

## Literature, &amp;c.

## The British Magazines

From the Christian Treasury.

## THE NEST AMONG THE GRAVES.

BY MRS. SIGOURNEY.

The cloudless sun went down

Upon a church-yard scene,

And there a quiet nest I mark'd

Hid in an ever-green,

And wandering 'mid the hallowed mounds

With velvet verdure drest,

I paused where two sweet sisters lay

In death's unbroken rest.

There was a marble seat

Beside that couch of clay,

Where oft the mournful mother sat,

To pluck the weeds away,

And bless each infant bud,

And every blossom fair,

That breath'd a sigh of fragrance round

The idols of her care.

The unfledg'd birds had flown

Far from the nest away,

Yet still within the imprisoning tomb,

Those gentle sleepers lay;

But surely as those bright-wing'd birds

Forsook the sheltering tree,

And soar'd with joyous flight to heaven,

Such shall their rising be.

From Hogg's Instructor.

## HELEN MAXWELL.

[Continued from our last]

In the way to Grosvenor Square, Miss Maxwell had no conversation with her uncle. Scarcely was he seated in the carriage when his capacious head was half buried in the folds of a newspaper and he was instantly involved in the profundities of East India bonds and railway speculations. The carriage soon stopped, and Miss Maxwell speedily found herself in a splendid drawing room in the presence of Mrs and Miss Russell.

'This is Miss Helen Maxwell,' said Mr Russell, thrusting forward the retiring young lady. 'You must be very kind to her and all that, since she has come to stay with us. Now don't be bashful, my dear, but endeavour to make yourself quite at home.'

Miss Maxwell looked at the cold, haughty, and supercilious countenance of the elder lady, and felt herself chilled to the heart. To make herself at home in the vicinity of such a visage, she felt at once to be impossible. Glancing timidly at the daughter, she saw a lively, pretty, and good-humoured face, and was a little reassured, especially when the young lady called her 'her dear cousin Helen,' and embraced her in a very cordial and affectionate manner. This conduct, however, called forth a pointed rebuke.

'Miss Maxwell, I hope you are well,' said Mrs Russell, 'Miss Henrietta Louisa, how can you be so forward, especially with absolute strangers? How often have you been told that there is nothing more vulgar, more unladylike, than such boisterous behaviour? Did you ever witness anything of the sort in your companion Lady Elinore Aubrey?'

'But, dear me, mamma,' rejoined the young lady, 'Lady Elinore is called an incarnate fiend; and surely near relations ought to know and to love each other.'

'Let young people know each other first and love each other afterwards,' replied Mrs Russell. Miss Maxwell, Miss Henrietta Louisa's maid will show you to the nursery, and you need not take the trouble of dressing for dinner, as I daresay you will find yourself very happy with the children.'

The bell was rung, and Miss Maxwell was conducted, by a servant, to a large apartment filled with hobbyhorses, dolls, drums, and all the other important trumpery of juvenile humanity, in the midst of which four rosy children, varying in ages from three to seven or eight, were exercising to the utmost pitch their diversified powers of noise-making. She thought on her poor brothers and sighed, but had no time for meditation, for, with the usual penetration of children, her little cousins immediately detected the sweetness and gentleness of her disposition, and directly claimed her as a playmate. Just relieved from the chilling presence of Mrs Russell, Miss Maxwell, dejected as she was, felt it refreshing to join in the amusements and listen to the vivacious prattle of the children.

The cool reception which she had received from Mrs Russell was not altogether premeditated. She was a proud and ambitious woman, vain of her wealth, children, and her own family connexions, which distantly allied her with some faded if not extinct branch of the aristocracy. In the pecuniary means of supporting state and grandeur, surpassing many of the nobility, there was nothing for which she so devoutly sighed as easy admission into titled circles; and the hope of her daughter forming an aristocratic alliance flitted incessantly before her mental vision. To such a woman it was natural to hate and shun poor relations, and therefore she had carefully abstained for years from any intercourse with the Maxwells. The arrangement, therefore, which introduced her niece-in-law into her family was the very reverse of agreeable to her; but, as Mr Russell was in the habit of taking his own way, she made little opposition to it, designing that, at

the best, Miss Maxwell should only be a humble companion or foil to her own daughter. But in spite of maternal partiality, a single glance showed her that the reverse was likely to be the case. In every natural quality Miss Maxwell was immeasurably superior. She instantly resolved that the latter young lady should be chiefly confined to the nursery, and make up any expenditure which she might cause, by filling the station or a-nursery governess.

