

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 Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Harte
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov Chambers Alcott
Doré Dante Swift Shaw Wodehouse
Pushkin Newton



tredition®

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.



Project Gutenberg

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.

Cruel As The Grave

Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte Southworth

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte Southworth

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8472-4131-7

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.

CRUEL AS THE GRAVE

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

AUTHOR OF "SELF-MADE," "ISHMAEL," "SELF-RAISED,"
"FAIR PLAY," "VIVIA,"
"MISSING BRIDE," "A BEAUTIFUL FIEND," "CHANGED
BRIDES," "RETRIBUTION,"
"HOW HE WON HER," "A NOBLE LORD," "BRIDE'S FATE,"
"FALLEN PRIDE,"
"LADY OF THE ISLE," "THE MAIDEN WIDOW," "ALLWORTH
ABBEY,"
"GYPSY'S PROPHECY," "LOST HEIRESS," "WIDOW'S SON,"
"INDIA,"
"THREE BEAUTIES," "BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN," "BRIDAL EVE,"
"DISCARDED DAUGHTER," "FATAL SECRET," "TWO SISTERS,"
"CURSE OF CLIFTON," "TRIED FOR HER LIFE,"
"PHANTOM WEDDING," "LOVE'S LABOR WON,"
"FORTUNE SEEKER," "FATAL MARRIAGE,"
"MOTHER-IN-LAW," "CHRISTMAS GUEST,"
"FAMILY DOOM," "WIFE'S VICTORY."

"He to whom
I gave my heart, with all its wealth of love,
Forsakes me for another." — Medea.

"And we saw Medea burning
At her nature's-planted stake." — Browning.

By T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS.

Cruel as the Grave.

CONTENTS

- I. — The Berners of the Burning Hearts.
- II. — John Lyon Howe.
- III. — Sybil Berners.
- IV. — The Beautiful Stranger.
- V. — The Landlord's Story.
- VI. — Rosa Blondelle.
- VII. — Down in the Dark Vale.
- VIII. — Black Hall.
- IX. — The Guest-Chambers.
- X. — The Jealous Bride.
- XI. — Love and Jealousy.
- XII. — "Cruel As the Grave."
- XIII. — More Than the Bitterness of Death.
- XIV. — The First Fatal Hallow Eve.
- XV. — The Masquerade Ball.
- XVI. — On the Watch.
- XVII. — Driven to Desperation.
- XVIII. — Lying in Wait.
- XIX. — Swooping Down.
- XX. — The Search.
- XXI. — Sybil's Flight.
- XXII. — The Haunted Chapel.
- XXIII. — The Solitude is Invaded.
- XXIV. — The Verdict and the Visitor.
- XXV. — The Fall of the Dubarrys.
- XXVI. — The Spectre.
- XXVII. — Fearful Waiting.
- XXVIII. — A Ghastly Procession.
- XXIX. — Ghostly and Mysterious

- XXX. – Flight and Pursuit.
- XXXI. – The Arrest.
- XXXII. – A Desperate Venture
- XXXIII. – A Fatal Crisis.
- XXXIV. – The Pursuit.
- XXXV. – The Fugitives.

CRUEL AS THE GRAVE

CHAPTER I.

THE BERNERS OF THE BURNING HEARTS.

"Their love was like the lava flood
That burns in Etna's breast of flame."

Near the end of a dark autumn-day, not many years ago, a young couple, returning from their bridal tour arrived by steamer at the old city of Norfolk; and, taking a hack, drove directly to the best inn.

They were attended by the gentleman's valet and the lady's maid, and encumbered besides with a great amount of baggage, so that altogether their appearance was so promising that the landlord of the "Anchor" came forward in person to receive them and bow them into the best parlor.

The gentleman registered himself and his party as Mr. and Mrs. Lyon Berners, of Black Hall, Virginia, and two servants.

"We shall need a private parlor and chamber communicating for our own use, and a couple of bedrooms for our servants," said Mr. Berners, as he handed his hat and cane to the bowing waiter.

"They shall be prepared immediately," answered the polite landlord.

"We shall remain here only for the night, and go on in 22 the morning, and should like to have two inside and two outside places secured in the Staunton stage-coach for to-morrow."

