Title: Margaret Capel: A Novel, vol. 3 of 3

Author: Ellen Wallace

Release date: June 22, 2012 [EBook #40054]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Robert Cicconetti, Sue Fleming and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive)

MARGARET CAPEL.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1846.

MARGARET CAPEL.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1846.

LONDON:

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

MARGARET CAPEL.

CHAPTER I.

For not to think of what I need's must feel, [Pg 1]
But to be still and patient all I can,
And haply, by abstruse research, to steal
From my own nature all the natural man:
This was my sole resource, my only plan.

COLERIDGE.

And time, that mirrors on its stream aye flowing
Hope's starry beam, despondency's dark shade;
Green early leaves, flowers in warm sunshine blowing,
Boughs by sharp winter's breath all leafless made.

ANON.

Margaret remained for more than a year in the most perfect retirement. The solitude of Ashdale was nothing to that of Mrs. Fitzpatrick's cottage. This tranquillity was well adapted to her state of [Pg 2] feeling: she never experienced a wish to interrupt it. She was sincerely attached to her hostess. Although reserved, Mrs. Fitzpatrick was even-tempered; and she became very fond of Margaret, whose society filled up such a painful blank in her home. Both had suffered much, though neither ever alluded to her sufferings: and sorrow is always a bond of union. When first she came to Mrs. Fitzpatrick's, her health was so delicate, that the poor lady feared she was to go through a second ordeal, similar to the one she had lately submitted to with her own child. Margaret had a terrible cough and frequent pain in the side, and whenever Mrs. Fitzpatrick saw her pause on her way down stairs with her hand pressed on her heart, or heard the well-known and distressing sound of the cough, the memory of her daughter was almost too painfully renewed. But Mr. Lindsay pronounced the cough to be nervous, and the pain in the side nothing of any consequence; and though winter was stealing on, his opinion was borne out by Margaret's rapid [Pg 3] amendment.

Circumstances had long taught Margaret to suffer in silence: she found then no difficulty in assuming a composure of manner that she did not always feel; and soon the healing effects of repose and time were visible in her demeanour. The loss of her uncle was become a softened grief—for her other sorrow, she never named it even to herself. Yet still if any accident suggested to her heart the name of Mr. Haveloc, it would be followed by a sudden shock, as though a dagger had been plunged into it. She could not bear to think of him, and it was a comfort to be in a place where she was never likely to hear him named.

And in the beautiful country, among those fading woods, on that irregular and romantic shore, was to be found the surest antidote for all that she had endured—for all she might still suffer. In the soft, yet boisterous autumn wind—in the swell of the mighty waves—in the fresh breath, ever [Pg 4] wafted over their foam, there was health for the body, there was peace to the mind. The scenery was so delightful that she was never tired of rambling—and so secluded, that there was no harm in rambling alone. And though a beauty, and by no means a portionless one, she found means to pass her time without an adventure, unless the vague admiration entertained for her by a young coxcomb who was reading for college with the clergyman, might deserve that name.

This youth, not being very skilful in shooting the sea-gulls, had nothing on earth to do except to make love to the first pretty woman he might encounter. He had literally no choice; for Margaret was the only young lady in the parish. She was waylaid, stared at—was molested in church by nosegays laid on the desk of her pew, and annoyed at home by verses that came in with the breakfast things. She was reduced to walk out only with Mrs. Fitzpatrick; she was debarred from [Pg 5] sitting on the beach—gathering nuts in the woods—even from wandering in the garden, unless she could submit to be stared at from the other side of the hedge. Trained, as she was, in the school of adversity, (a capital school, by the way, to make people indifferent to minor evils), she could not help crying with vexation when the butler coolly brought her up the fiftieth copy of wretched verses, setting forth her charms and her cruelty in no measured terms.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick had smiled to see the contempt with which Margaret brushed down the first bouquet among the hassocks, and left the second unnoticed upon the desk; even the sweet scent of the Russian violets had not softened her resolution, and the verses wrapped round their stems became the property of the beadle. But Mrs. Fitzpatrick, really sorry for the annoyance of her young charge, spoke confidently to the good Mr. Fletcher; and she had the pleasure to assure Margaret that the Hon. Mr. Florestan was going away at Christmas. Still she had felt some [Pg 6] surprise and more curiosity at the conduct of so very young a girl, under such circumstances—there had appeared no vanity, no agitation, none of the natural emotion resulting from the

novelty of inspiring a passion.

Mr. Florestan was a boy of good family; some people would have called him a man, for he was seventeen and a half; he wrote rhymes and bought hot-house flowers; so many girls would have been delighted at his homage. Margaret seemed merely bored: she cried, as she said, from absolute weariness of him and his scented paper; from the perpetual chafing of a small annoyance. His love was too contemptible to cause a stronger feeling; for herself she had never looked at him, and did not know whether he was tall or short. Once or twice when Mrs. Fitzpatrick had called to her, 'Look, Margaret, there goes your devoted swain!' she had been so long in putting down her work, and coming to the window, that he had turned the rocks, or the [Pg 7] corner of the road, and the opportunity was lost. And he actually left the place, without her ever having seen more of him than a green coat and brass buttons, with which he was wont to enliven their parish church every Sunday, and which being on an exact level with her eye, she could not without affectation avoid. Such entire indifference to a conquest, Mrs. Fitzpatrick could not understand, and she told Margaret with a smile, that some day she would be more indulgent to the feelings of a lover than she seemed at present. The well-known sharp pain went through Margaret's heart as she spoke; but she smiled too, and said she had a great respect for lovers, but she saw no cause to enrol the Hon. Mr. Florestan in their ranks. And so the subject dropped.

After this, many months passed in such stillness, that Margaret hardly knew how they flew. Her only regular correspondent was Lady d'Eyncourt. Her letters formed the one excitement of her life. It was so delightful to trace her from place to place; to hear the little anecdotes of her travels [Pg 8] —even the name of Captain Gage, mentioned casually, brought back vividly to her remembrance, the many happy days she had passed at Chirke Weston. And in the few allusions to her husband that her letters contained, it was evident that the devotion she felt for him before marriage, had increased, and was still gathering strength in a degree that it was perilous to indulge. She said, herself, that the unclouded sunshine of her life could hardly last. To say that she adored Sir Philip, was no figure of speech in her case. The more intimately she became acquainted with his character, the more she found to love and to respect. He had no *little* faults. The reserve which repelled others, vanished entirely with her; and the most exacting of an exacting sex, must have been content with the measure of his fondness. She was not so much his first, as his only object. Captain Gage often said that they were made for each other, and neither party seemed inclined to dispute the opinion. At last, the storm came. After an unusual silence on the part of Elizabeth, Margaret received a letter—a few lines from Captain Gage, announcing the terrible news of Sir [Pg 9] Philip's death. He had been carried off in a few weeks by a fever, at Marseilles. Elizabeth was expecting to become a mother; and the next hurried intelligence from her father announced the disappointment of her hopes,—and spoke of his intention of taking her on to Italy as soon as her health would permit. These few lines had been sent to her at the desire of Elizabeth, and she could not but feel them a proof of her unaltered friendship.

Margaret felt, after this shock, as young people cumbered with much feeling are apt to do, when they see and hear around them so much of sorrow and alarm. Every thing seemed insecure; she could picture no happiness sufficiently stable to be worth desiring; she looked round to see what new misfortune threatened herself; she was possessed with a feeling of vague apprehension. But [Pg 10] her religious impressions, always sincere, and now deepened by the experience of sorrow, enabled her in time to combat this feeling of undue depression.

Always gentle, she became more grave than was common at her years; more than would have been graceful in so young a person, had it not been tempered by the remarkable sweetness of her disposition. She found too the benefit of constant occupation. She learned that nothing so effectually dispels regret.

Her improvement in every branch of knowledge was great enough to content even herself; and in music, her favourite recreation, Mrs. Fitzpatrick often told her that she could at any time have gained her living by her proficiency.

The next event of her tranquil life was the receipt of a box of bride-cake, and a letter from Harriet Conway. This was in the month of November; just three months after the death of Sir Philip. [Pg 11]

The letter, which was written in a good bold hand, ran as follows:——

> "Ma mie,
>
> "Do not take it into your head that this is a piece of my bride-cake. Somewhere in the box you will find the cards—Lord and Lady Raymond. I wonder if you recollect who I am. Also, I wonder if you are as pretty as you were two years ago? To be sure you think I might have asked the question a little earlier. But we returned from Germany only a short time before Lucy's marriage.
>
> "I am now at Singleton Manor, and desire you, on the receipt of this, to set off directly, and join me there. I have your promise, and, therefore, you cannot very well be off paying the visit. So come instantly; I cannot endure to wait for any-thing; and stay as long as ever I please.
>
> So say Uncle and Aunt Singleton, besides the veritable mistress of the mansion, [Pg 12]
>
> "Harriet Conway."

Margaret at last found the cards Harriet mentioned under a quantity of bon-bons. She rather

wondered that her friend was still Harriet Conway; but she was glad that this singular young lady still bore her in mind.

She showed the letter to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and obtained her ready consent to the visit. There was no objection to Margaret travelling with Mason; a steady creature, who had been so long with her, and who could pay the post-boys as well as a manservant.

Mason was in ecstacies. Of course she understood paying the post-boys. She would have undertaken to pay the National Debt, if that could have delivered her from the hated seclusion of the cottage. She confessed to Miss Capel, in confidence, that it had really fretted her to see Miss Capel growing handsomer every day, and not a soul coming, or likely to come, to this wilderness [Pg 13] of a place, since poor Mr. Florestan. She confessed she should like to see Miss Capel have her due; and now that she had her health again, she thought it was high time to get out of this dungeon and mix in the world; and for that purpose, she supposed Miss Capel would choose to have a new bonnet, and a new silk walking dress, and a few evening dresses, and more things than she could recollect at once; but she could sit down and make a list of them.

Margaret gratified her by leaving entirely in her hands, the reforming of her wardrobe; and that important matter being arranged, and a warm and reluctant farewell taken of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, she stepped into the post-chaise that was to convey her to Singleton Manor.

She was to make one long day's journey of it—a fatiguing performance—but she was anxious to avoid sleeping on the road.

The last few stages seemed to be interminably long; she was almost exhausted with fatigue. It [Pg 14] had been dark for some miles, and she was just beginning to convince herself that there was no chance of reaching their destination that night, when the carriage turned abruptly round; the wheels echoed over the rough stones of a paved court-yard; lights glimmered; the Gothic outline of a grey stone porch became visible; and Margaret alighted at Singleton Manor.

CHAPTER II.

> The gnawing envy, the heart-fretting fear,
> The vain surmises, the distrustful shews,
> The false reports that flying tales do bear,
> She doubts, the dangers, the delays, the woes,
> She feigned friends, the unassured foes,
> With thousands more than any tongue can tell,
> Do make a lover's life a wretched hell.
>
> SPENSER.

The hall into which Margaret was ushered was low-ceilinged, carpeted, and adorned with numerous glass cases filled with stuffed animals, such as a seal, an otter, a Norway bear, and the rarer kinds of birds, that sometimes fall into the way of sportsmen, in distant parts of this island. Some handsome furs were stretched before a blazing wood fire, upon which several dogs lay enjoying the warmth. The oak staircase was wide and finely carved, and at every few steps there [Pg 16] was a broad landing-place, while the balustrades took the opportunity to make a halt also, and to transform themselves into huge claws, which sustained the scutcheon of the Singletons, with the raven's heads, and golden roses duly emblazoned on them.

The room into which Margaret was shown, was divided into two compartments by a screen of oak carved like filagree, with a door-way left in the centre to admit of passing through; the one side of this screen serving for a dressing-room; the other for a bed-room, having a recess filled with a curious tall bed, gloomy with plumes and purple velvet hangings.

While her maid was arranging the preliminaries of her toilet, and Margaret was looking at all the curiosities that the room contained,—the carved wardrobe, the curiously framed pictures, the antique looking glass, upheld by silver cupids, who bestowed on the mirror, the lace draperies of [Pg 17] which they themselves seemed to stand in some little need; her door was thrown open, and Harriet rushed into the room, so altered, so improved, so radiant with health and beauty, that Margaret hardly knew her again.

"Well!" exclaimed Harriet, after kissing and fondling her as she would have done a pet child. "Well, now I have you here, after this long while; I shall not let you go again in a hurry!"

"You are very kind, very kind, indeed," said Margaret, almost overcome by the warmth of her reception, "I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you again, you good little creature. But do you know you are grown considerably taller? You will be too tall to pet soon, if you do not take care. What are you looking at? We have some people staying in the house, that is the reason I have made something of a toilet."

Harriet was rounded into a splendid woman. Her complexion was as soft and clear as alabaster, and a bright carnation colour in her cheeks, gave a dazzling brilliancy to her hazel eyes. She [Pg 18] wore a white Cachemere dress, edged with a red Greek pattern; her hair was banded back from her forehead, and a slight wreath of white periwinkles, mixed with dark green leaves, encircled her head.