Besides those junior members of the family to whom allusion has already been made, there was a son about twenty, engaged in the study of the law, with the view of practising as a barrister. With her family thus dispersed, with servants enough to relieve her in a great measure from domestic cares, and with means sufficient to enable her to indulge in her expensive habits, Mrs Russell gave large dinner parties, balls, and musical entertainments; and yet she contrived to keep her expenses within a secure medium. With these matters Mr Russell never interfered. He moved in a world of his own and yet greatly enjoyed the parade and magnificence which was to his wife the prime element of existence. Having introduced his niece into the family, he gave himself no further concern, leaving all the rest to Mrs Russell's management.

Miss Maxwell's life was for a time sufficiently monotonous. She seldom saw Mrs Russell; and although she frequently dined with the family, she by no means regretted that, on the occasion of parties or assemblies, she was never requested to be present. At Miss Russell's solicitation, she was permitted to attend in the class room for a few hours in the morning, when her cousin was engaged with her governesses, and she was greatly profited by the instructions which were communicated. We must not forget to add that, whenever she could find an opportunity, she walked out to visit the Andersons, to spend an hour or two with her little brothers. These were delightful seasons; and as she witnessed the kindness and humanity, which, amidst their own comparative poverty, the worthy couple displayed toward the orphan children, and her earnest prayer was that she yet might have it in her power to make a practical return for liberality so great and spontaneous.

Alexander Russell, the eldest son of the family, dandy and exquisite as he was, liked nothing better than to make an occasional dash into the nursery, and enjoy a little romping with the younger children. But it was remarked, that after Helen Maxwell was so often found in that region, his visits became much more frequent, and his attention to the children a great deal less. Her beauty, simplicity, and gentleness of demeanour, made a powerful impression upon his heart. As a relation, he claimed the privilege of conversing with her freely; and she, in her guileless innocence, neither courted nor avoided his attentions. With something of the frivolity and vanity natural to a youth in his position, with great vivacity of character, and abundant means of pursuing the phantom pleasure, he possessed a substratum of good sense and genuine warmth of feeling which did not appear to be inherited from either parent. Admiring the natural modesty and sweetness of Miss Maxwell, struck with her fine mental qualities, and touched by the friendlessness of her condition, he first felt that pity which is akin to love; an emotion which speedily ripened into strong and ardent attachment. More than once he expressed, with a vehemence which both startled and alarmed Miss Maxwell, the indignation which he felt in witnessing the neglect and unkindness with which she was treated; and it was only in consequence of her urgent request that he was prevented from declaring to his mother his opinion upon this point. Mrs Russell was slow in suspecting the existence of the attachment to which we have referred, but at random embraced every opportunity of reminding Miss Maxwell of her dependant station, and the immeasurable superiority of her own children in point of position and prospects. Miss Russell, on the other hand, was the confidant of her brother's secret, and herself strongly attached to her cousin, looked forward with satisfaction to a union which she conceived would be eminently conducive to the happiness of both parties. Miss Maxwell, with a prudence above her years, refused to give any countenance whatever to the addresses of her impassioned lover, feeling that the circumstance was calculated to render her situation even more painful than otherwise it would have been. She therefore resolved to embrace the earliest opportunity of finding another home, and requested her faithful friend, Mr Anderson, to make inquiries after any situation for which her acquirements now considerably increased, might qualify her.

In the mean time, the assiduities of young Russell became daily more ardent. On every possible occasion he contrived to obtain interviews with Miss Maxwell, and with the most earnest entreaties urged her to allow him to address her in the capacity of an accepted lover. This she mildly but firmly declined. She reminded him of his youth, of her own humble condition, of the obstacles which she knew the wishes of his parents would present to their union, but she spoke in vain. With a lover's logic, he met, and, as he conceived, triumphantly refuted, all her objections; and, as a *dernier resort*, urged his sister to undertake his cause. Thus besieged, Miss Maxwell intimated to Miss Russell her determination to leave a residence in which she apprehended her stay would only be productive of mischievous consequences, to lodge with some respectable family, and support herself by her needle, till Providence might open up for her an eligible situation. Circumstances, however,

brought the matter to a crisis sooner than she expected.

