, and still more miserable mother!" Tears burst forth, and Mrs. Kirkham laid her head upon the table.

"Did you address me, Madam?" asked Sylvester Trelan, stepping from the deep window recess, where he had been standing unobserved.

"Address you? No! I knew not that you were in the room," returned Mrs. Kirkham, hastily subduing her grief, and rising from her chair.

"You appeared to be mourning for your—" "Don't mention his name to me again," violently interrupted Mrs. Kirkham, her whole frame trembling with emotion.

Sylvester Trelan covered his face with his hands, and muttered, "it is well." When he looked up he was alone.

"It is cruel, unaccountable, his behavior," said Mabel Lynn, as she listened with flashed cheek, some minutes after, to her aunt's incoherent tale. Why this man seeks thus to torture you, I know not."

"Mother!" exclaimed the impetuous Allie Dale, fondly kissing Mrs. Kirkham's faded lips, "Mother! Sylvester Trelan shall stay here no longer. Let me this very night bid him seek other lodgings; it matters not if we are poor, better so than have your feelings crushed."

"Allie! stay a moment. Our poverty does matter much; we cannot so hastily cut off from us the means of support; but, daughter, I promise you if Sylvester Trelan mentions my boy to me again, he leaves this house forever."

"I am satisfied," murmured Allie.

Another evening was stealing over the village; not a dim, misty, weeping one, as that of yesterday, but radiant with golden light, balmily and fair. Allie Dale sat upon the porch step; nature was joyous, but she was not; and whilst the birds sang, she sighed.

"You are sad, this evening," Mrs. Dale, and wherefore?"

Allie turned and saw Sylvester Trelan; a shiver of dislike crossed her, and she answered proudly:

You need not ask, Mr. Trelan. Permit me to inquire why you have twice cruelly wounded the heart of my mother!—twice, and not two weeks have flown since you entered our family. Why have you done this?"

"For my own satisfaction," hurriedly returned Mr. Trelan.

"Is your heart of adamant? You know what agony to my mother is in the mention of Ned; even Mabel and myself have never dared to advert to him, by word or look, for years; and yet you, a stranger, coolly delight in her misery."

"Not so—not so; I have an object in view," said Trelan, with strange emphasis.

Allie Dale did not reply. Again she sighed, and again her companion inquired the reason of her grief.

"I will tell you," she answered suddenly, "although you have no feeling. To save mother, Mabel and myself, from bitter poverty, I have partly consented to wed one I can never love; and now a path of wretchedness lies before me."

"Be comforted, Allie—Mrs. Dale! In that path you shall never walk. I will save you, so help me heaven!"

Allie looked up through her tears at Trelan, but he turned away from her earnest gaze, and left her alone.

An hour later, Sylvester Trelan entered the parlor where sat Mrs. Kirkham, Allie, and Mabel. A chill silence followed his entrance. It was broken at last by Trelan.

"Mrs. Kirkham, I wish not to torture you but I implore you, tell me, do you yet love your son?" As Trelan paused, his frame shook with violent emotion.

"In mercy, speak not his name again to me!" gasped Mrs. Kirkham.

"In mercy answer my question, and I pledge my sacred honor that I cease to trouble you."

"Man! tormentor! You have pitilessly torn my bleeding heart since you came to this house; now leave it, and take my answer. I love my dead boy with a mad, passionate, undying love!" Mrs. Kirkham almost screamed these words out, and then clasping her hands tightly together, she pressed them on her brow.

"I have probed your heart but to heal. Oh, mother! mother! I have ever loved you, I have pined for you; mother, behold your son!"—And with a convulsive sob the strong man threw himself upon his knees before Mr. Kirkham.

"My son!" exclaimed the bewildered woman, looking wildly on Trelan. "Alas! no—my poor boy was drowned?"

"Mother, he was not, I tell you! I am your

son. I am Edward Kirkham. In a moment of fierce anger I vowed to be dead to you, and left my clothes and satchel on the bank, that you might think I slept beneath the waters.—Oh, mother forgive me?" As Edward Kirkham spoke he swept back the masses of dark hair from his brow, and his high, bold forehead was uncovered. A deep red scar glowed upon it. As Mrs. Kirkham's eye fell on this, she uttered a scream of joy.

"You are my Ned! That scar was on your brow in childhood. I know you now. Oh child, for seventeen long years parted from your mother, you are mine again! My God! I thank thee." And Mrs. Kirkham's arms were wound around her son's neck, with a wild rapturous endearment.

Allie and Mabel knelt by Edward Kirkham, and when his mother's head was on his shoulder, and their soft kisses fell upon his cheek and lip, the weary wanderer of seventeen years acknowledged with a grateful heart that God had richly blessed him.

"I have gathered wealth; I have brought home gold, mother,—it is yours! you are poor no longer. Sweet sister! darling Allie! you shall never walk in the wretched path of which you told me an hour ago."

Allie Dale looked fondly in her brother's face, as he spoke. "I said harsh things to you one hour ago. My precious Ned, can you forgive them?"

"Think not of them, Mother," and Edward turned to Mrs. Kirkham, "forgive my strange conduct since I came to your house. I know my questions seemed cruel, but I felt such a yearning to hear from your own lips whether you had forgiven and loved me yet, or had cast me off forever. Had your heart seemed closed against me, I would have left you, unknowing that other than Sylvester Trelan had crossed your threshold."