"I was not looking at your dress," said Margaret, smiling, "I did not ascribe your appearance to

your toilet, I assure you."

"You little flatterer! But do you know you will cut us all out? I never saw any one so improved, and you were quite pretty enough to do mischief before."

"Oh, Harriet!" said Margaret, hardly knowing to what her volatile companion referred.

"True for you," said Harriet, archly. "Well, you have not asked me all the particulars of Lucy's marriage."

"I ought to congratulate you upon it," said Margaret, "I hope Lady Raymond is well?"

"Lady Raymond—yes, I will let you call Lucy so, because you were not very intimate with her, though I mean you to know each other more by and by; but if you call me Lady Any-thing, when I marry a Lord, I will not forgive you. Yes, Lucy is very well, and as happy as possible. Lord Raymond is amazingly fond of her; the more so, perhaps, because he is not very likely to attract any body else. There was such a party at the breakfast! We, the bridesmaids, had pelisses of peach-coloured silk, trimmed with swansdown, and Lucy was all in white lace, and she looked so cold, poor girl, while we were as cosy as possible in our warm coats. And Lord Raymond stammered dreadfully; which was very odd, for I had been hearing him the responses for a week previous." [Pg 19]

"Harriet, you make me laugh!"

"I mean it. Now let us come down together. You will love my Aunt Singleton; she is such a good little mouse!"

Mrs. Singleton did win very much upon Margaret by the manner in which she received her: there was something in her quiet and impressive kindness which seemed to say that she felt a more than ordinary interest for the orphan who was thrown in her way. [Pg 20]

Margaret looked at her serious but sweet countenance, and felt with the intuitive knowledge that experience gives, that Mrs. Singleton must have suffered much at some period of her life, and that her placidity was as much the effect of resignation as of contentment.

Mr. Singleton looked the hearty fox-hunter. He welcomed Margaret with honest kindness, thanked her repeatedly for taking so long a journey to gratify a wish of Harriet's, and hoped earnestly that dinner would soon be announced, since he was certain she must have been starved on the road. He then crossed over to welcome a strange looking young man who had entered the room, and was standing on the other side of the ample fire-place.

This young man might have been of age, though a short, stumpy face, surmounting a very large person, gave him the appearance of a little boy under a strong magnifier. His arms were too short, and his hands, which were singularly small, seemed to hang the wrong way. He gave a little kick behind, when he attempted to bow, and began almost every sentence with a short barking laugh. [Pg 21]

"Look at that animal!" said Harriet leaning across to Margaret. "That is Mr. Humphries—the very rich Mr. Humphries! Is he not exactly like a seal set upright? Look at him trying to reach my aunt with his short fins! Quite in vain, my good friend! Oh, no, Mr. Humphries, I never shake hands, you know."

The youth, who had advanced for the purpose of exchanging this courtesy with Harriet, barked, gave his accustomed scrape, and retired. Harriet continued her caustic remarks to Margaret.

"Observe the very fat Mrs. Pottinger in the brocaded gown and Mrs. Markham with a whole dish of grapes and currants upon her head; and their well-bred daughters whispering together on that ottoman—comparing notes about you, I have no doubt! I tell my uncle he need never expect me to pay any attention to this sort of guests. I hardly know who shall take me in to dinner. Colonel Markham drawls so, and Mr. Pottinger speaks through his nose. Then Mr. Baxter is so fat, and the seal—oh! I see Evan has caught somebody that will do to walk across the room with. Uncle Singleton, let that black-looking man take me in to dinner. Evan, I wish to introduce you to Miss Capel." [Pg 22]

"Delighted," said Mr. Evan Conway bowing to Margaret.

"You will also take Miss Capel in to dinner."

"Delighted."

"And, oh! in case I don't come near you again, be careful that you make Mr. Humphries sing in the evening."

"Delighted."

"Evan is not a fool," said Harriet, turning to Margaret, "though you would think so by his using only one word to express everything. What is that man's name Evan, who is propping that side of the chimney-piece with his shoulder?" [Pg 23]

"Gordon."

"Oh, good Heaven! A Scotchman! I retract, Margaret, I will have Colonel Markham; though he drawls, he says very little; and any-thing is better than the brogue. What is he, this Scotchman?"

"Nothing."

"Worse and worse. I detest a man without an occupation; and now I look at him, I suspect he writes."

"Sometimes."

"What does he write in the name of goodness?"

"Travels."

"Oh! that is better than poetry, don't you think so Margaret? I am not sure if I will not put up with him. Is he poor?"

"No." [Pg 24]

"Rich then?"

"Nor rich."

"One of your black swans that I always find to be so much worse than geese?"

"Perhaps."

"Introduce him to me."

"Harriet—Mr. Gordon."

"What a detestable introduction. I suppose Mr. Gordon, you are sufficiently acquainted with Evan not to be surprised at any-thing he says or does?"

Margaret did not hear Mr. Gordon's reply, for he led Harriet off to dinner, which was announced at the moment, and she accepted the offered arm of Mr. Evan Conway.

Margaret was struck with the appearance of the dining-room. It was a large dark room; for although crowded with lamps, black oak is the most difficult of all things to light up. The mantle-piece was in the form of a Gothic arch; the ceiling crossed with carved beams of wood; and at the end of the apartment there was an arched recess, where stood the sideboard loaded with old plate. [Pg 25]

"Are you fond of talking?" said Mr. Evan, as soon as they were placed at table.

Margaret thought the question an odd one; but she said that she had never considered the subject, and that she should hardly think herself a good judge of her own peculiarities.

"Singular now, what different replies people give to the same question," said her companion. "Most young ladies say, oh, no, Mr. Evan! Or, how can you ask such things, Mr. Conway? Or, dear me, what makes you think so? You may imagine how much refreshed I feel, when a young lady makes an answer which shows something like thought and originality. Pray who taught you to sing?"

"I believe, I taught myself," said Margaret, amused by the singularity of her neighbour.

"Very industrious of you!" said he smiling. "It is a great exertion to teach oneself any-thing. One has to undergo the double labour of master and scholar—both hard situations. Do you like the society in this neighbourhood?" [Pg 26]

"I know nothing of it. I arrived to-day, just before dinner."

"But the general aspect of it—do pronounce an opinion. What a combination of grace and intelligence in the ladies! and—and—what is the corresponding virtue in the gentlemen?"

"I cannot tell," said Margaret.

"Oh! let us come to a decision—or, suppose we illustrate. The man opposite, whom that amiable girl is trying to encourage, mistaking awkwardness for shyness,—is he your beau-ideal?"

"I will not tell you," said Margaret.

"Poor Humphries!" said Mr. Evan, still looking at the couple on the other side. "He will go home now, and swear she is his devoted admirer! How well Miss Bremer hits off a scene of that kind in the new novel of the H—— Family." [Pg 27]

"I recollect it," said Margaret, smiling.

"His letter to his brother—ha! ha!—You ladies see the bye-play of society so very keenly."

"I am not an authoress," said Margaret.

"I am aware of that. You do not look in the least like one, I can assure you."

"What do they look like, then?"

"Green spectacles, frizzled hair, which they obstinately refuse to cover with a cap. Large hands in black mittens—ditto feet, in villainous thick shoes. In fact, every thing that is most odious in women, and to crown all, when they walk abroad, or take the air, or whatever phrase they may

employ to indicate their savage peregrinations, they exhibit to the world an old straw bonnet adorned with a broken black feather—this costume is invariable."

"I do not believe that picture to be always correct," said Margaret laughing.

"But it has entirely answered my purpose, it has made you laugh; and a genuine merry laugh is [Pg 28] not a thing to be met with every day in the week."

"But a description is of no value if it is devoid of truth," said Margaret.

"Truth, my dear Miss Capel, is a very excellent lady or gentleman, (I am not quite certain of the gender) and I do not dispute its value; for you may have often remarked that the things are valuable in proportion to their scarcity. The most ill-favoured curiosities fetch a high price in the market. Nobody denies that truth is scarce enough to be a curiosity, and in most cases a very ill-favoured one. You don't agree with me, and I'm very sorry for it—but I cannot alter my opinion."

"I was not going to oppose it," said Margaret. "I have no mania for making converts."

"No. You were merely saying to yourself that you had come in the way of a monstrous odd person. That you did not agree with a word he said; but that it was not worth while to oppose the [Pg 29] fancies of a passing acquaintance."

Margaret laughed.

"Now, by way of returning good for evil, I will give you some excellent advice. Never touch either curry or ice at this house. They do not manage well the two extremes of hot and cold. The curry is stuffed with rhubarb, and the ice with ground-glass. I found a splinter in my mouth the other day. On the contrary, their farm yard is famous—no end of chickens and turkies, and fresh eggs and cream; it is quite a country-house you see. Well, it is very hard you will not believe any thing I say."

"I was not going to contradict you," said Margaret.

"But you have no idea how transparent your countenance is. It will take four or five years more before you will be able to conceal your sentiments. You did not think, when first I was introduced to you, that I was such a *causeur*. But, reflect, my dear Miss Capel, upon the extreme difficulty of [Pg 30] keeping up any kind of conversation with my sister Harriet. A single word introduced edgeways, is the amount of any one's share in a dialogue with her. She is fond of talking, and so am I; and, of course, as a lady, I always yield her the precedence. Do not run away with the idea that I am a satirical person. I am by no means rapid in detecting the weak points in my neighbour's characters. Do you mean to hunt next Tuesday?"

"Oh, no!"

"Why not? Harriet would give you an infallible mount; I believe that is their phrase. For my own part, I never was on a horse in my life."

"Oh! am I to believe that?"

"Why not? It is out of my line. Depend upon it, there is something in the atmosphere of a stable that impairs a man's brains, supposing he sets out in life with any; and the few I may possess are the only means of earning salt to my porridge. I have, therefore, always rather shunned four- [Pg 31] footed animals. But that reason does not apply to you."

"Not exactly that reason; but it is equally out of my line. I mean hunting, for I am very fond of riding. It is very becoming to Harriet; but in me, it would be only an imitation, and a very awkward one."

"You do seem to be one of those whom the winds of Heaven should not visit too roughly," said Mr. Evan. "What, rising already? Harriet is in a great hurry to dissolve the house to-night. Will you sit next me to-morrow?"

Margaret was the last person to give a favourable answer to so bold a request. She gathered together her gloves and her handkerchief in silence, and followed the ladies into the drawing-room.

"Well, what do you think of Evan?" asked Harriet eagerly, as soon as she could reach Margaret.

"I think him very clever, but I could not get rid of the impression that he was laughing at me." [Pg 32]

Harriet fell on an ottoman in a burst of merriment.

"Dear, little innocent; laughing at you, depend on it men never laugh at any thing so pretty. Miss Lydia Pottinger, don't you think my friend here the prettiest woman in Somersetshire."

The young lady thus appealed to, would much rather have been burned than have allowed such a truth. She was not generous enough even to think Margaret pretty, much less to say so; therefore, after a little cough, which Harriet watched with much amusement, she exclaimed with great naivetè:

"Oh! talking of beauty, dear Miss Conway, you can't think the number of pretty women we saw at Boulogne. Hetty and I remarked that really every other woman was good looking."

"Really!" said Harriet directing towards her the proud stare that Margaret had sometimes noticed at Chirke Weston, when any one in company displeased her. "I say, Margaret, the creature supposes I do not see her poor evasion; I know it would have choked her to admit your beauty, but I wished her choked!" and Harriet stood with her foot on the fender, and her hand on the mantel-piece, looking whole volumes of scorn that Miss Lydia had not been willing to undergo strangulation at her desire. [Pg 33]

"Look, ma mie," she continued, "do you like these candlesticks of gold filagree? These people are going to stay all to-morrow and part of the next day. Fancy! that is the way we visit in this part of the country. Did you see how I manœuvred Miss Markham into the chair next Mr. Humphries? Pretended that I should be wanted to carve the fowls, a thing I never did, and never shall do, and gave her my place; so, never say that I neglect the interests of my aunt's guests."

"Did you like Mr. Gordon?" [Pg 34]

"After all the trouble I took to get him; no. He was very conceited; so I merely told him to hold his tongue, and amused myself by watching you and Evan."

"Do you not think," said Margaret timidly, "had you not better talk a little to some of the young ladies?"

"I—why no—I think not," said Harriet, throwing her haughty glance around, "I am not a very popular character among them. Do you try the Markhams, and if you find them bearable, I'll see about it."

So Margaret did as she was desired, and the usual nothings were exchanged between her and the young ladies.

Harriet remained standing in the same attitude looking at their proceedings in the glass, and of course got the credit of spending the time in contemplating her own face. Nothing could be more independent than her proceeding. She prepared herself a cup of coffee, placed it on the chimney-piece, and drank it at intervals; still keeping her eyes fixed on the glass. Then she came sauntering up to Miss Markham who was talking to Margaret. [Pg 35]

"Well, Miss Markham," she said, "how did you like Mr. Humphries?"