Mrs Russell had issued invitations and made all due preparations for a splendid dinner party. Always manœuvring, she designed at this high-festival to promote, to the utmost of her ability, the matrimonial interests both of her son and daughter. As an eligible catch for the former, her eye was fixed on a Miss Burstall, the only daughter of an old stock-broker, whose fortune, at the lowest figure, was estimated at a hundred thousand pounds. To this young lady she had repeatedly endeavoured to direct the attention of her son; and at one time, by whatever motive actuated, she seemed to regard her with considerable partiality. But the star of the evening was expected to shine forth in the person of a young baronet of excellent character, distinguished talent, and great wealth, who had been for two or three seasons an object of much attraction and vast scheming to many dutiful mammas in the world of fashion. The hopes of Mrs Russell were peculiarly sanguine. Sir Charles Arlingford had danced with Miss Russell at several assemblies, had frequently conversed with her at public places, and paid her what, in the eyes of an anxious and speculative mother, appeared to be marked and singular attention. It was true that, on certain occasions, he happened to drop into the drawing-room when Miss Russell and Miss Maxwell were practising duets together, and that the latter young lady drew forth some glances of rather warm admiration; but as Mrs Russell invariably recollected some duty which demanded Miss Maxwell's presence in another quarter, and as the baronet's eyes could not follow farther than the door, the circumstance caused no apprehension. In fairness we must remark that Miss Russell herself never perceived in the behaviour of Sir Charles anything more than the ordinary civilities of a well bred man of fashion, and regarded him with no other sentiment than she did the crowds of young, glittering and polite personages with whom, in the course of her gay existence, she came into casual intercourse. All these matters, however, together with the innumerable anxieties and perplexities connected with the set-out of a magnificent entertainment, kept Mrs Russell's mind for several days in a state of feverish turmoil and excitement.

The eventful day arrived. Carriage after carriage—and amongst others, those containing the city heiress and the stylish baronet—drove up to the door. A crowd of unexceptionably dressed ladies and gentlemen assembled in the drawing-room, and speedily filed off to the dining-room, to enjoy *real* turtle-soup and the various efforts of genius on the part of an illustrious French cook, hired for the occasion. The dessert, with its flood of the richest foreign wines and loads of beautiful fruit, succeeded; the ladies withdrew, the gentlemen followed; the music-room attracted all ears. Miss Russell played on the piano, Sir Charles turned the leaves; and Miss Burstall, the city heiress, chatted briskly away with a dashing officer of the Guards—for *Mr Alexander was no place to be seen*. Mrs Russell was amazed; anger succeeded to astonishment; but, in order to explain the matter, it is necessary that we should change the scene.

Forgotten and neglected, like Cinderella in the fairy tale, Miss Maxwell sat quietly in the nursery alone, with those of the children who were not yet in bed, the maids being called to aid in the operations going on above stairs, now playfully chatting with her little friends, and now inditing a fragment of a simple epistle, with which she designed to favour her youngest brother. The proceedings of the upper regions scarcely cast her a thought; and in her comparative quietude she felt herself almost happy. While thus innocently engaged, the door opened, and Alexander Russell entered the apartment.

'Miss Maxwell, and alone!' exclaimed the youth, rapidly advancing, and, before she was aware, seizing her hand and pressing it to his lips. 'This is indeed a pleasure infinitely greater than that of playing my part amongst the heartless triflers congregated above. Oh, Miss Maxwell, if you only knew how it tortures me to exchange fine words and hackneyed compliments with these thoughtless revellers, while you, fitted to shine in an incomparably brighter sphere, are thus lost to society! But I feel I am acting a weak and unmanly part. Only say that you consent to be mine, and before another day passes, it will be my happiness and triumph to claim you openly in the face of the world.'

'Mr Russell,' said Miss Maxwell, disengaging her hand, 'you have already received my answer. I came a stranger and an orphan into your father's house, and I would feel myself acting unworthily, were I to afford the slightest encouragement to your desire for a union which, by your parents, could only be regarded with the utmost disapprobation. If you value my peace, my good name, I beseech you to leave me instantly.'

'Never,' he exclaimed, vehemently, 'till you give me the pledge I have so often sought. Promise to be mine, and you cannot form a wish I will not hasten to obey.'

'That, replied Miss Maxwell, 'I will not—I cannot do.'

'But you will permit me to hope?' exclaimed Russell.

'I will not add to what I have so frequently said,' answered Miss Maxwell. 'Once more I entreat you to leave me. Your absence will be observed.'

'Observed! no,' said Russell; 'but, hear me, Miss Maxwell. Do not suppose that I am altogether dependent on the favour of my parents. I have adequate means left by an uncle,

over which, in a few months, I shall have the sole control. Forgive me for mentioning this; it is to show you that my imprudence, as you have termed it, is not so great as you may imagine. Why not, then, this very night fly together, and present ourselves, to-morrow united by a bond which no human laws can sever?'