"I will send and take them at once, sir."

"Thanks. We should also like tea got ready as soon as possible in our private parlor."

"Certainly, sir. What would you like for tea?"

"Oh, anything you please, so that it is nice and neatly served," said Mr. Berners, with a slightly impatient wave of his hand as if he would have been rid of his obsequious host.

"Ah-ha! anything I please! It is easy to see what ails him. He lives upon love just now; but he'll care more about his bill of fare a few weeks hence," chuckled the landlord, as he left the public parlor to execute his guest's orders.

The bridegroom was no sooner left alone with his bride than he seated her in the easiest arm-chair, and began with affectionate zeal to untie her bonnet-strings and unclasp her mantle.

"You make my maid a useless appendage, dear Lyon," said the little lady, smiling up in his eyes.

"Because I like to do everything for you myself, sweet Sybil; because I am jealous of every hand that touches your dear person, except my own," he murmured tenderly as he removed her bonnet, and with all his worshipping soul glowing through his eyes, gazed upon her beautiful and beaming face.

"You love me so much, dear Lyon! You love me so much! Yet not too much either! for oh! if you should ever cease to love me, or even if you were ever to love me *less*,—I—I dare not think what I should do!" she muttered in a long, deep, shuddering tone.

"Sweet Sybil," he breathed, drawing her to his bosom and pressing warm kisses on her crimson lips—"sweetest 23 Sybil, it is not possible for the human heart to love *more* than I do, but I can never love you less!"

"I do believe you, dearest Lyon! With all my heart I do!—Yet—yet—"

"Yet what, sweet love?"

She lifted her face from his bosom and gazing intently in his eyes, said:

"Yet, Lyon, if you knew the prayer that I never fail to put up, day and night! What do you think it is for, dear Lyon?"

"I know; it is for Heaven's blessing to rest upon our wedded lives."

"Yes, my prayer is for that always, of course! but that is not what I mean now! That is not the stronger, stronger prayer which I offer up from the deeps of my spirit in almost an agony of supplication!"

"And what is that prayer, so awful in its earnestness, dear love?"

"Oh, Lyon! it is *that you may never love me less than now, or if you should, that I may never live to know it,*" she breathed with an intensity of suppressed emotion that drew all the glowing color from her crimson cheeks and lips and left them pale as marble.

"Why, you beautiful mad creature! You are a true daughter of your house! A Berners of the burning heart! A Berners of the boiling blood! A Berners of whom it has been said, that it is almost as fatal to be loved, as to be hated, by one of them! Dear Sybil! never doubt my love; never be jealous of me, if you would not destroy us both," he earnestly implored.

"I do not doubt you, dearest Lyon; I am not jealous of you! What cause, indeed, have I to be so? But — but — —"

"But what, my darling?"

"— Ever since I have been in this house, a darkness and a coldness and weight has fallen upon my spirits, that I cannot shake off — a burden, as of some impending calamity! And as there is no calamity that can possibly affect me so much as the lessening of your love, I naturally think most of that," she answered, with a heavy sigh.

"Dear love! this depression is only reaction! fatigue! the effect of this damp, dull, dreary room! We will change all this!" said Lyon Berners, cheerfully, as he pulled the bell-cord and rang a peal that presently brought the waiter to his presence.

"Are our rooms ready?" shortly demanded Mr. Berners.

"Just this moment ready, sir," answered the man, with a bow.

"Gather up these articles, then, and show us to our rooms," said Mr. Berners, pointing to a collection of outer garments and travelling bags that occupied a centre-table.

With another bow the man loaded himself with the personal effects of the guests and led the way up-stairs.

Mr. Berners, drawing his wife's arm through his own, followed the waiter to a cheerful little private parlor, where the bright red carpet on the floor, the bright red curtains at the windows, the bright red covers of the chairs and sofas, the glowing coal fire in the

grate, and above all the neatly spread tea table, with its snowy damask table-cloth, and its service of pure French china, invited the hungry and weary travellers to refreshment and repose.