"Oh! very much," said Miss Markham, drawing her gold chain through her fingers, "he improves upon acquaintance."

"He had need," returned Harriet shortly, and she turned away and loitered about the room until the gentlemen appeared.

"Here comes the English Moriani!" she exclaimed, as Mr. Humphries made his appearance in the door-way. "Come, Mr. Humphries, lose no time, begin singing directly."

He scraped with one foot, gave a very wide smile, and said he should be happy, if she had anything he knew, and if she would take the trouble to accompany him.

Harriet pointed to a heap of music; told him to select three or four songs, and sent Miss Markham to play for him: while she threw herself on a sofa near, and summoned Margaret to sit by her.

"Come here, ma mie," she said, "you have been very good and civil, and Aunt Singleton has been smiling her approbation of you for the last half hour. Now rest yourself. Is it not strange what a fine voice that seal has? Look at him turning the leaves with his short fins. He will be the death of me! But you should see him hunt; he has a capital stud, and rides well though you would not believe it. Will you have him?" [Pg 36]

"No thank you," said Margaret laughing.

"Then I will not interfere with Miss Markham. What is that commotion, I wonder, among the dogs in the hall? It cannot be an arrival at this time of night. I must go and sing that duet from the Andronico with Mr. Humphries. You will admire it extremely."

Mr. Humphries and Harriet sang admirably, Margaret was delighted, and drew near the piano to listen. Most of the gentlemen came round to applaud and admire, while the young ladies contented themselves with remarking that they had been taught in a different style, and had been always recommended to avoid such theatrical music as the unhappy duet now under discussion. [Pg 37]

Meantime, while the fine voices of the singers were gliding through the charming little movement, *O voce soave*, all unconscious of the imputations thrown upon their efforts, Margaret was very much surprised to see the door thrown open, and Mr. Gage walk leisurely up to Mrs. Singleton. She concluded that he was staying in the house, and that having dined out, he was only just returned. Nothing could be farther from the fact.

Having paid his compliments to the lady of the house, he advanced to Mr. Singleton, who greeted him with a start and a shout, and many other boisterous indications of surprise and pleasure; and seizing him by the arm, hurried him among the group round the piano; where regardless of Harriet's occupation, he tapped her on the shoulder, and bade her welcome an old friend of hers. Now Mr. Singleton had always taken Mr. Gage's part, although he stood too much in awe of Harriet to contend the point with her; but she well knew his opinion, and had no idea of making her welcome a very warm one. [Pg 38]

Without the slightest sign of embarrassment or surprise, without even interrupting her part in the duet, which was now drawn to a close, she allowed him to touch her hand, stooped her head a little, and then directed her glance steadily over Miss Markham's shoulder to the pages of the music book from which she was reading. Mr. Gage was not given to betray his feelings any more than herself—perhaps he had anticipated no kinder reception—he drew himself up, stared haughtily at the company, arranged his moustaches, looked at his watch, told Mr. Singleton he had not expected to arrive so soon; and then perceiving Margaret, advanced to her, believed—was *sure* he had the pleasure of addressing Miss Capel; pressed her hand with remarkable [Pg 39] earnestness, told her how rejoiced he was to meet her again so unexpectedly; hoped that her stay at Singleton Manor was likely to be a long one; and, in fact, tried very hard to make an impression. It was plain he had either forgotten, or forgiven her rejection of Hubert, and so far Margaret was pleased; for the rest, she knew what his extreme civility meant. This lasted until the company had done thanking and complimenting the singers; and then Margaret expected that Harriet would have addressed a few words to Mr. Gage, who was standing close beside her; but she perversely turned round and addressed Mr. Humphries.

"Well," she said, "you and I, Mr. Humphries, have done something wonderful, according to all these good people. I think we *did* get on very well."

"Oh! I am glad of that, Miss Conway. Was I quite right in that last part?"

"Quite; it never went better." [Pg 40]

"Oh! I was afraid of that E. It is such an awkward interval."

"Very. A seventh always is; and it is more difficult to hit in concerted music than in a solo."

"Yes. Shall you hunt to-morrow?"

"I have not made up my mind; and you know even if I had, I might change it: women are not always to be depended upon."

"Oh! I don't know. I like—I have not a bad opinion of women, do you know, Miss Conway."

"I am sure all the women are much obliged to you for your good opinion, Mr. Humphries," said Harriet, fixing her brilliant eyes upon him, without the slightest appearance of irony in their expression; "it is a proof of your good sense not to follow in the common track of unmeaning abuse against our sex."

"Yes; that is what I think—there is no sense in it: and people who have mothers—and that—"

Mr. Humphries evidently thought his sentence complete; and Harriet, leaning over Margaret, [Pg 41] whispered, "Mothers, *and that*:—to think that old Chaucer's delicate idea should have found its way into such a head, no wonder it comes out again rather garbled!"

Still Mr. Gage stood fronting Harriet, with his eyes fixed full upon her; and still she perversely avoided meeting his glance.

"We owe you a thousand thanks, Miss Markham," she said, turning graciously to that young lady, "for your accompaniment:—the second movement is no sinecure to play."

"I was very happy, I am sure, to be of any use," said Miss Markham, amiably.

"Perhaps you will be able to induce Mr. Humphries to give us 'Di pescator ignobile.' I forget who was your singing master, Mr. Humphries?"

"Oh! I learned when I was at Oxford of one of the choristers. I had three lessons a week all the time I was there; and glee meetings besides of an evening." [Pg 42]

"All you ever did learn there, I'll engage!" whispered Harriet, as Mr. Humphries went to the piano.

Margaret looked anxiously at Harriet, and at Mr. Gage; she seemed so determined not to notice him, and he looked equally resolved to make her speak.

"So it was you making all that noise," said Harriet, turning carelessly round; "I thought the dogs had gone mad!"

"Donald recognised me, I believe," said Mr. Gage; "the noise was of his making, not mine."

"Oh, do you hear him!" cried Harriet; "is not that good. I must tell Uncle Singleton that when I can catch him. Did any body give you any dinner, Mr. Gage, when you arrived?"

"Thank you—no. I underwent that ceremony on the road."

"I envy you. I like dining at an inn; don't you, Margaret?"

"I have not yet had an opportunity of congratulating you on the marriage of your sister with *Lord* [Pg 43] *Raymond*," said Mr. Gage, with emphasis.

"Thank you very much," returned Harriet; "only the affair is almost a fortnight old, and one has nearly forgotten all about it. How long do you think, Mr. Gordon, one may offer congratulations after a wedding?"

"I really have hardly considered the subject," said Mr. Gordon: "I should say, perhaps, during the honeymoon a very good distinction; so you see, Mr. Gage, you have still a fortnight left."

"I was surprised, I own," said Mr. Gage; "I had not imagined Lord Raymond's selection would have fallen where it did."

"Lord Raymond was a wise man, Mr. Gage," said Harriet, laughing; "and knew when he was well off."

Mr. Gage looked earnestly at her for a few moments, and then moved away.

"Hark you, ma mie," said Harriet, leaning towards Margaret, "you would hardly believe how I long for a good laugh at this moment. I know George so well!—Now, he has actually taken the [Pg 44] trouble to get leave of absence as soon as ever he heard of this marriage, and to come over here to see how I bear the shock of Lord Raymond's marriage. He believes me a disappointed wretch; and that the very good spirits I am in to-night are merely forced, to conceal the anguish of a breaking heart;" and Harriet, unable any longer to restrain her laughter, fell back in her chair, and gave way to one burst of merriment after another.

"Did you see, Margaret, how he fixed his eyes upon me to detect, if he could, the constraint I was putting on my feelings; how he watched for some trace of suffering in my voice; something to betray the anguish within; and the stress he laid on *Lord Raymond*, as if he would have asked how I liked parting with my especial property. I would not have missed this scene for any thing in life!"

"Oh, Harriet! do not laugh so. He is looking at you!" [Pg 45]

"No great wonder in that, my dear, since he has come all the way from Ireland for that especial purpose."

"Mr. Gage! I wish to show you the bracelet Lord Raymond gave me on the morning of his marriage. Look! this is Lucy's hair. I told him not to put any of his straw-coloured stuff along with it, to spoil the effect. I rather like those dolphins fretted with rubies; they have an eastern look. He would clasp it on, over my swansdown cuff, and I did not like to take it off, though I had the pleasure of telling him he had done me an incredible deal of mischief."

Mr. Gage stood looking attentively at the bracelet, which she had unclasped, and given into his hand.

"Do you not think it very handsome?" she said.

"Very. It would almost have reconciled you to the match had you been averse to it," said Mr. Gage.

"It did not reconcile me to his crushing my beautiful swansdown," said Harriet. "Here, give it me; [Pg 46] you cannot put it on. Margaret shall clasp it."

"It must have been a trying day to you on the whole," said Mr. Gage, employing himself as he spoke in fastening the bracelet on Harriet's arm, regardless of her hint.

"Why, between you and I, it was," said Harriet, holding up her embroidered handkerchief by two corners, and contemplating the pattern of the point lace, as she leaned back in the chair. "First, I had to get up early—a thing I detest in cold weather; then—let me see, what was my next trouble? Oh! my shoes were too long; and I was obliged to steal a pair of Lucy's:—and then, Margaret, when Lucy was nearly dressed, and I expected her to sit down by the fire, and have some breakfast in peace and quietness she suddenly leaned up against mamma's bureau, and burst out crying. I was never so taken aback in my life; for she is not given to demonstrations; and what to say to her, I knew not. I could not tell her she was not going to be married; and that [Pg 47] seemed to be the cause of her grief. However, we managed with salts and essences, and scolding and coaxing, to bring her round; and then we got on very well till after breakfast, when we came to the parting. Now, you know, Margaret, in the same county, it can hardly be called a parting. But then Lucy began again; and Lord Raymond did so fuss, and so stammer, by way of consoling her. And when they were off, and the company melted away—what do you think I did? I got into plain clothes again as fast as possible; and sat down to stuff your box of cake full of bon-bons, I took you for the little girl you were when I left you. Mr. Gage, a compliment, Sir, quick now!"

"I would not offend Miss Capel by supposing that I could compliment her," said Mr. Gage.

"Aha! Margaret, the fun we will have at Wardenscourt! The riding and driving; the parties and [Pg 48] dances; the plays—the tableaux!"

And Harriet went on eagerly planning a visit with Margaret to her sister, as soon as Lord and Lady Raymond were settled at Wardenscourt. Mr. Gage seemed for a wonder to be completely puzzled. He remained gazing at Harriet in the greatest uncertainty, endeavouring to reconcile to himself the sparkling and mischievous enjoyment that her looks expressed, with the misery she must be feeling upon the destruction of all her ambitious hopes. Harriet, regardless of those remorseless eyes, went on conversing gaily with Mr. Humphries and two or three other gentlemen; while Mr. Gage sometimes concluded that she was the best actress in the world; sometimes, that as her heart was not engaged in the matter, she was able to bear without much pain the loss of a good match; sometimes, that whatever her feelings might have been, she intended to console herself with the hand of Mr. Humphries. [Pg 49]

This idea filled him with indignation; for Mr. Humphries, without the merit of a title, was more unprepossessing in appearance than Lord Raymond himself; and Mr. Gage, like many men in the army, thought, that next to good birth and the glory of serving Her Majesty, stood the inestimable and incalculable advantage of possessing a fine person.

"Harriet is looking well, don't you think?" said Mr. Singleton, coming up to Mr. Gage.

The fact was too incontestible to admit of a dispute, for Harriet was looking handsomer than ever she had done in her life; and Mr. Gage said so. Harriet was at a little distance, about to leave the room for the night. Margaret rose to follow her.

"Ah!" said Mr. Singleton, on hearing Mr. Gage's flattering opinion of his niece, "Well, never mind; it will all come right one day yet." [Pg 50]

Margaret overheard the exclamation, given in the hearty tone of the old sportsman; and Harriet's former remark seemed to ring in her ears:

"These things never do come right again, Margaret." [Pg 51]

CHAPTER III.

Wordes sharply wound, but greatest grief of scorning growes.
SPENSER.

Tal d'un alma l'effanno sepolto
Si travede in un riso fallace,
Ché la pace mal finge nel volto
Chi si sente la guerra nel cor.
METASTASIO.

Mr. Singleton breakfasted at nine o'clock; and it was the custom of the house for everybody to appear at that meal. At half past eight, the worthy squire read prayers in the chapel; and at this ceremony all the servants, and such visitors as pleased, attended.