'Situated as I am, unable to shun your importunities, I can only regard such a proposal as a deliberate and unfeeling insult,' said Miss Maxwell, 'my determination is fixed and unalterable.'

'I beseech you to recall these words, dearest Miss Maxwell,' exclaimed the impetuous youth, as he spoke casting himself at her feet, and again seizing her hand; and while he was in this position the door once more opened, and Mrs Russell, elegantly attired and glittering with jewels, entered the apartment.

With a countenance absolutely livid with rage, she gazed on the scene before her. Miss Maxwell sunk back nearly fainting on her chair; while young Russell, on whom strong emotion had wrought the work of years, appeared to gather fresh energy from the interruption.

'Mother,' he exclaimed, 'I am rejoiced you have come so opportunely. You have come to hear me swear that Miss Maxwell, whom, in your foolish jealousy, you have treated so ungenerously, is the object of my heart's warmest affections. Had she but consented, this very night she would have been my wedded wife.'

The indignant lady gave no reply to the speech of her son, but turning on Miss Maxwell a look of fury, exclaimed—'Base, designing, unprincipled wretch!'

'I implore you to permit me to explain, madam,' cried Miss Maxwell, 'and you will perceive I am unworthy of such reproaches.'

But Mrs Russell would hear nothing. Assuming that the scene she had witnessed was the result of a special assignation, she poured forth on the offending girl a torrent of the most bitter sarcasm and invective. Miss Maxwell, with neither nerves nor spirits to support her part in such a recounter, fainted away; and it is needless to dwell on the rage of her son, of the calm contemptuous scorn of the mother. Suffice it to say, that Miss Maxwell was committed to the charge of a waiting-maid, and conveyed to her room. Young Russell sought his apartment; and Mrs Russell with a face as dark as a thunder cloud till she reached the drawing-room door, entered with a brow as unruffled, and a smile as radiant, as if no shadow had ever swept across her countenance. Mr Russell, senior, busily discussing the comparative merits of two rival insurance companies with a knot of sagacious cronies, never perceived that his son was absent. No one made it the subject of remark; and in due time the entertainment closed, much in the manner that such things generally do.

Early next morning, Miss Maxwell, still faint and exhausted, was presented with the following note:—'Mrs Russell's compliments to Miss Maxwell. Friendless and a beggar, Mrs R. received Miss M. into her house. Miss M.'s requital has been, in the most mean and dishonourable manner, to entrap her son, an inexperienced youth, into a low and disgraceful marriage. Having lost all confidence in Miss Maxwell's character, Miss R. requests that she will immediately provide herself with another home.' An intimation of this nature Miss Maxwell well expected, and it affected her less than the scene of the preceding night. She dressed herself for walking, and after writing a few lines, in which she merely referred Mrs Russell to either her son or daughter for an explanation of the whole circumstance, she told a servant that her parcels would be sent for presently, and having gently kissed the blooming cheeks of the sleeping children, she speedily found herself in the open streets, in the cold gray of a winter morning. Without hesitation she directed her steps to the quiet dwelling of Mr Anderson, to whom, in the presence of his wife, she fully explained the whole circumstances we have just related. From these kind people she received a cheering welcome, and Mrs Anderson promised to procure her employment from a neighbouring milliner, the produce of which would more than discharge the expense of her board. Distressed as she was, she found abundant reason to join in the morning thanksgiving of this pious family.

A few hours after Miss Maxwell had left Grosvenor Square, a splendid equipage with four richly harnessed horses drove up to Mr Russell's door. The black livery servant, as well as the more than English style of grandeur indicated that it was the carriage of some wealthy foreigner. Mrs Russell, after another fiery altercation with her son, in which, however, she secretly came to the conclusion, that she had judged very erroneously of Miss Maxwell's conduct, stood at the window, and gazed with admiration on the elegant vehicle and the beautiful horses. 'Probably some nabob, on business with Mr Russell,' she said to her daughter, who, grieved and dejected, stood at her side. A gentleman of dark complexion wrapped in a fur cloak, not far advanced in life but apparently in a very weak state of health, descended from the carriage and inquired for Mr or Mrs Russell. In the absence of the former, he was ushered into the drawing-room.

'Mrs Russell, I presume!' said the stranger. The lady bowed.

'I am a stranger to you,' said the gentleman, 'but when I tell you that I am brother to the late Mr Maxwell, who formed a marriage connexion with the family of your husband, you will understand who I am. I have been for many years in the East Indies, and have newly returned to England. Since coming to London, I have been informed of my poor brother's