Through a pair of partly drawn sliding doors a vista was opened to a clean and quiet chamber, furnished to match the parlor, with the same bright-red carpet, window curtains, and chair covers, but also with a white-draped tent-bedstead, with bed-pillows and coverings white and soft as swan's down. In the glow of the coal fire in the inner room sat and waited a pretty mulatto girl, Delia, or Dilly, the dressing maid of Mrs. Berners.

On seeing her mistress enter the parlor, Dilly quickly arose and met her, and handed a chair and relieved the waiter of his burden of portable personal property, which she hastened to carry into the chamber to put away.

"Bring in the tea immediately and send my own man Hannibal here to attend us," said the guest to the waiter, who promptly left the room to execute the orders.

"Come, my darling! Take this easy-chair in the corner and make yourself comfortable! Here is a scene to inspire the saddest heart with cheerfulness," said the bridegroom cordially, as he drew forward the easy arm-chair and led his bride to it.

She sank into the soft seat and smiled her satisfaction.

In a few moments the waiters of the inn entered and arranged a delicious little repast upon the table and then withdrew, leaving Hannibal, the faithful servant of the bridegroom, to attend his master and mistress at their tea.

The young pair sat down to the table. And in that quiet and cheerful scene of enjoyment, the young bride recovered her spirits. The transient shadow that had for a moment darkened the splendor of her joy, even as a passing cloud for an instant obscures the glory of the sun, had vanished, leaving her all smiles and gayety.

To say that these wedded lovers were very happy, would scarcely express the delirium of pure joy in which they had dreamed away their days and nights for the last few weeks—joy that both were too young and untried to know could not last for ever, could not indeed

even last long—joy so elevated in its insanity as almost to tempt some thunderbolt of malignant fate to fall upon it with destroying force, even as the highly rarefied air sometimes draws on the whirlwind and the storm.

But then the story of their loves was rare and strange, and almost justified the intensity of their mutual devotion, and that story is briefly this:

CHAPTER II.

JOHN LYON HOWE.

“A brow half martial and half diplomatic,
An eye upsoaring like an eagle’s wing.”

John Lyon Howe was the younger son of a planter, residing in one of the wildest mountain regions in central Virginia. The elder Howe was blessed with a large family, and cursed with a heavily mortgaged estate—a combination of circumstances not unusual among the warm-hearted, generous and extravagant people of the Old Dominion.

John Lyon Howe had been educated in the Law School of the University of Virginia, where, at the age of twenty-three, he graduated with the highest honors.

Then, instead of commencing his professional life in one of the great Eastern cities, or striking out for the broad fields of enterprise opened in the Far West, young Howe, to the astonishment of all who were acquainted with the talents and ambition of the new lawyer, returned to his native county and opened his law office in Blackville, a small hamlet lying at the foot of the Black Valley, and enjoying the honor and profit of being the county-seat.

But the young lawyer had strong motives for his actions. He had great talent, an intense passion for politics, and quite as much State pride as personal ambition. He wished to distinguish himself; yes, but not in Massachusetts or Minnesota, nor in any other place except in his native State, his dear old Virginia.

Sometime to represent her in the National Congress, and to do her service and credit there, was the highest goal of his youthful aspirations.

For this cause, he settled in the obscure hamlet of Blackville, and opened his law office in one of the basement rooms of the county court-house.

27 While the courts were in session he attended them regularly, and did a good deal of business in the way of gratuitous counselling and pleading; advocating and defending with great ability and success the cause of the poor and oppressed, and winning much honor and praise, but very little money, not enough, indeed, to pay his office rent, or renew his napless hat and thread-bare coat.

Besides his unprofitable professional labors, he engaged in equally unprofitable political contests.

He took the liberal view of State craft, and sought to open the minds of his fellow-citizen to a just and wise policy, or what he, in his young enthusiasm, conceived to be such. He wrote stirring leaders for the local papers, and made rousing speeches at the political meetings.

He was everywhere spoken of as a rising young man, who was sure to reach a high position some day. Yes! some day; but that desired day seemed very far distant to the desponding young lawyer.

And to make his probation still more painful, he was in love! not as men are who are taken with a new face every year of their lives, but as the heroes of old used to be—for once and forever! profoundly, passionately, desperately in love, almost despairingly in love, since she whom he loved was at once the richest heiress, the greatest beauty, and the proudest lady in the whole community—Sybil Berners! Miss Berners, of Black Hall!—in social position as far above the briefless young lawyer as the sun above the earth; at least so said those who observed this presumptuous passion, and predicted for the young lover, should he ever really aspire to her hand, the fate of Phaeton, to be consumed in the splendor of her sphere, and cast down blackened to his native earth.