This had been a custom in the house from the days of Edward the Sixth; and Mr. Singleton would on no account have omitted it; though his performance of this duty was something odd. Any one might have thought from his tones, that he was calling over the names of his hounds. Margaret made a point of attending; and found Mrs. Singleton, Harriet, and Mr. Humphries assembled. [Pg 52]

As soon as prayers were over, Harriet hurried off to make breakfast; and commanded Margaret to sit beside her; and by degrees the rest of the visitors assembled round the table. Some little time after they were all collected, George Gage came into the room; made some very earnest inquiries after Mrs. Singleton's health; which that lady imperfectly heard, and replied to very mildly; and then begged to know whether Miss Capel had recovered the fatigue of her journey. Having received a satisfactory answer to this question, he remained standing on the hearth-rug, looking at all the people, as if they were eating and drinking for his sole amusement.

"Do you ever eat breakfast, Mr. Gage?" asked Harriet, after he had remained some time in the same position. [Pg 53]

"Thank you—yes. I breakfasted an hour ago."

"How was that?" asked Mr. Singleton. "What made you so early afield?"

"I was anxious about one of my horses," said Mr. Gage. "I was afraid he had sprained his shoulder; and as I wished to see him early this morning—I breakfasted at the same time."

"Oh, but that is important!" said Mr. Humphries, rising hastily, and pulling the table-cloth crooked as he rose, "shall I go and have a look at him?"

"Sit still, Mr. Humphries;" said Harriet. "Horses, we know, are much more amiable and important than their masters. Still, as the masters must be fed some time or other, they had better take their meals at the proper hour. The horse will wait till you have finished your breakfast."

Mr. Singleton and Mr. Humphries laughed heartily at this address; and Mr. Gage informed Mr. Humphries, that he need not trouble him to look at the horse, for that he seemed to be perfectly well this morning. [Pg 54]

Mr. Humphries nodded to express his acquiescence in this remark, and continued eating; and Mr. Singleton noticing, for the first time, that Harriet was not dressed in her habit, asked in astonishment why she was not going out hunting with them as usual.

"Yes, you will have a great loss in me," said Harriet laughing. "I intend to disappoint the field. I am not going to run off this first day that I have Miss Capel with me; and I have something to do —I intend to call on the Veseys in the course of the morning."

"Wait till to-morrow, and I'll drive you over;" said Mr. Singleton. "I should like to call on the Veseys myself." [Pg 55]

"Indeed you won't, Uncle Singleton," said Harriet. "You always knock my bonnet with your elbow as you get in and out of the carriage. I vowed the last time I let you drive me, you should not

sacrifice my next best bonnet in that worthless way."

"Ha! ha!" said Mr. Singleton, "what does it signify? You have the best seat and the best horse in the country, and what matters spoiling your bonnet."

"Go! you have no feelings," said Harriet. "I mean to ride to the Veseys to-day, and Margaret and Evan shall accompany me; and so we shall trouble nobody, good uncle. Another cup of tea, Mr. Humphries? Why you make absolutely no breakfast! Is this a preparation for a day's hard hunting? Try that curried lobster."

"Ha! ha! thank you Miss Conway, I think I have done very well," said Mr. Humphries; looking on the wrecks scattered on and around his plate.

Everybody was inclined to be of his opinion; and Margaret wondered how Harriet could say such things with a grave face. [Pg 56]

"I wish," pursued Mr. Humphries, "this was not a hunting morning, because it would be so pleasant to ride with you to the Veseys."

"But which is the attraction, Mr. Humphries? Is it Mrs. Vesey, or I, or my friend, Miss Capel? Do now be confidential and tell me; I will keep your secret, upon my word!"

Mr. Humphries laughed bashfully; he could not very well scrape his foot when seated; but he made a gesture something as if he wished to lift up the table-cloth, and disappear beneath it. George Gage, looking every moment more haughty, stared down upon Harriet and Mr. Humphries in speechless contempt.

At last he coldly recommended Mr. Humphries not to lose a day at that time of year; for that his groom predicted a frost soon, and he had never known the fellow mistaken in the weather. [Pg 57]

"Is that the man you had from Mr. Singleton's," asked Harriet.

"Yes—Thompson," replied Mr. Gage.

"Ah!" returned Harriet, "he was well brought up; it would be his own fault if he did not learn to understand horses here."

"Did Captain Gage keep the lad I recommended him?" asked Mr. Singleton.

"Not long," replied Mr. Gage. "I never saw any thing so wretched as my father's management of his stables. He never bought a horse that he was not palpably cheated; and, if he chanced to buy a good one, the animal would be ruined, with that lame old sailor at the head of affairs."

"Don't say one word against Captain Gage," exclaimed Harriet. "Whatever he does is sure to be better than any body else. I do not mean wiser, Mr. Gage, but better. Perhaps no one else would choose to have a lame sailor with one eye to superintend his stables. It shows he has more kindness than his neighbours." [Pg 58]

"He might have pensioned the old fellow, if he was so fond of him, instead of keeping him to do mischief," said Mr. Gage; pleased, however, with the tribute to his father's goodness of heart. "He once ruined a splendid pointer of mine with his nonsense; and even Hubert, a fellow who has spent his life in a frigate, could not help seeing how things were going on."

Here Mr. Humphries, whose extraordinary face had brightened up as much as it could, during this discussion, attempted to express incoherently, his admiration of Captain Gage's conduct.

"Depend on it, Mr. Humphries," said Harriet, "that sailors are the best people extant. They are all that is left of the romance of warfare. Like the knights of the Middle Ages, there is a simple reality about them that does not belong to the present time." [Pg 59]

"Harriet means to say, they are the only people who are not humbugs," said Evan Conway, translating his sister's remark.

"It is very true, Miss Conway," said Mr. Humphries; who, it need not be said, did not understand one word that she had uttered; "I always liked sailors very much. Don't you think Miss Capel would be generally considered pretty?"

"Undoubtedly, Mr. Humphries. I was sure your good taste would discover that."

"They are bringing round the horses, Miss Conway. I wish we were to have the pleasure of your company."

"It is a great temptation, Mr. Humphries; but another time. How well you look in your red coat—it is the most becoming dress—"

"No—do you think so!" said Mr. Humphries, with a visible desire to vanish under the table. "No—I never noticed. I say, Miss Conway, I hope we shall have another duet this evening." [Pg 60]

"So do I. You cannot suppose I often meet with such a second; and I am very fond of music."

"Come, Humphries," said Mr. Gage, stalking past them as he spoke; "there is your horse playing the deuce out yonder, standing so long."

This was a summons he could not neglect; and after scrambling for his pocket handkerchief,

which had dropped under his chair, Mr. Humphries quitted the room.

"Oh, Harriet!" exclaimed Margaret, with a serious look, when the other ladies had disappeared in company with Mrs. Singleton.

"Oh, little Puritan! what is the matter now?" returned Harriet, catching her round the waist, and whirling her in a rapid waltz round and round the large room.

"How you do flirt," said Margaret, pausing, with her hand to her side.

"You should be the last person to accuse me," said Harriet, laughing. "I asked you, if you would have the man. You declined the honour, and therefore it is no business of yours." [Pg 61]

"It is a business of some other persons, then," said Margaret, archly.

"What other person?"

"Mr. Gage."

"You don't say so!" returned Harriet, crossing the room, and leaning through the deep oaken door-way, "Evan!"

"At your service," returned her brother, coming in with the morning paper in his hand.

"We mean to ride at two; and you may accompany us."

"Thank you very much."

"Will this be your first essay in horsemanship?" asked Margaret, smiling.

"Ha! Miss Capel, you remember what I said to you. A great point that—I feel highly flattered by it."

Margaret smiled quietly, and moved away. She had too much self-possession to be either flattered or pleased by his ironical civility. [Pg 62]

When they went up-stairs to prepare for their ride, Harriet, whose ways were singularly independent, came into Margaret's room, half attired, and stood before the large glass arranging her habit.

"Look here, Margaret," said she, "you should wear a waistcoat."

"Masculine?"

"Not at all; copy me, my dear, I dress very well on horseback."

"So you do at all times, I think," said Margaret.

"Much obliged. I say, what do you think of Evan?"

"I should be so very likely to tell you truly," said Margaret.

"Then I will tell you what to think of him," said Harriet, "he has an excellent head, my dear, but no heart; he thinks he will be a very great man. I differ from him; no very great man ever was heartless. He will be only a little above the middle size. I like him very much." [Pg 63]

"How odd you are, Harriet."

"Do you think so, ma mie? What a pretty Victorine you have—sable I see."

"Now, Mr. Humphries—ha! ha! one cannot help laughing when one thinks of him—has a capital heart, but no head. Which do you like best, Margaret?"

"The heart," replied Margaret.

"But then, my dear, like most Englishmen, his nerves are actually made of pack thread; he has not a grain of sensibility. He is ugly. I tell Evan sometimes that he is ugly to a misfortune; but this man is ugly to a fault. But he is an excellent son to a very tiresome old mother; honest, good-natured, rich, obstinate. I do not know if he has any other qualities, or I would tell you. I think it my duty to walk you over the course, you perceive."

"You make an excellent chaperon, Harriet."

"But Margaret," said Harriet with a hurried change of manner, "I never knew any-thing so good as George coming here just now. It gives me pleasure to see that I can torment his pride, not his feelings; but his absurd haughty conceit, that I was to remain his slave under all treatment. I do not care for him the least atom, and I despise his coming to pry into my concerns, to investigate and to triumph in my distress, as he thinks, on Lucy's marriage. I can turn the tables on him, and I will!" [Pg 64]

"Indeed, Harriet," said Margaret, "it is hardly generous in you to take that view of Mr. Gage's conduct. I think he would not have taken so much trouble, if he had not been very much interested about you. I think ever since I have known you both, he has appeared to feel any-thing but indifference to you; and if you cannot return his feelings, is it fair to treat them with contempt?"

Margaret spoke earnestly, yet half afraid of giving offence; but to her surprise, as soon as she had finished, her eccentric friend caught her in her arms, and kissed her heartily; then gathering up the long folds of her habit she hastened down stairs. [Pg 65]

Mr. Evan Conway was leaning against the neck of his sister's horse, without his hat, or any sign of being prepared to accompany the ladies; a groom was mounted, and in waiting. He helped them both to mount, arranged their dresses with great care and then left them.

"So we are not to have the honour of your company," Harriet called after him.

He replied by a shake of the head, and went into the house.

They paid their visit. Mrs. Vesey was a young married woman, with four or five small children, who very much occupied her time and thoughts. The conversation was chiefly made up of things which Johnny and Matilda had said; of the quarrel which Harry had with the nurse, and the beautiful cake which uncle Richard had sent to Mary on her birthday. Then the children were produced, in velvet frocks, and long trained ringlets of white hair, and these having been kissed and praised enough, the two friends took their leave. [Pg 66]

"Ah, that is over!" said Harriet, when they rode off, "I like children well enough, Margaret, to make hay with, or play at blindman's buff; but I always long to pinch those little dressed up dolls. If Lucy should have any olive branches, I shall make them as rude and as natural as possible."

"How soft the wind is," said Margaret, "it is often colder than this in summer."

It was certainly a mild day for November. Although the twilight was coming on, there was nothing chilly in the air. The wind drove slowly before it large floating masses of grey clouds; the leafless trees rocked majestically to and fro in the dim light; and the scent of the air, and of the fallen leaves was soft and refreshing.

Before they had gone very far they were overtaken by Mr. Gage and Mr. Humphries, who were returning from hunting.

"Well—oh! now—come!" exclaimed Mr. Humphries, who was sometimes troubled with incoherence, "how glad I am that we came home this way." [Pg 67]

"It is, indeed, a very fortunate circumstance," said Mr. Gage, addressing himself pointedly to Margaret, "I hope you will really value our escort now that it is growing so dark."

"Yes, it is a lonely road about here," said Mr. Humphries, closing up to Harriet.

"I never am afraid of any-thing," said Harriet, "but I am glad of your company, because I wish to know what sort of a run you had."

Mr. Humphries was very much enlivened by this demand upon his descriptive powers. By the aid of a very few words, and a great many extraordinary gestures, he conveyed to Harriet the information she desired.

Mr. Gage, looking the very impersonation of injured pride, suffered them to take the lead, and then riding up close to Margaret, and laying his hand affectionately on the mane of her horse, he exerted all his powers to make himself agreeable. [Pg 68]

He was intent on persuading Margaret to ride some day to the place where the hunters met. It was a very gay scene on a fine morning, and would make a pleasant change for her. Although nobody could disapprove more strongly than he did, a lady following the hounds, yet just to ride to cover, and go quietly home again, he thought quite feminine, and perfectly allowable.

