

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
Andersen Andersen Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
London Descartes Wells Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Bunner Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Doré Dante Shaw Wodehouse
Swift Chekhov Pushkin Alcott
Newton



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

The Baronet's Bride

May Agnes Fleming

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: May Agnes Fleming
Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany
ISBN: 978-3-8424-7812-1

www.tredition.com
www.tredition.de

Copyright:
The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

ALL'S WELL.

The clouds, which rise with thunder, slake
Our thirsty souls with rain;
The blow most dreaded falls to break
From off our limbs a chain;
And wrongs of man to man but make
The love of God more plain.
As through the shadowy lens of even
The eye looks farthest into heaven
On gleams of star and depths of blue
The glaring sunshine never knew!

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

SHADOW.

It falls before, it follows behind,
Darkest still when the day is bright;
No light without the shadow we find,
And never shadow without the light.

From our shadow we cannot flee away;
It walks when we walk, it runs when we run;
But it tells which way to look for the sun;
We may turn our backs on it any day.

Ever mingle the sight and shade
That make this human world so dear;
Sorrow of joy is ever made,
And what were a hope without a fear?

A morning shadow o'er youth is cast,
Warning from pleasure's dazzling snare;
A shadow lengthening across the past,
Fixes our fondest memories there.

One shadow there is, so dark, so drear,
So broad we see not the brightness round it;
Yet 'tis but the dark side of the sphere
Moving into the light unbounded.

ISA CRAIG-KNOX.

CHAPTER I.

THE BARONET'S BRIDE.

"And there is danger of death—for mother and child?"

"Well, no, Sir Jasper—no, sir; no certain danger, you know; but in these protracted cases it can do no harm, Sir Jasper, for the clergyman to be here. He may not be needed but your good lady is very weak, I am sorry to say, Sir Jasper Kingsland."

"I will send for the clergyman," Sir Jasper Kingsland said. "Do your best, Doctor Godroy, and for God's sake let me know the worst or best as soon as may be. This suspense is horrible."

Doctor Parker Godroy looked sympathetically at him through his gold-bowed spectacles.

"I will do my best, Sir Jasper," he said, gravely. "The result is in the hands of the Great Dispenser of life and death. Send for the clergyman, and wait and hope."

He quitted the library as he spoke. Sir Jasper Kingsland seized the bell and rang a shrill peal.

"Ride to the village—ride for your life!" he said, imperatively, to the servant who answered, "and fetch the Reverend Cyrus Green here at once."

The man bowed and departed, and Sir Jasper Kingsland, Baronet, of Kingsland Court, was alone—alone in the gloomy grandeur of the vast library; alone with his thoughts and the wailing midnight storm.

A little toy time-piece of buhl on the stone mantel chimed musically its story of the hour, and Sir Jasper Kingsland lifted his gloomy eyes for a moment at the sound. A tall, spare middle-aged man, handsome once—handsome still, some people said—with iron-gray hair and a proud, patrician face.

"Twelve," his dry lips whispered to themselves—"midnight, and for three hours I have endured this maddening agony of suspense! Another day is given to the world, and before its close all I love best may be cold and stark in death! Oh, my God! have mercy, and spare her!"

He lifted his clasped hands in passionate appeal. There was a picture opposite—a gem of Raphael's—the Man of Sorrows fainting under the weight of the cross, and the fire's shine playing upon it seemed to light the pallid features with a derisive smile.

"The mercy you showed to others, the same shall be shown to you. Tiger heart, you were merciless in the days gone by. Let your black, bad heart break, as you have broken others!"

No voice had sounded, yet he was answered. Conscience had spoken in trumpet-tones, and with a hollow groan the baronet turned away and began pacing up and down.