Had they who cavilled at his high-placed love but known the truth; how she whom he so worshipped, on her part, adored him? But this he himself did not know, or even 28 suspect. Had he possessed much less of a fine, high-toned sense of honor, he might, by wooing the lady, have found this out for himself; but he, an almost penniless young man, was much too proud to ask the hand of the wealthy heiress. Or had he possessed a little more personal vanity, he might have suspected the truth; for certainly there was not a

handsomer man in the whole county than was this briefless young lawyer with the napless hat and thread-bare coat. His person was of that medium height and just proportions necessary to give perfect elegance of form and grace of motion. His features were classic, with the straight forehead, hooked nose, short upper lip, and pointed chin of the strong old Roman type. His complexion was fair, his eyes blue, and his hair and beard a golden auburn. Added to these attractions, there was an intense magnetic power in the gaze of his dark eyes, and in the tone of his deep voice, a power that few could resist, and certainly not Sybil Berners.

But who and what besides heiress and beauty was Sybil Berners? To tell you all she was. I must first tell you something about her family, the "Berners of Black Hall."

Theirs was an old family, and a historical name interwoven with the destinies of the two hemispheres. Their house was older than the history of the new world, and almost as ancient as the fables of the old world.

They were among the first lords of the manor in Colonial Virginia, and they claimed descent from a ducal house whose patent of nobility dated back to the first months of the Norman Conquest of England.

They had been great in history and in story; great in the field and the forum; great in the old country and in the new. They had been a brave, fierce, cruel, and despotic race, equally feared and hated at home and abroad, equally loved and trusted as well; for never were such dangerous foes or such devoted friends as were these Berners; no one ever loved as these Berners loved, or hated as they hated. In the intensity of their love or their hate they were capable of suffering or inflicting death; these Berners, whose friendship was almost as fatal as their enmity; these Berners, who "never spared man in their hate or woman in their love;" these Berners of the burning heart; these Berners of the boiling blood; these Berners of Black Hall; and whose sole representative now was Sybil, the last daughter of their line, who concentrated in her own ardent, intense nature all the most beautiful, all the most terrible attributes of her strong and fiery race.

I said that she was the richest heiress as well as the most beautiful girl of the country.

She was the inheritor of the famous Black Valley manor, holding besides its own home plantation, several of the most productive and valuable farms in the neighborhood.

There is not in all the mountain region of Virginia a wilder, darker, gloomier glade than that forming the home manor of the Berners family, and known as the Black Valley. It is a long, deep, narrow vale, lying between high, steep ridges of iron-gray rock, half covered with a growth of deep-green stunted cedars.

At the head or northern extremity of the vale springs a cascade, called, for the darkness of its color, the Black Torrent. It rushes, roaring, down the side of the precipice, now hiding under a heavy growth of evergreen, now bursting into light as it foams over the face of some rock, until at length it tumbles down to the foot of the mountain and flows along through the bottom of the Valley, until about half way down its length, it widens into a little lake, called, from its hue, the Black Water, or the Black Pond; then narrowing again, it flows on down past the little hamlet of Blackville, situated at the foot or southern extremity of the Black Valley.

The ancient manor house, known as the Black Hall, 30 stands on a rising ground on the west side of the Black Water with its old pleasure gardens running down to the very edge of the lake.

It is a large, rambling, irregularly-formed old house, built of the iron gray rocks dug from the home quarries; and it is scarcely to be distinguished from the iron-gray precipices that tower all around it.

The manor had been in the possession of the same family from the time of King James the First, who made a grant of the land to Reginald Berners, the first Lord of the Manor.

Bertram Berners was the seventh in descent from Reginald. He married first a lady of high rank, the daughter of the colonial governor of Virginia. This union, which was neither fruitful nor happy, lasted more than thirty years, after which the high-born wife died.

Finding himself at the age of sixty a childless widower and the last of his name, he resolved to marry again in the hope of having