Margaret, who readily perceived that Mr. Gage was extremely angry with Harriet, and that this was the cause of his invectives against ladies hunting, could not help smiling, but she willingly consented to his plan, provided he could secure her a horse so conveniently stupid, as not to become excited by the scene. And then, the spirit of romance being not yet extinguished within her, she began turning over in her own mind how she could manage that Mr. Gage should ride next to Harriet. Chance effected the transfer for her; in turning down a lane, Mr. Humphries reined back his horse, and Mr. Gage pushing forward at the same time, the manœuvre was accomplished. But it seemed to very little purpose. Harriet kept her head perversely turned to the hedge-row, as if bent on counting the feathered clusters of traveller's ivy, which adorned the wayside, or else leaning back in her saddle, she addressed some laughing remark to those behind. While Margaret rose very high in the opinion of Mr. Humphries, from the simple and kind answers she gave to all his questions, and from the grace with which she guided her delicate looking steed. He began to think that she might be deserving of a share in the rich estates which his prudent mamma was always cautioning him against offering to any lady who gave evidence of particularly wishing for them. It was very easy to see that this worthy young man was not gifted with any great degree of sensibility, but yet Margaret was a little surprised when, after a few remarks interchanged about their favourite colours for dogs, horses, &c.; her companion, looking rather uncomfortable, which was his nearest approach to a sentimental state of mind, suddenly asked her if some fellow who wrote had not said that music was the food of love, and if she thought it was. [Pg 69] [Pg 70]

Margaret, with her gentle voice, turned to him and said that Shakspeare was very great authority; and that such love as he depicted in his lighter plays she dared say could be fed very well upon music. That she thought, after all, he put it as a question, not as a remark, but that she

would ask Harriet, who was a great reader of Shakspeare.

"No, don't," said Mr. Humphries uneasily, "Miss Conway would only laugh."

But Harriet, having caught the word love, insisted on the question being referred to her, and as soon as she could speak for laughing, "Look you, Mr. Humphries," she said, "music is the food of [Pg 71] love, and love is the food of fools; but if you have any curiosity to hear the line in question it is this,—

'If music be the food of love, play on.'"

Mr. Humphries thanked Harriet, made several gestures expressive of great confusion, and then resumed his dialogue with Margaret.

"Do you think, Miss Capel," he continued, "that anybody can love twice?"

"No, Mr. Humphries," returned Margaret quietly.

"No, Miss Capel?" said Mr. Humphries uneasily.

"I think not," replied Margaret smiling at the question.

"But then, Miss Capel, if one is prevented from marrying one's first love, what can one do?"

"Those who think love necessary must remain, single you know, Mr. Humphries; but most people will marry some one else." [Pg 72]

And so completely did she feel that love with her was past for ever, that she discussed the topic with as much calmness as if she had been fifty years old.

"But one would not like to keep single for ever, you know, Miss Capel," said Mr. Humphries.

Margaret highly amused at the idea of being selected as a confidante on such short notice, merely laughed at this declaration; which Mr. Humphries enforced by one of his widest smiles thereby disclosing, the only beauty he possessed; namely, a singularly fine set of teeth.

It was almost dark when they arrived before the Manor House, but Harriet insisted that there was light enough to see some remarkably curious birds, which were kept in a part of the ornamental grounds.

Mr. Gage and Margaret could not but follow, although he represented to her the imprudence of hanging over a pond at sunset after being heated with riding.

The pond turned out to be a very pretty lake with little rocky dwellings for the water-fowl. [Pg 73]

Harriet stood almost in the water feeding them with bread, which she had provided herself with at the house; she offered some to Margaret, but Mr. Gage urged so strongly the danger of remaining in the damp, that Margaret, a little frightened, complied.

Harriet laughing at her caution remained with Mr. Humphries making ducks and drakes, to the great surprise of the water-fowl.

Mr. Gage, as usual, to relieve his feelings, paid the most careful attention to Margaret; selected the dryest paths for her; insisted on disencumbering her of her riding whip, which might weigh a quarter of an ounce; admired its agate handle, pitied the troublesome draperies in which she was enveloped, and pointed out, as they went along, the most beautiful parts of the land-scape; all the while with his moustache so close to the rim of her hat, that any one looking from the windows, [Pg 74] might have imagined, with some show of reason, that he intended to salute her.

Mr. Singleton seemed surprised to see Margaret enter the drawing-room without her friend; but on hearing where she had left her, he laughed heartily, and said it was all right; for that Humphries was the best fellow in the world, and if a young lady were to run off with him, she would never be sorry for it afterwards.

Just as dinner was announced, Harriet hurried into the room followed by Mr. Humphries, still attired in her riding habit; threw her hat on an ottoman, put her hand on her uncle's mouth to stop the remonstrance he was beginning to make, and desired him to find her a beau.

Mr. Singleton turned to look for George Gage, but he, in the same moment, offered his arm to Margaret and led her off. Harriet saw the manœuvre by which he avoided being her neighbour at dinner; she willingly accepted the arm of Mr. Humphries, transferred herself to the opposite side [Pg 75] of the table, just under Mr. Gage's eye, and then began a very systematic flirtation with her partner. She talked to him of dogs and horses until he became really animated, and so engrossed that he could hardly be made to understand that Mr. Singleton wished to take wine with him. She complimented him on his choice in those articles until she so overpowered him with pleasant confusion that he repeatedly threatened to disappear under the table-cloth, and she suffered him to talk upon choir singing, opera singing, glee singing, and all other singing, with an eager interest that was sufficiently visible to the whole table.

Margaret glanced uneasily at Mr. Gage, who had placed himself beside her. Once or twice, when Harriet was most animated, he glanced at her and her companion with an air of some surprise and curiosity, but with a more complete appearance of indifference than might have been expected. It was plain that he was not quite so much the slave of her flexible moods as Harriet [Pg 76]

would fain have made him.

And Margaret thought with a sigh, that these two persons, so strongly and constantly attached, would go through life without ever coming to an understanding, because each was too proud to let the other see how unchanged their first feelings had remained.

To the company around the table, Mr. Gage appeared to be entirely engrossed by his beautiful neighbour, in whose ear he was whispering a variety of pleasing nothings; while the match between Harriet and Mr. Humphries, long pending and often doubted, was now declared to be finally arranged. They had made and accepted the proposal at the pond, and she was civil to him, at last, in her manners. It was high time that she should be civil to some one—perhaps marriage would improve her—and really she had been out some years, and was glad, no doubt, to take any one who came for ward. So said Mrs. Pottinger and Mrs. Markham; and Harriet's spoilt and [Pg 77] wayward temper left no milder impression upon the greater number of her country neighbours.

But Mr. Singleton, when the dessert was set on the table, observed, with some alarm, the flushed cheek and sparkling eye of his niece.

"Hallo, Harriet!" he exclaimed.

"Well, Sir," she replied.

"What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing at all, good uncle; let me recommend you to attend to your claret, instead of staring me out of countenance."

"Don't go and catch cold again—that's all," said Mr. Singleton.

"Never fear, Sir," returned Harriet, shortly.

"Are you subject to colds?" asked Mr. Humphries.

"Not at all. I have one now and then, like other people." [Pg 78]

"You have them very badly when they do come," said Mr. Singleton.

"I don't know a greater bore," said Mr. Humphries, "but if you will do what I tell you, Miss Conway—now don't laugh, I will undertake to cure you."

"Thank you, I will be sure to apply to you, when I have any occasion for your skill," said Harriet, glancing at her aunt, who being too deaf to follow the progress of conversation, trusted to the bright eyes of her niece for intelligence of the moment at which it was desirable to make the move. Mrs. Singleton rose, and the ladies flocked into the drawing-room.

Harriet, not caring to remain the whole evening in her habit, went up-stairs to change her costume, while Margaret placed herself beside Mrs. Singleton, and helped her in some of the work she had in hand. She possessed the art of making herself heard by means of a very low and clear intonation; and Mrs. Singleton enjoyed with her a pleasure she had almost surrendered in [Pg 79] general; the pleasure of maintaining an unbroken conversation.

"I'll warrant, now," said Harriet, when she returned, "I'll warrant, my good aunt is becoming fonder of that little staid piece of propriety than of me. How say you, Aunt Singleton?"

"Why, niece Harriet," said the old lady, looking up quaintly from her canvass, "if you do not take great care, and behave very well, there is no saying what may happen."

"I defy you, aunt!" said Harriet, suddenly kissing her. "Come here, ma mie," she added, drawing Margaret aside; "were you flirting with George at dinner."

"No, indeed, Harriet," returned Margaret, smiling; "ever since I have known you, he has found it very convenient to be civil when you are present; but I should be silly, indeed, if I could not read through that."

"Ha, ha!" said Harriet. "You are a surprising little creature; for he is not a person to despise. I [Pg 80] mean in point of manner and appearance."

"I wish you made that opinion of yours a little more evident," said Margaret, archly.

"Why, you bold little creature," returned Harriet; "advising me to tell a gentleman I admire him. What do you say to that, Aunt Singleton."

"Oh, fie! Niece Harriet," said Mrs. Singleton, shaking her head.

"No, but you don't understand, Aunt Singleton: this is Margaret's plan, not mine."

"Oh fie! Niece Harriet," repeated Mrs. Singleton.

"It is not my plan, is it, Margaret?" said Harriet, laughing. "By the way, do I talk hoarsely?"

"I think you do, a little."

"Then my good uncle is right, and I am going to have a cold: my throat is very uncomfortable. I will tell you what you must do to-night—take my place at the piano with Mr. Humphries. You can [Pg 81] sing ten times better than I can."

"But I do so dislike singing in company. People are always bored by good music."

"People, my love, are bored if you sing; but they are enraged if you don't. Choose the least evil."

"Mr. Humphries, Miss Capel will take the first of that fine duet in Norma, 'Qual cor tradisti:' you will then hear the purest mezzo soprano in England."

Mr. Humphries gave a wide smile, and offered his hand to lead Margaret to the piano. Harriet drew a low, easy chair, close to the instrument, wrapped a scarf round her throat, and gave her attention to the singing.

"How greatly you have delighted us all," said Mr. Gage to Margaret, when she left the piano; "you have never before allowed us to know that you were a very beautiful singer." [Pg 82]

"Won't you sing something now, Miss Conway?" asked Mr. Humphries.

"I cannot—I have a sore throat coming. You must sing for me," said Harriet.

"Dear me, I am very sorry," said Mr. Humphries, "then I am afraid you won't be able to hunt on Thursday."

"Not a chance of it," replied Harriet. "Evan, are those new books ever coming down from London?"

"I am sorry I cannot inform you; but I am not a prophet even in the small Highland way of second sight. Only that as all the ladies are wishing to get the new novels first, one may presume that some among them are doomed to be disappointed."

"I shall send you up to town for Coningsby," said Harriet.

"There is nothing at all unreasonable in that," replied her brother calmly. "But, perhaps, it would be cheaper for me, and quite as rapid for you, if you were to order it of the T—— bookseller." [Pg 83]

"I have a great many books at home, Miss Conway, if you want any-thing to read," said Mr. Humphries.

"I am much obliged; you are all kindness," returned Harriet very gravely, "I dare say *you* read a great deal."

"No, not so much as you would think," said Mr. Humphries, all unconscious of irony; "what with hunting, and shooting, and angling—I am very fond of angling—the whole year passes away. But my mother is always reading."

"Said mother," said Harriet, pulling Margaret close to her, and wheeling her chair a little out of the circle, "said mother has a dower-house to which to retire whenever the seal marries; so don't let the vision of a cross old woman always reading 'Nelson's Fasts and Festivals' deter you; if you have a mind."

"Oh, Harriet! you should not make me laugh before all the people."

"No, you stand it vastly well; you look very demure I assure you. His name is *William*." [Pg 84]

These last words pronounced in a very pathetic tone of voice, rather tended to discompose the tranquillity upon which she had complimented her friend; but Margaret took the chair at a sufficient distance to protect her from Harriet's provoking asides. George Gage and Mr. Humphries came and talked to her; the other young ladies occupied the piano in turn, and so the evening passed. [Pg 85]

CHAPTER IV.

Young ladies, sir, are long and curious
In putting on their trims; forget how day goes
And then 'tis their good morrow when they are ready.

I warrant ye a hundred dressings now
She has surveyed—this and that fashion looked on,
For ruffs and gowns.
WOMEN PLEASED.

Margaret was hardly awake the next morning, before she received a message from Harriet requesting to see her as soon as she was dressed, and having hastened this ceremony, she found her friend sitting up in bed very flushed, very hoarse, but evidently much pleased with something.

"Do not kiss me, ma mie," said she, holding Margaret at arm's length, "you shall not catch this cold; but look here—your ticket for the T—— ball. I was so afraid they might be all gone, as the ball takes place the day after to-morrow; but one of my few friends sent me this, so now set Mrs. Mason to work as fast as possible. [Pg 86]

Margaret was young enough to feel elated at the thought of a ball; her eyes sparkled as she received the ticket, but recollecting the state of her friend, evidently on the borders of a severe

cold, she strongly urged that they should give up all idea of the ball, it was of no consequence; certainly not worth running any risk.

Harriet was always positive in what she undertook, and she would not hear of a single objection. She meant to keep her room until they set off to the ball. She had not caught a cold but a chill, which was a very different thing; so she thrust a small bunch of keys into Margaret's hand, and told her to run down as the chapel bell was ringing, and to take her post at the breakfast table.