It was a large and spacious apartment, this library of Kingsland Court, dimly lighted now by the flickering wood-fire and the mellow glow of a branch of wax-lights. Huge book-cases filled to overflowing lined the four walls, and pictures precious as their weight in rubies looked duskily down from their heavy frames. Busts and bronzes stood on brackets and surmounted doors; a thick, rich carpet of moss-green, sprinkled with oak leaves and acorns, muffled the tread; voluminous draperies of dark green shrouded the tall, narrow windows. The massive chairs and tables, fifty years old at least, were spindle-legged and rich in carving, upholstered in green velvet and quaintly embroidered, by hands moldered to dust long ago. Everything was old and grand, and full of storied interest. And there, on the wall, was the crest of the house—the uplifted hand grasping a dagger—and the motto, in old Norman French, "Strike once, and strike well."

It is a very fine thing to be a baronet—a Kingsland of Kingsland, with fifteen thousand a year, and the finest old house in the county; but if Death will stalk grimly over your threshold and snatch away the life you love more than your own, then even that glory is not omniscient. For this wintry midnight, while Sir Jasper Kingsland walks moodily up and down—up and down—Lady Kingsland, in the chamber above, lies ill unto death.

An hour passes—the clock in the turret and the buhl toy on the stone mantel toll solemnly one. The embers drop monotonously through the grate—a dog bays deeply somewhere in the quadrangle below—the wailing wind of coming morning sighs lamentingly through the tossing copper-beeches, and the roar of the surf afar off comes ever and anon like distant thunder. The house is silent as the tomb—so horribly silent that the cold drops start out on the face of the tortured man. Who knows? Death has been on the threshold of that upper chamber all night, waiting for his prey. This awful hush may be the paean that proclaims that he is master!

A tap at the door. The baronet paused in his stride and turned his bloodshot eyes that way. His very voice was hollow and unnatural as he said:

"Come in."

A servant entered—the same who had gone his errand.

"The Reverend Cyrus Green is here, sir. Shall I show him up?"

"Yes—no—I cannot see him. Show him into the drawing-room until he is needed."

"He will not be needed," said a voice at his elbow, and Doctor Parker Godroy came briskly forward. "My dear Sir Jasper, allow me to congratulate you! All is well, thank Heaven, and—it is a son!"

Sir Jasper Kingsland sunk into a seat, thrilling from head to foot, turning sick and faint in the sudden revulsion from despair to hope.

"Saved?" he said, in a gasping whisper. "*Both?*"

"Both, my dear Sir Jasper!" the doctor responded, cordially. "Your good lady is very much prostrated—exhausted—but that was to be looked for, you know; and the baby—ah! the finest boy I have had the pleasure of presenting to an admiring world within ten years. Come and see them!"

"May I?" the baronet cried, starting to his feet.

"Certainly, my dear Sir Jasper—most certainly. There is nothing in the world to hinder—only be a little cautious, you know. Our good lady must be kept composed and quiet, and left to sleep; and

you will just take one peep and go. We won't need the Reverend Cyrus."

He led the way from the library, rubbing his hands as your brisk little physicians do, up a grand stair-way where you might have driven a coach and four, and into a lofty and most magnificently furnished bed-chamber.

"Quiet, now — quiet," the doctor whispered, warningly. "Excite her, and

I won't be answerable for the result."

Sir Jasper Kingsland replied with a rapid gesture, and walked forward to the bed. His own face was perfectly colorless, and his lips were twitching with intense suppressed feeling. He bent above the still form.

"Olivia," he said, "my darling, my darling!"

The heavy eyelids fluttered and lifted, and a pair of haggard, dark eyes gazed up at him. A wan smile parted those pallid lips.

"Dear Jasper! I knew you would come. Have you seen the baby? It is a boy."

"My own, I have thought only of you. My poor pale wife, how awfully death-like you look!"

"But I am not going to die — Doctor Godroy says so," smiling gently. "And now you must go, for I cannot talk. Only kiss me first, and look at the baby."

Her voice was the merest whisper. He pressed his lips passionately to the white face and rose up. Nurse and baby sat in state by the fire, and a slender girl of fifteen years knelt beside them, and gazed in a sort of rapture at the infant prodigy.

"Look, papa — look? The loveliest little thing, and nurse says the very picture of you!"