"Forgive me. Oh Ned! I have been fearfully punished for my bitter words to you that fearful morning. My heart has borne a load of misery ever since, my precious boy."

Mrs. Kirkham's arms were around Edward again, and mother and son felt that, in that earnest, holy embrace, both were forgiven, and the shadows of the past forever effaced. Mrs. Kirkham chided herself as one blind of heart, for not knowing her son; but, as Mabel and Allie declared, there was little wonder she had failed to do so.

Seventeen years work deep changes, and in the bronzed muscular man of thirty-three, none could have traced the fair slender boy of sixteen. The dark tinge had rested too long on Edward Kirkham's cheek to lightly pass away; but, as he tossed back the rich masses of hair from his brow, and suffered bright, beamsome smiles to light up his countenance, Mabel and Allie declared he was their "handsome Ned" again.

Burning with boyish rage against his mother, young Kirkham went to sea a few days after his flight from the village. For years he never wished to return; but as he advanced in life, a wild desire sprang up, to revisit his home, and share with his mother, Allie, and Mabel, the fortune he had gained. When he came to the village, and ere he had time to inquire for his friends, the notice in the paper met his eye. As he read, a strange fancy struck him; it deepened into a strange plan. Reader, this plan and the sequel there, you already know.

"Mabel! sweet Mabel Lynn! for whom have you kept that free heart so long? You were the idol of my boyish days, you are the idol of my proud manhood. Darling Mabel! will you give me your priceless heart?" To this earnest question of Edward's, I know that Mabel answered "yes."

"Some weeks after, there was a wedding in the 'old homestead,' and Edward Kirkham took to his true and noble heart the fair Mabel Lynn. Allie Dale even smiles when she speaks of Sylvester Trelan, and her mother declares it a blessed day upon which he crossed her threshold. There was excitement and joy in the village, when it was known that the long-lost Ned Kirkham had come back; and down to the present time the villagers regard "Mrs. Kirkham's Boarder" with wonder and interest.

## WASHING SHEEP.

We take it that this is a pretty good total abstinence story—if any one has seen it before, let him read it and laugh at it again:—

"A year or two since, when the subject of temperance was being freely discussed, the citizens of a little town in the Western part of Massachusetts, called a meeting to talk over the matter. There had never been a temperance society in the place, but after some little discussion, it was voted to form one. They drew up a pledge of total abstinence, and agreed that if any member of the society broke it, he should be turned out.

Before the pledge was accepted, Deacon D— arose and said he had one objection to it; he thought that Thanksgiving Day ought to be free for the members to take something, as he could relish his dinner much better at this festival if he took a glass of wine.

Mr. L— thought that the pledge was not perfect. He didn't care anything about Thanksgiving, but his family always made a great account of Christmas, and he couldn't think of sitting down to dinner then without something to drink. He was willing to give it up on all other days, and in fact, that was the only time when he cared anything about it.

Mr. B— next arose, and said he agreed with the other speakers, except the time. He didn't think much of Thanksgiving or Christmas, though he liked a little any time. There was one day, however, when he must have it, and that was the Fourth of July. He always calculated upon having a "reg'lar drink" on that occasion, and he wouldn't sign the pledge if it prevented him from celebrating Independence.

Squire S—, an old farmer, following Mr. B—, He was not in the habit of taking any thing often, but must have some when he washed his sheep. He would sign the pledge if it would give him the privilege of imbibing when he washed sheep. Why, he considered it dangerous for him to keep his hands in cold water without something to keep him warm inside.

After some consideration it was concluded that each member of the society should take his own occasion to drink—Deacon D— on Thanksgiving, Mr. L—, Christmas, &c. The pledge was signed by a large number, and the society adjourned in a flourishing condition, after voting that it should be the duty of the members to watch each other to see that they did not break the pledge.

The next morning Deacon D— walked into his next neighbor's yard, who, by the way, was Mr. L—, the sheep man, wondering, as it was a bitter cold morning, whether L— was up yet. He met his neighbor coming out of the house, and, to his surprise, gloriously drunk, or to use a modern phrase, "burning a very beautiful kiln."

"Why L—!" exclaimed the astonished Deacon, "what does this mean, sir? You have broken your pledge, and disgraced our society and the temperance cause."

"Not—hic—as you knows on—hic—Deacon," said L—. "I haven't—hic—broken the—hic—pledge, Deacon."

"Certainly you have, sir, and I shall report you to the society. You agreed not to drink except when you washed sheep. You cannot make me think that you are going to wash sheep such a cold day as this."

"F—follow me—hic—Deacon."

L— started for the barn, and the Deacon followed. On entering the door, the Deacon saw a large wash-tub standing in the floor with an old ram tied to it, the poor animal shaking dreadfully with the cold, and bleating pitifully.

"Hic—there, D-d-deacon," said L—, pointing to the sheep, with an air of triumph, "that old—hic—ram has been washed s-six times this—hic—morning, and I—hic—ain't done with him—hic—yet."

It is hardly necessary to say that the Deacon vanished.

A steam doctor, in a North Carolina paper, boasts that he has discovered a system, by which he can make out of an old man, an entire young man, and have enough left to make