Mr. Humphries was at prayers, and accompanied her from the chapel. He mustered courage to [Pg 87] pay her some awkward compliment upon her regular attendance. But Margaret, who was very reserved upon any subject connected with the feelings, said quietly, that she was very glad to take advantage of so good a custom, and then hastened to pay her respects to Mrs. Singleton and to commence her task of tea-making.

When Mr. Gage came in, he looked surprised to see Margaret in Harriet's place, coldly expressed his regret when he was told the reason; commended Miss Capel's superior prudence of the preceding evening, and then sat down quietly to his breakfast, and appeared to dismiss the subject from his mind.

During the day all the people who had been staying in the house, dropped off, one by one. Mr. Evan Conway took himself to some friend's house at the other end of the county. Mr. Gage and Mr. Humphries went out riding; and Margaret devoted herself to her friend. [Pg 88]

At dinner, Mr. Gage did not condescend to make the commonest enquiries respecting Harriet's progress, which Margaret thought very ill-bred. But Mr. Humphries made up for his want of civility.

Mr. Singleton, who was very fond of this young man, made the approaching ball, an excuse for asking him to stay in the house for a short time; and Mr. Humphries, nothing loth to exchange for a while the crabbed society of his honoured mother for that of two pretty and accomplished women, accepted with readiness.

Margaret passed the evening with Harriet, who appeared much better, and in high spirits. She exhibited to Margaret her ball-dress. A black net, trimmed with clusters of carnations, with all the costly et ceteras of her toilet.

"You are always effective in your dress," said Margaret, looking at the gold net-work which Harriet was to wear on her head.

"That is the secret," said Harriet, "some people love to be in the fashion. Others think it [Pg 89] distinguished to be plain; but give me effect. There is a great deal of sly effect in your white crape and blush roses, little one."

For Mason, with her usual prudence, had anticipated the materials for a ball dress, which she was now preparing with much skill and contentment.

Harriet took up her guitar and sang Margaret a Spanish song, then handing her the instrument, she bade her go on with the concert.

Margaret began a Barcarolle—presently a loud knock at the door.

"Olá! what now?" exclaimed Harriet.

"May we come in?" asked Mr. Singleton, putting his head in at the door.

"What is the meaning of We?" asked Harriet.

"Humphries and your humble servant," replied Mr. Singleton, almost shutting his head off in the door as he spoke.

"Well, I don't know! eh, Margaret?—Yes," returned Harriet, glancing round her boudoir. The [Pg 90] maid had removed the ball dresses, and the room was very fit for a reception.

Mr. Humphries followed Mr. Singleton with a step much as if he were treading on eggs, and was very sorry for it.

Harriet held out her hand. "How glad I am to see you again, Mr. Humphries. I hope you are come to engage me to dance with you on Thursday."

Mr. Humphries smiled amazingly at this reception.

"Yes. I—I'm glad," he said, by way of reply.

"Well, but about the dancing," said Harriet eagerly.

"Oh! Will you dance the second quadrille with me, Miss Conway?"

"With pleasure, on one condition. That you will tell me who you have engaged for the first?"

A wide smile, but no answer.

"Well, Mr. Humphries, you are not going to be so rude as to refuse my request. I know I am to [Pg 91] keep it secret. Come, tell me."

"I can't," returned Mr. Humphries, going through several convulsive movements.

"Is he not ill-natured, uncle Singleton?" asked Harriet, "I am sure I would tell Mr. Humphries, if I knew who was to be my first partner."

"But you will dance with me all the same?" asked Mr. Humphries.

"Well, I will then," said Harriet laughing; "but I am very angry with you."

Margaret had laid down the guitar and was standing in the Tudor window, pulling the dry leaves from the geraniums. Mr. Humphries joined her.

"Gage is down stairs with Mrs. Singleton," he said.

"So I thought," returned Margaret.

"They are playing at chess together."

"Are they, indeed!" [Pg 92]

"Do you like chess, Miss Capel?"

"Not very much, Mr. Humphries."

"No more do I."

"Ha! ha! there's sympathy," cried Harriet, leaning back in her chair to gain a full view of them among the geraniums.

Mr. Singleton laughed heartily, and told Harriet not to spoil sport.

Mr. Humphries coloured, and tried to get more effectually behind the flower stands.

"Miss Conway is always laughing at one," he said.

Margaret could not deny it.

"But what I was going to say," remarked Mr. Humphries, coming close to Margaret and whispering. "Will you dance the first quadrille with me?"

"With pleasure," said Margaret, smiling.

"Thank you—you see I could not tell Miss Conway just now, because I did not know myself, till I had asked you." [Pg 93]

"No, you could not, indeed."

"Well, I'm going now," he exclaimed, suddenly taking her hand. "God bless you!"

"Did you sneeze, Margaret?" asked Harriet, turning quickly round.

Mr. Humphries was walking fast to the door.

Margaret supposed the explanation was meant as a farewell, for he stopped at the door, said "good night!" accompanied by an extraordinary nod of the head, and vanished.

"That is one of the best fellows that ever lived," said Mr. Singleton, nodding at the door through which Mr. Humphries had departed.

"What do you say to that assertion, Margaret?" asked Harriet, looking mischievously at her.

"I will take Mr. Singleton's word for it," replied Margaret, with her usual calmness.

"But he is not the best dancer that ever lived, Uncle Singleton," said Harriet, laughing, "as Margaret will find to her cost. Come, he has set you a very good example. Vanish! and good night to you. And, uncle," she added, calling him back, "had you not better, in the course of the evening, take an opportunity to ask Mr. Humphries his intentions?" [Pg 94]

Mr. Singleton was well used to Harriet's jests; he laughed, shook his head, and left the room. [Pg 95]

CHAPTER V.

But nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on; and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak.
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

"Well, ma mie, and what is it?" asked Harriet, as Margaret came hastily into her room while she was dressing for the ball. "Any-thing gone wrong with the blush roses."

"I am come about some blush roses," said Margaret, holding out a beautiful bouquet. "I do not know how it is, Harriet, but I found these on my toilet when I went up to dress."

"And who do you think gave me these carnations," asked Harriet, pointing to a splendid cluster of [Pg 96]

those flowers placed in a glass vase. "The fairies have matched our trimmings, that is all, Margaret. Blush roses for you—carnations for me."

"No, but is it your doing, Harriet?" asked Margaret earnestly.

"Faith, no;" said Harriet laughing, "who do you suspect; Mr. Humphries has not the wit, though you have so barbarously—"

"Harriet! do not accuse me."

"I do not know who would think me worth a bouquet," said Harriet, going composedly on with her toilet; "perhaps young Vesey, or Sir Hawarth Fane. I should not wonder if it were Sir Hawarth. I hope not, though."

"But it is so very disagreeable," said Margaret, "to be obliged to any one for a bouquet. I had much rather not wear it."

"Nonsense, child, it is quite proper—flowers, you know; if it were jewels it would be quite another thing. I dare say, after all, it comes from George Gage; eh! Charlotte?" [Pg 97]

"La, Miss Conway! how you do startle one."

"Yes, he bribed you to place these two nosegays on our tables."

"Well, Miss Conway, it is no use denying any-thing to you."

"There, Margaret, now your mind is at rest, go back and dress. What splendid hair you have, child."

Mr. Singleton was loud in his commendations of the two young ladies. He was to accompany them. Mr. Gage and Mr. Humphries went together. It appeared to Margaret that Mr. Singleton was asleep in his corner of the carriage, and she could not forbear whispering to Harriet. "Do be civil to Mr. Gage, to-night."

"Why, so I am always, am I not?" said Harriet, "civil as an orange."

"Oh! not to-day at dinner."

"I am sure I said nothing," said Harriet.

"No, it was your manner." [Pg 98]

"Well, he was rude too," returned Harriet, "why did he not ask me to dance?"

"Because," said Margaret, "he took it for granted you would refuse him."

"He had no business to take it for granted," was Harriet's perverse reply; "if he does ask me now, I shall certainly decline."

It was an excellent ball; the room was very prettily got up, and all the families of any consideration, far and near, were present. Mr. Singleton and the two ladies became at once an object of great attention. They were remarkably well dressed, and their style of beauty, so opposite and so distinguished, that every one was employed in passing an opinion upon them. Several people came up to Mr. Singleton, and asked eagerly who was the beautiful girl with the crown of blush roses. Mr. Singleton informed them that she was a Miss Capel—very good family —charming girl —excellent fortune—great friend of Harriet's. Almost all the ladies present [Pg 99] disliked Harriet, and were delighted at the opportunity to set up a rival beauty. Had Margaret been poor, this would have been difficult; the men would have called her a pretty girl, and passed on to dance with somebody else; but as it was, Margaret was pronounced the belle of the ball-room, and besieged with requests for her hand from all quarters. She was engaged for the first quadrille, and was quite puzzled to remember and distinguish the numerous applicants for the succeeding dances. Mr. Gage entreated her to remember that her promise to dance with him was of very long standing, and having renewed it for the next waltz, he turned to Harriet, and begged for the honour of her hand. She was talking with her uncle, and just looked round with the words "Engaged, Mr. Gage." He bowed, and stepped back, and one of her numerous acquaintances coming up at the moment, she walked off with him to the dancers. [Pg 100]

Margaret danced very quietly and well; Harriet's dancing was superb. She was light as air, and the precision of her steps, and the foreign expression and grace of her movements, excited universal attention.

When waltzing began, and she floated round the room on the arm of a young Spaniard who had just been introduced to her, and who had been staying at Sir Evan Conway's, there was quite a crowd collected to watch her and her partner. Directly Harriet became aware of this, she stopped, retired within the circle with her companion, and there stood talking with him in Spanish until the dance was over. This was not from any feeling of bashfulness, but because she did not choose to exhibit for the amusement of the company.

"In England," as she said haughtily to her partner, "if one dances a little better than a bear, one is [Pg 101] actually mobbed in a ball-room!"

As soon as the waltz was over, the young Count led Harriet to her seat, and stood politely by her side, holding her flowers, and talking of the carnations of Andalusia. Harriet selected one of the

finest, pulled it out of her bouquet, and gave it him. The Count very respectfully kissed her hand (a common courtesy in Spain), and placed the flower in his coat.

It may be supposed how excited all the ladies were. They *never had* seen in all their lives, such very indecorous behaviour in a public room. They really thought she ought to be desired to withdraw; and their anger was all the more pointed, as the Conde de F. was very distinguished in his appearance—was interesting from having taken an active part in some of the late Spanish squabbles, and was such a waltzer as no Englishman need ever hope to be.

George Gage, who was standing beside Margaret, after looking arrogantly into every corner of [Pg 102]
the room, said that he had formerly thought the T—— ball very respectable, but that really to-night there was hardly a soul that one knew; and such a very—singular—set of beings, that he wondered how the two or three ladies who were present could find a change of partners. That, perhaps, as they knew nobody, Miss Capel would not object to honour him by taking another turn with him, when the next quadrille was over;—there was this advantage in waltzing, that you were not mixed up during the dance with Heaven knows who; and obliged, perhaps, to give your hand to a hair-dresser in passing. Margaret looked very arch during this speech, but she offered no opposition to Mr. Gage's remarks. She was, still, half afraid of him. She could not help seeing that he interrupted himself half-a-dozen times during his speech to bow to different people who had the honour of his acquaintance; and the thought crossed her mind, that a hair-dresser was not [Pg 103]
very likely to gain admittance to a county ball.

Every moment some one or other was coming up to Harriet to solicit her hand. Some she refused, some she evaded, some she put on her list. She was engaged in a sparkling conversation with the Spanish nobleman, which grew every moment more and more animated.

The Conde had come to the ball solely for the chance of meeting the Senorita, and she seemed determined to make it as agreeable to him as possible.

Mr. Singleton brought Margaret a partner, who had been very eager for an introduction. He was next to Harriet in the Mazourka, which was still rare enough to excite a good deal of attention. Every one not engaged in the figure stood round to watch the dancers. Mr. Gage, with Margaret's bouquet in his hand, leaned against a pillar, following with his eyes the graceful movements of Harriet and the Conde. A party, who had just entered the room, made their way into the front of [Pg 104]
the circle, and as Margaret was standing while Harriet and her partner were in the centre, the Conde on his knee, and Harriet passing round him, she heard a loud assured voice exclaim, "Heavens, Collins! what a handsome man."

She turned her head, and beheld a large middle-aged woman, with red hair, and a very plain face, extravagantly dressed, and leaning on the arm of a very young man, apparently under twenty. She was in a lace dress of great value, with a gold cord and tassels round her waist, and her arms loaded with bracelets, while the front of her dress was decorated with beetles, locusts, scorpions, and other reptiles in jewellery, after a fashion that was then making a great noise in Paris. The young man held a gold pomander-box and a flaçon, with the lady's bouquet and handkerchief: an elderly man stood a little behind with an Indian shawl over his arm.