Not very lovely, certainly; but Sir Jasper Kingsland's eyes lighted with pride and joy as he looked. For was it not a boy? Had he not at last, after weary, weary waiting, the desire of his heart — a son to inherit the estate and perpetuate the ancient name?

"It is so sweet, papa!" Miss Mildred whispered, her small, rather sickly face quite radiant; "and its eyes are the image of yours. He's asleep now, you know, and you can't see them. And look at the dear, darling little hands and fingers and feet, and the speck of a nose and the dot of a mouth! Oh papa! isn't it splendid to have a baby in the house?"

"Very splendid," said papa, relaxing into a smile. "A fine little fellow, nurse! There, cover him up again and let him sleep. We must take extra care of the heir of Kingsland Court. And Mildred, child, you should be in bed. One o'clock is no hour for little girls to be out of their nests."

"Oh, papa! as if I could sleep and not see the baby!"

"Well, you have seen it, and now run away to your room. Mamma and baby both want to sleep, and nurse doesn't need you, I am sure."

"That I don't," said nurse, "nor the doctor, either. So run away, Miss Milly, and go to sleep yourself. The baby will be here, all safe for you, in the morning."

The little girl—a flaxen-haired, pretty-featured child—kissed the baby, kissed papa, and dutifully departed. Sir Jasper followed her out of the room, down the stairs, and back into the library, with the face of a man who has just been reprieved from sudden death. As he re-entered the library, he paused and started a step back, gazing fixedly at one of the windows. The heavy curtain had been partially drawn back, and a white, spectral face was glued to the glass, glaring in.

"Who have we here?" said the baronet to himself; "that face can belong to no one in the house."

He walked straight to the window—the face never moved. A hand was raised and tapped on the glass. A voice outside spoke:

"For Heaven's sake, open and let me in, before I perish in this bitter storm."

Sir Jasper Kingsland opened the window and flung it wide.

"Enter! whoever you are," he said. "No one shall ask in vain at Kingsland, this happy night."

He stepped back, and, all covered with snow, the midnight intruder entered and stood before him. And Sir Jasper Kingsland saw the strangest-looking creature he had ever beheld in the whole course of his life.

CHAPTER II.

ACHMET THE ASTROLOGER.

An old man, yet tall and upright, wearing a trailing cloak of dull black, long gray hair flowing over the shoulders, and tight to the scalp a skull-cap of black velvet. A patriarchal board, abundant and silver-white, streamed down his breast, and out of a dull, white face, seamed and wrinkled, looked a pair of eyes piercing and black.

Sir Jasper took a step backward, and regarded this singular apparition in wonder. The old man folded his arms across his bosom—and made him a profound Oriental salaam.

"The Lord of Kingsland gazes in amaze at the uninvited stranger. And yet I think destiny has sent me hither."

"Who are you?" the baronet demanded. "What jugglery is this? Are you dressed for an Eastern dervish in a melodrama, and have you come here to play a practical joke? I am afraid I can not appreciate the humor of the masquerade. Who are you?" sternly.

"Men call me Achmet the Astrologer."

"An astrologer? Humph! your black art, it seems, could not protect you from a January storm," retorted Sir Jasper, with a cynical sneer. "But come in—come in. Astrologer or demon, or whatever you are, you look too old a man to be abroad such a night, when we would not turn an enemy's dog from the house. The doors of Kingsland are never closed to the tired wayfarer, and of all nights in the year they should not be closed to-night."

"When an heir is born to an ancient name and a princely inheritance, you speak rightly, my Lord of Kingsland."

"How say you? What do you know of the events of this night, Sir Astrologer?"

"Much, Sir Jasper Kingsland, and for the very reason you deride—because I am an astrologer. I read the stars, and I lift the veil

of the future, and, lo! I behold your life years before you have lived it!"

Sir Jasper Kingsland laughed a cynical, unbelieving laugh.

"You jeer at me, you scoff at my words," murmured the old man, in soft, steady tones, "and yet there was no one to tell me on my way here that a son and heir had been born to the house of Kingsland within the past hour."