"They are foreigners," said Mr. Collins, directing his glass towards Harriet and the Conde. [Pg 105]

"Is he not handsome?" asked the lady.

"I think the girl the best looking," returned the young man.

"No—do you? Fan me, Collins, there's a good soul."

Mr. Collins unfurled her fan, fringed with swansdown, and proceeded to fan the "large lady."

"Is there any one here one knows?" said the lady, turning her head a little towards the elderly man.

"No, my dear, I think not," he replied.

"Ah, dear Paris!" said the lady, with a powerful sigh.

"Ah!" returned Mr. Collins.

"Could not we sit down somewhere?" asked the lady.

Way was made for her through the circle, and she sank on a bench. Mr. Collins stood fanning her.

"Do go and look for some ice, Collins, I am perishing with heat," said the lady. [Pg 106]

"I'll try," replied the obedient Mr. Collins.

"That's a pretty modest girl—there—with the blush roses," said the lady, addressing her husband.

"Yes, my love," returned the good gentleman.

"What time did you order the carriage?"

"At two, dearest."

"What ice is this, Collins? Pine? Oh! it's pretty good; as well as one can expect in this remote corner of the earth. There, I feel better now."

Mr. Collins obsequiously held her ice-plate. "Will you dance to-night?" he asked, leaning over her.

"Why—I think I will take a few turns when the waltzing begins," she replied.

The Mazourka finished, Margaret went to claim her bouquet of Mr. Gage; but to her dismay, she found him leaning against the pillar in profound thought, and the floor quite strewn with the delicate leaves of her blush roses. He started on seeing her; seemed rather confused, a most unusual thing for him, and began to attempt some apology for his depredations. [Pg 107]

He could only hope that Miss Capel would not again leave him to the mercy of his own reflections, now that she saw how badly he employed his leisure. He scarcely knew how to palliate his offence, for he was aware of the importance of a lady's bouquet.

Margaret, smiling archly, received the remains of her bouquet with a very good grace, and said that she suspected Mr. Gage had a better right to dispose of the flowers than she had.

He replied by a gracious bow and smile, and begged her with much humility to allow him to conduct her to the refreshment room.

There they found Harriet and the Spanish Count, standing eating ice and wafers. Harriet laughing and talking, the Conde keeping his eyes fixed upon her with that watchful admiration, that is very nearly allied to a more tender feeling. [Pg 108]

Harriet turned quickly round to Margaret, leaned close to her ear, and exclaimed:

"My dear Margaret, such a discovery! Did you notice a large woman, superbly dressed, who came in during the Mazourka?"

"Yes," replied Margaret.

"Mrs. Maxwell Dorset, my dear!" said Harriet enforcing her words with a tap of her fan.

Margaret's face expressed, in a slight degree, her unspeakable surprise at this piece of news.

"A fact, my dear," resumed Harriet. "I am going to ask George to introduce me to her."

Margaret caught her friend by the arm as she was pressing forward.

"Harriet! you cannot be in earnest," she exclaimed, "you must be jesting—such a character. I am sure no friend of yours would present you." [Pg 109]

"What a very innocent little soul!" said Harriet, drawing back, with a touch of scorn in her voice. "The lady's character is as fair as yours or mine. You may impeach her taste, Margaret, but not her virtue, for there stands her guarantee—her husband, good easy man! She merely takes presents of value from her admirers, instead of bouquets, like you and I. 'Men's eyes were made to gaze,' *ma mie*, and a beautiful woman may be admired, I hope, without being sent to Coventry for the offence."

"But after all that has past, Harriet," said Margaret, imploringly, "indeed, it would be very wrong to ask Mr. Gage."

"My dear, let 'bygones be bygones,'" said Harriet with an air of decision. "I wish Mr. Gage you would introduce me to that lady opposite—Mrs. Maxwell Dorset. I have a great inclination to become ac quainted with her." Harriet spoke with unusual suavity of manner. [Pg 110]

Mr. Gage raised his eyebrows and looked at her for a moment with astonishment, and then without losing his self-possession, as she had hoped, he replied that he very much regretted it was entirely out of his power to comply with Miss Conway's request.

Harriet's eyes flashed fire; she turned away and went back to the ball-room, where she directly engaged Margaret to dance with the Conde de F—— who was still in attendance upon her, and then after looking round on every side for some means of annoyance, she said calmly as if to herself, "I shall dance with Sir Hawarth Fane when he comes to ask me."

Mr. Gage, who well knew that this speech was pointed at him, remarked coldly, that he believed he had heard Sir Evan express a very decided opinion upon that subject.

Harriet looking every moment more resolute, repeated, "I shall dance with Sir Hawarth Fane." [Pg 111]

Now the fact was, that Sir Hawarth Fane was one of the worst characters in the county, but he was a single man of large property, and therefore very well received in most families. He had given some decided proofs of admiration for Harriet; but Sir Evan had always required her to receive them as coldly as possible. Even Mr. Singleton had often begged her "for God's sake never to dance with that fellow Hawarth Fane."

Harriet received his homage as her due, had it been ten times more marked; treated him with the easy neglect she generally assumed towards her admirers, and never danced with him, for the single reason that he was forty years old, and had a red face.

Margaret could only hope that he would not make his appearance, but soon a stout figure was seen to emerge from the door-way, and with his glass in his eye, to look eagerly about for some one. Mr. Gage looked as resolute as Harriet, and both turned their eyes in the direction of the advancing Baronet. Margaret was breathless. Harriet drew her handkerchief through the [Pg 112]

jewelled ring hanging to her bouquetiére, and settled herself as if she meant to prepare for the next dance. It was quite clear, both to Mr. Gage and Margaret, that she had made up her mind. Mr. Gage looked like Creon, and Harriet like Antigone—neither spoke. Sir Hawarth who had been blundering about the room with his eye-glass, very much like a person who had sat a good deal too long after dinner, now caught sight of Harriet, and steered his course in her direction. Mr. Gage leaned over Margaret, and whispered to her:

"Miss Capel, the man is a thorough blackguard; he shall not dance with Harriet. If you cannot prevent it—I *will*."

Margaret looked up at him with such a glance of quick intelligence, as he could not have believed her to possess.

"Harriet!" she said, as Sir Hawarth neared them, "if you dance with that man, I will leave Singleton Manor to-morrow morning." [Pg 113]

"You!" said Harriet, turning quickly upon her.

"I will," returned Margaret.

"I dare say," said Harriet laughing scornfully, "but I won't let you. I will lock you up in the store-room among the apricots."

"I am in earnest," said Margaret, "take your choice."

"The pleasure of dancing the next quadrille with you, Miss Conway," said Sir Hawarth Fane, evidently rather intoxicated.

"Engaged, Sir Hawarth," replied Harriet in some confusion, her colour rose, her breath grew short, she was evidently in much agitation.

"Engaged! I am deucedly sorry for that," said Sir Hawarth in a thick voice, "I'll wait till after this quadrille, and perhaps I may prevail on you to galop with me afterwards." [Pg 114]

He certainly looked in a charming condition for a galop. Harriet replied that she was really sorry, but that they were to leave the ball-room after the next dance.

Sir Hawarth muttered something about his being in confounded ill-luck; and that there was not another woman in the room worth dancing with.

"And pray," he whispered, "could not you be off your engagement? Is it any very particular person? Who is it, if I may be so bold?"

The dancers were collecting; Harriet, not knowing how to answer, and aware that he was not quite composed in his mind, glanced uneasily round the room. Mr. Gage coming forward in the most natural manner, said easily:

"Now, Miss Conway, if you will do me the honour—"

Harriet took his arm, and joined the dancers.

"Oh!" said Sir Hawarth, satisfied that her plea of an engagement was genuine. [Pg 115]

Harriet's anger was magnificent. She felt that for once she had lost her self-command, when she excused herself on the plea of being *engaged*; she, who never hesitated to refuse a partner upon the most trivial reason, and frequently upon no reason at all; and whose right to do so was tolerably well established. She to commit herself! To put herself in the power of Mr. Gage—to be obliged to dance with him to cover a blunder of her own. It was insupportable.

Mr. Gage moved through the figure as carelessly as possible. Harriet never danced a step, hardly vouchsafed her fingers' ends, when it was requisite to give her hand, and never directed to him a single glance from those stormy, dark eyes, that seemed to burn beneath her haughty brows. She never uttered a word even to those about her, but employed herself in opening and shutting her emblazoned fan with the jerk peculiar to Spanish women, which movement completely diverted [Pg 116] the eyes of the Conde from his partner to herself. It brought his country more completely home to him than even the pure Castilian in which she had been so ably conversing.

As soon as the quadrille was over, and before the dancers had time to disperse, Harriet turned from her partner without the slightest gesture of acknowledgment, and making a sign to Margaret, walked into the cloak-room, followed by seven or eight gentlemen, more or less in despair at her early departure. She suffered the Conde to put on her shawl, and hand her into the carriage, and parted from him with a smile, and a verse from Calderon. Mr. Humphries and Mr. Gage both attended Margaret, and then got into their own conveyance.

There was a profound silence for a short time. Mr. Singleton felt that something was wrong, and was really so much under the dominion of his niece, that he hardly ventured to make a remark. At last he made bold to say that it was a very good ball. [Pg 117]

"Very," replied Margaret.

Harriet said nothing.

Mr. Singleton then complimented Margaret upon the number of hearts she had won, and said he

expected to be besieged the next day by her different suitors.

Margaret said that Mr. Singleton was very flattering, and thought no more of the effect she was said to have produced.

"Well, Harriet," said Mr. Singleton after he had cleared his throat two or three times, "you were rather in a hurry to come away this evening."

"Yes, Sir," returned Harriet, in a short decided tone.

"How was that, eh?" asked her uncle.

"I was bored," returned Harriet as shortly as before.

This was conclusive, and an ominous silence prevailed. Margaret feared that Harriet was mortally offended with her, and began to think that her threat of leaving Singleton Manor the [Pg 118] next day might come to be put in practice. She felt constrained—distressed. There was not light enough to see Harriet's face, and she hardly knew how to end her suspense. At last she timidly put her hand into that of her wilful friend. Harriet snatched hold of it, and pressed it suddenly to her lips. Margaret was almost affected to tears by this little incident. She hoped that the storm had blown over, but she was satisfied that, at least, Harriet's displeasure did not extend to her.

As soon as the carriage door was opened, Harriet sprang out without waiting for the steps to be let down, and dashed through the hall into the drawing-room. Mr. Singleton saying something about "a storm brewing," handed Margaret out and followed his niece.

She took up her night-candle, nodded to her uncle and beckoned Margaret to follow her. As soon as she reached her dressing-room, she began in silence to take off her ornaments from her dress [Pg 119] and hair. Then she held out her hand at a little distance, and watched it for a few moments with great attention. It trembled.

"Margaret, ma mie," said she, raising her head. "I am going to be ill; will you mind sleeping with me for once?"

Margaret willingly gave her consent. Harriet stooped over her desk, and hastily wrote a few lines on a scrap of paper.

"If I am hors-de-combat to-morrow, Margaret," she said, "give this to Mr. Gage."

A stamp of her slender foot, as she pronounced his name, was the only indication of feeling that she betrayed.

Margaret really did not know if it was a cartel of defiance, but she thought it better to promise compliance.

"Then kiss me, ma mie, and go to sleep," said Harriet, "we will talk over our adventures to- [Pg 120] morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

Mar. Yes, a letter.
She brings no challenge sure.
THE MAID IN THE MILL.

Val. He must not then be angry
That loses her.
Gom. Oh! that were Sir, unworthy.
Mir. A little sorrow he may find.
Val. 'Tis manly.
THE KNIGHT OF MALTA.

The next morning Harriet was in a high fever. Mr. Singleton said she had nobody to thank for it but herself. She had no business at a ball when she was suffering from a severe cold, unless she had chosen to go in a fur cloak. That he wondered how any ladies escaped without catching their death at such places; and that he hoped the servant who was gone for the doctor would not be an [Pg 121] hour on the road. Margaret seriously alarmed about her friend, had been making the breakfast in silence, until Mr. Singleton's attack upon Harriet led her to say, with tearful eyes, that she believed Harriet had gone to the ball entirely on her account, and that she felt so very sorry she had not more decidedly opposed it.

Mr. Gage, who had said nothing upon the subject in any way, and who had hardly seemed to know Harriet was not at table, now begged Margaret not to allow herself to feel any concern on that point, for that he believed Miss Conway had been always rather remarkable for her imprudences. Margaret always disliked his polite phrases, and the persuasive interest of his manner, but now they seemed more than ever out of place. The slip of paper that Harriet had entrusted to her was lying folded by her side—she had no idea what it might contain; but now, seeing Mr. Humphries standing at the window with Mr. Singleton, she took it up timidly, and said [Pg 122] with a little hesitation:—"Harriet desired me to give you this paper, Mr. Gage."