He lifted his arm and pointed to the clock, his dark eyes fixed upon the baronet's changing face.

"You deride the power I profess, yet every day you quote your English poet, and believe him when he says: 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy.' But I am accustomed to derision, and it does not offend me. Let me prove my power, so that even the most resolute skeptic dare doubt no longer. Judge of my skill to read the future by my ability in reading the past. I have come here—I have taken a long journey to look into the future of your new-born son. Before I begin, let me look into the past of his father. Sir Jasper Kingsland, let me read your palm."

But Sir Jasper drew back.

"You have taken a long journey to look into the future of my son? Pray, what is my son to you?"

"That is my secret, Sir Jasper, and my secrets I keep. Come, hold forth your hand, and test my skill."

"Why should I? Even if you can bring before me my past life, of what use will it be, since I must know all better than you?"

"My power to read the past may prove my power to read the future."

"Nay, you may easily know the past, without magical skill. Many thanks, my venerable friend, but I will not put your necromancy to the test."

"Is Sir Jasper Kingsland afraid?" he said. "Surely not, for he comes of a daring race. And yet it seems like it."

"By Heaven! if a younger man had spoken those words I would have hurled him by the throat from yonder window. Be careful of your words, old man, else even your hoary hairs may fail to save you."

Once more the astrologer bent servilely.

"I cry your mercy, my haughty Lord of Kingsland. It shall be as you say. I will depart as I came. I will not serve you nor your newborn son, since you refuse to be served. I will depart at once. I fear no earthly storm. Good-night, Sir Jasper Kingsland. Look to the heir of your house yourself. When 'angels unaware' visit you again, treat them better than you have treated me."

With a gesture indescribably grand and kingly, the silver-haired old man turned to go, folding his long cloak about him. But the voice of the baronet called him back.

"Stay," he said. "You speak of serving my son. What danger threatens his infant life that you can avert?"

"I know of none. I have not cast the horoscope yet."

"Then you wish to do so?"

"With your good permission. I have taken a long journey for that very purpose, Sir Jasper."

"Then you shall," the baronet cried, yielding to a swift impulse—"you shall cast his horoscope. If it can avert no evil, it can, at least, cause none. But, first, there is no action without its ruling motive. What are me or mine to you, to make you take a long and toilsome journey on our account?"

The old man paused, drawn up to his fullest height, imposing as a new King Lear, his deep, dark eyes glowing with inward fire.

"I will tell you," he said. "Years ago, Sir Jasper, when you were a young man, you did an honor and a service to one I dearly love; that I have never forgotten and never will forget! You have ceased to remember it years ago, no doubt; but I never have, nor ever will until my dying day."

"A service! an honor! What could it have been? I recollect nothing of it."

"I expected as much; but my memory is a good one. It is stamped on my heart forever. Great men like Sir Jasper Kingsland, grandees of the land, forget these little things. I owe you a long debt, Sir Jasper, and I will pay it to the uttermost farthing, so help me God!"

His black eyes blazed, his low voice rose, his arm uplifted fiercely for an instant in dire menace. Then, quick as lightning flashes, all was transformed. The eyes were bent upon the carpet, the arms folded, the voice sunk, soft and servile.

"Forgive me!" he murmured. "In my gratitude I forget myself. But you have my motive in coming here—the desire to repay you; to look into the future of your son; to see the evils that may threaten his youth and manhood, and to place you on your guard against them. 'Forewarned is fore-armed,' you know. Do not doubt my power. In far-off Oriental lands, under the golden stars of Syria, I learned the lore of the wise men of the East. I learned to read the stars as you Englishmen read your printed books. Believe and trust, and let me cast the horoscope of your son."

"First let me test your vaunted power. Show me my past, before you show me my son's future."

He held forth his hand with a cynical smile,

"As you will. Past and future are alike to me—save that the past is easier to read. Ah! a palm seamed and crossed and marked with troubled lines. Forty years have not gone and left no trace behind—"

"Forty years!" interrupted Sir Jasper, with sneering emphasis. "Pray do not bungle in the very beginning."

"I bungle not," answered Achmet, sternly. "Forty years ago, on the third of next month, you, Jasper Southdown Kingsland, were born beneath this very roof."

"Right!" he said. "You know my age. But go on."

"Your boyhood you passed here—quiet, eventless years—with a commonplace mother and a dull, proud father. At ten, your mother went to her grave. At twelve, the late Sir Noel followed her. At thir-

teen, you, a lonely orphan, were removed from this house to London in the charge of a guardian that you hated. Am I not right?"

"You are. Pray go on."

"At fourteen, you went to Rugby to school. From that time until you attained your majority your life passed in public schools and universities, harmlessly and monotonously enough. At twenty-one, you left Cambridge, and started to make the grand tour. You were tolerably clever; you were young and handsome, and heir to a noble inheritance. Your life was to be the life of a great and good man—a benefactor to the human race. Your memory was to be a magnificent memento for a whole world to honor. Your dreams were wild, vague, and impracticable, and ended in—nothing."

Sir Jasper Kingsland listened and stared like a man in a dream. Achmet the Astrologer continued to read the palm with a fixed, stony face.

"And now the lines are crossed, and the trouble begins. As usual, a woman is at the bottom of it. Sir Jasper Kingsland is in love."

There was a pause. The baronet winced a little.

"It is in Spain—glowing, gorgeous Spain—and she is one of its loveliest children. The oranges and pomegranates scent the burning air, the vineyards glow in the tropic sun, and golden summer forever reigns. But the glowing southern sun is not more brilliant than the Spanish gypsy's flashing black eyes, nor the pomegranate blossoms half so ripe and red as her cheeks. She is Zenith, the Zingara, and you love her!"

"In the fiend's name!" Sir Jasper Kingsland cried, "what jugglery is this?"

"One moment more, my Lord of Kingsland," he said, "and I have done. Let me see how your love-dream ends. Ah! the old, old story. Surely I might have known. She is beautiful as the angels above, and as innocent, and she loves you with a mad abandon that is worse than idolatry—as only women ever love. And you? You are grand and noble, a milor Inglese, and you take her love—her crazy worship—as a demi-god might, with uplifted grace, as your birth-right; and she is your pretty toy of an hour. And then careless and

happy, you are gone. Sunny Spain, with its olives and its vineyards, its pomegranates and its Zenith the Gitana, is left far behind, and you are roaming, happy and free, through La Belle France. And lo! Zenith the forsaken lies prone upon the ground, and goes stark mad for the day-god she has lost. There, Sir Jasper Kingsland! the record is a black one. I wish to read no more."

He flung the baronet's hand away, and once more his eyes glowed like the orbs of a demon. But Sir Jasper Kingsland, pale as a dead man, saw it not.

"Are you man or devil?" he said, in an awe-struck tone. "No living mortal knows what you have told me this night."

Achmet the Astrologer smiled—a dire, dark smile.

"Man, in league with the dark potentate you have named, if you like. Whatever I am, I have truthfully told you the past, as I will truthfully tell your son's future."

"By palmistry?"

"No, by the stars. And behold!" drawing aside the curtain, "yonder they shine!"

"Take me to an upper room," the astrologer exclaimed, in an inspired tone, "and leave me. Destiny is propitious. The fate that ruled your son's birth has set forth the shining stars for Achmet to read. Lead on!"

Like a man in a dreamy swoon, Sir Jasper Kingsland obeyed. He led the astrologer up the grand sweeping staircases—up and up, to the very top of the house—to the lofty, lonely battlements. Cloudless spread the wide night sky; countless and brilliant shone the stars; peaceful and majestic slept, the purple sea; spotless white gleamed the snowy earth. A weird, witching scene.

"Leave me," said the astrologer, "and watch and wait. When the first little pink cloud of sunrise blushes in the sky, come to me. My task will have ended."

He waved him away with a regal motion. He stood there gazing at the stars, as a king looking upon his subjects. And the haughty baronet, without a word, turned and left him.