He took it up very politely, glanced at it, and handed it back to her. It contained only two words:—"*Go away.*"

He drew his chair nearer to Margaret, glanced at the window, and then said in a low voice:—"Perhaps you will tell Miss Conway, that my respect for Mr. and Mrs. Singleton will not admit of my complying *immediately* with her demand."

"I will," said Margaret.

She felt pleased with his reply, and with his straightforward manner; and she hoped that she was not considered a party concerned in so abrupt a missive. And yet she could hardly help laughing, it appeared to her so very ridiculous.

Mr. Gage took up the paper and looked at it again. "I think I need hardly *write* an answer," he said.

He seemed as little inclined to be grave as Margaret. She assured him that she would deliver his message faithfully. He twisted up the paper, and seemed about to burn it, when he drew it back, said it was really worth preserving, and added something, as if to himself, about its being "so like a spoilt child." [Pg 123]

Like most men, who think a spoilt child the perfection of womankind, until they have her, when their opinion changes inconveniently fast.

Then turning to Margaret, who was about to leave the room, he said "that he could not avoid expressing his thanks for her skilful interference last night; that it was most kind in her to undertake so difficult and unpleasing a task; and for himself, he was grateful to her for preventing what might have been annoying to all parties."

Margaret thought he could not have been more glad than she was to prevent a scene; she made some quiet remark to his compliment, and went back to her friend's room.

For three days, Margaret was a voluntary prisoner with Harriet. Every morning after breakfast, when she was locking up the tea-chest, Mr. Humphries made it a point to sidle up to her, and ask "if she could not make him of any use; if he should not drive over to G——, and get any thing for Miss Conway." He likewise, at the same period, warned Miss Capel against the dangers of attending too closely upon her sick friend. [Pg 124]

"It is all very well for a day, you know," he said, "but how any body can stand being shut up in a sick room for so long, I can't imagine; and I really think, Miss Capel, I——" and here Mr. Humphries looked round, as if he was anxious to hide behind some of the furniture, "I think, indeed, you are beginning to look pale."

"Oh! I shall do very well," said Margaret, smiling, "Harriet will soon be down stairs, I hope."

"And in the meantime," said Mr. Gage, with deep anxiety, "I fear you are injuring your health by your kind exertions."

Margaret thought he might as well expend a little of his interest upon Harriet's health, which at that time was in rather a more precarious state than hers, but she said "it was a pleasure to her to sit with Harriet, for she well knew how long the days appeared in illness." [Pg 125]

"That is very—I mean it is just what I—you are all goodness, I am sure," faltered Mr. Humphries.

Mr. Gage could not but feel the most sovereign contempt for the manner in which Mr. Humphries attempted to show his interest for Margaret: instead of whispering a well-turned phrase into her long tresses, to stand blushing and stammering like an idiot. So after staring haughtily at both for a moment, he loitered away to the stable.

Margaret had a note to write for Harriet, and as during this process her eyes were fixed on the paper, Mr. Humphries found it less difficult to keep up a conversation with her.

"Does Miss Conway make a good invalid?" he said.

"Yes, indeed," said Margaret, "she is very patient." [Pg 126]

"You would be very patient," said Mr. Humphries, with his usual gesture of attempting to hide under the table.

"I hope so," said Margaret, gently; "but sickness is a great trial to every body, Mr. Humphries."

"I don't think," began Mr. Humphries, looking fixedly at the beautiful fingers that were engaged in folding the note:—"that is, I think—if you were to nurse people, they would not need to be much pitied."

This sentence, which was spoken very fast, and accompanied by strong signs of bashfulness, was received by Margaret as one of the ordinary civilities which young men are in the habit of paying. She carefully traced the direction, and, pausing at the last word, said calmly:—

"Let me see, is Lockwood in Worcestershire or Somersetshire, Mr. Humphries?"

"In Worcestershire," said Mr. Humphries, relieved by finding that his speech had produced no greater effect,—for he had grown extremely red in the face, and felt like a person who had fired a train, and expected some terrible explosion to take place. [Pg 127]

However, he had composure enough left to light her a taper, and find the sealing wax, but before

Margaret could make use of it, Harriet's maid rushed into the room, and with signs of great agitation informed her that her mistress was much worse, and as she thought, light-headed.

Margaret hastily left the note for Mr. Humphries to seal and dispatch, and ran up stairs. Harriet was much worse; quite delirious, and holding forth to Mrs. Singleton with great eagerness; while she, poor lady, perfectly unable to hear a word she uttered, had no idea of the real state of the case. Margaret saw it directly, took Mrs. Singleton aside, and informed her of Harriet's condition, sent off a servant for a medical man, and took her place firmly by her friend's bedside.

Before night, Harriet was very ill,—was worse—was in danger. Margaret would not go down to dinner; but the kind Mrs. Singleton would not allow her to remain in the room all the evening. She sent her into the drawing-room to make tea, and begged her to remain there till bed time. [Pg 128]

Mr. Singleton was walking up and down the room, whistling discordantly. He came up to Margaret, thanked her repeatedly for her kindness to Harriet, and rang the bell for the urn.

Mr. Gage and Mr. Humphries joined her at the tea-table.

"I have not seen you since breakfast," said Mr. Gage, bending across the teacups, "how much I have regretted your absence."

Now Margaret was in very low spirits, feeling solitary and frightened, and perhaps his being a Gage inspired her with confidence, and made her feel a claim upon his sympathy, for she turned her eyes, filled with tears, upon him, and said:— [Pg 129]

"Harriet is so ill, Mr. Gage!"

"I am sorry to hear it," he replied coldly.

This sudden check did not produce the effect upon Margaret that it might upon some people. She never cried upon such occasions: she forced back her tears, at once, and sat cold and silent.

Mr. Humphries handed her toast and cakes in vain.

Mr. Gage rose, and employed himself in altering the lamp.

"Does the doctor come again this evening, Miss Capel?" asked Mr. Singleton.

"Yes, Sir, the last thing," replied Margaret, "he asked when the house would be shut up, but Mrs. Singleton desired him to name his own time, and he appointed eleven."

"It is just ten now," said Mr. Singleton, looking at his watch.

Mr. Gage looked at his watch too, which did not seem at all necessary, and then altered the lamp again.

"Who sits up with Harriet to-night?" asked Mr. Singleton. [Pg 130]

"Her maid, Sir; Mrs. Singleton would not hear of my sitting up."

"Perfectly right," said Mr. Gage, "if I were Mrs. Singleton, I should be inclined to forbid you the room altogether; you run a great risk of infection."

"I am sure," said Mr. Humphries, "I wish I could be of use; I only wish I could sit up, that's all."

Mr. Gage remarked with much disdain, "that his sitting up with a young lady would possess, at least, the charm of novelty;" and then he turned away and loitered to the fire-place.

Mr. Humphries drew his chair closer to Margaret.

"This is very dull for you, Miss Capel," he began.

"Very sad for me," said Margaret.

"You are not afraid of being with Miss Conway?"

"Not at all; I never was timid about infection." [Pg 131]

"I think—(*a long pause*)—I think you are an angel, Miss Capel."

"Do you, Mr. Humphries," said Margaret unconsciously; her whole mind occupied with Harriet's illness, and the unkind indifference displayed by Mr. Gage.

For a little while Mr. Humphries had to endure a paroxysm of bashfulness; when he recovered, the first words he uttered were: "I like you very much!"

Margaret, who was fitting a steel pen into a mother of pearl handle, replied: "you are very good, Mr. Humphries. Is not this a pretty pen?"

He took it in his clumsy way, and then began to laugh.

"I—I meant," he began; but here his courage failed him, and he gave her back the pen, looking suspiciously at Mr. Singleton and George Gage, who were conversing in whispers at the other end of the room.

"Can you tell me what o'clock it is, Mr. Humphries?" asked Margaret.

"Twenty minutes to eleven." [Pg 132]

"Thank you."

"I shall not hunt to-morrow, Miss Capel," said Mr. Humphries, "somehow—"

He wanted an interpreter; "somehow," meant that while Harriet was ill, he did not think he should quite enjoy a run with the hounds. Margaret understood his meaning and smiled.

Mr. Humphries returned her smile with his usual breadth of expression, revealing a perfect semicircle of dazzling teeth, and then said: "Coming home from hunting, last time—"

"Yes, Mr. Humphries."

"Gage, and I—"

"Yes, Mr. Humphries."

"I wish you would say yes always!"

Here a prodigious smile, and the usual symptoms of vanishing under the table.

"But it would not make sense always, Mr. Humphries," replied Margaret.

"You said that day, you did not believe that people could be in love twice."

"I thought you said so, and I agreed to it," said Margaret, still looking at the pen-holder. [Pg 133]

"No, I didn't; you did."

"Oh! was that it? I think it must be near eleven."

Margaret laid down the pen, and rose to leave the room.

Mr. Humphries thought he had better make haste.

"Miss Capel, I say, were you ever in love?" he stammered in much confusion.

Margaret was certainly a little startled. She had been so engrossed by her own thoughts that she had not observed the progress her companion was making.

"If I ever have been," she said tranquilly, "as I am now single, Mr. Humphries, you must suppose it would be an unpleasant subject for me to touch upon."

He seemed struck by her calm, grave manner, but he stumbled on.

"Because, I was in love once—with a very nice girl—when I was at Christ Church; but, for all that, I feel as if—I should be in love again—" [Pg 134]

Margaret held out her hand, and said gently, but coldly, "Good night, Mr. Humphries."

He took her hand, kissed it, seemed very much inclined to cry, but let her pass him without a word. He had perfectly understood her manner. [Pg 135]

CHAPTER VII.

Parlar di te non voglio, e fra le labbra
Ho sempre il nome tuo: vó dal pensiero
Cancellar quel sembiante e in ogni oggetto
Col pensier lo dipingo.
METASTASIO.

In rapid attacks of illness, like that which Harriet suffered from, there is, fortunately, no very long interval of suspense for those interested in the patient.

The next day she was much better, and the day after was able to sit up by her dressing-room fire, and talk and laugh pretty much as usual.

"Oh! by the way," said Harriet, interrupting a lively discussion upon some trifling subject, "did Mr. Gage ever condescend to enquire after me while I was ill?" [Pg 136]

Margaret had rather feared this question, but she was obliged to reply that he had not.

Harriet seemed more disturbed by this proof of his indifference than Margaret had ever before seen her.

After a pause she said: "Did he seem—" then, suddenly interrupting herself, she exclaimed, "Pshaw! I will not stoop to enquire what he seemed. Perhaps," she added, after another pause, "I had no reason to expect any-thing else from him."

"I thought it very unkind," said Margaret.

Harriet nodded her head in acquiescence, and remained silently gazing into the fire. Once or twice she felt for her handkerchief, and drew it hastily across her eyes as if she did not wish to be observed.

"The fire makes one's eyes weak," she said at last.

Margaret agreed to it.

"Oh! by the way, how do you get on with Mr. Humphries?" said Harriet, rousing herself. [Pg 137]

"He was always very considerate," said Margaret, "and extremely sorry for your illness."

"He is a good soul," said Harriet, "You had better think twice, before you throw him away."

"I do not throw him away," said Margaret smiling; "but I confess I have no desire to captivate him."

"He would make a very good husband, ma mie."

"I dare say," replied Margaret, "but it is all very much out of my way."

"Why you cannot mean to be single for ever," said Harriet. "I assure you I often think who I shall entrap, now that George won't have me."

"Whose fault is that?" asked Margaret.

"I detest him—I hate him from my heart!" exclaimed Harriet. "I would accept Mr. Humphries, to-morrow, or Sir Hawarth Fane, with all the readiness in the world. How dare he remain in this house, when I ordered him to leave it?" [Pg 138]

"I told you what he said," replied Margaret.

"Is not Charlotte very late with my tea?" asked Harriet, in her usual manner.

"I think it is rather past the time," replied Margaret.

"The girl grows more careless every day," said Harriet. "I hope George does not make love to her."

"Oh! Harriet—impossible! a gentleman—"

"Why my dear," said Harriet drily, "such things have been done once or twice—it is a very wicked world; she has some nonsense in her head, I am sure, for she marked a whole set of handkerchiefs wrong for me the other day."

At this moment Charlotte came in with the tea-things, Harriet leaned over the tray, and surveyed the cups.

"Charlotte!" she exclaimed, "where is the cream jug?" [Pg 139]

"Oh, dear, Miss Conway! I forgot it. I will bring it up in a minute."

"Charlotte!" exclaimed Harriet, with a tragic frown, "you are in love."

Charlotte gave a prodigious start, but she denied the charge.

"Oh! dear me, Miss Conway, how you can say so," she simpered. "It is only your fun. I thank goodness, I keep myself to myself."

"Very good," said Harriet, "I don't care how many hearts you break, only don't lose your own."

Charlotte thought this a famous joke—she tossed her head, laughed and disappeared.

But a few days after, while she was dressing her young mistress; after having committed a series of blunders, which were enough to try the patience of anybody, she stood quite still, and began to cry.

Harriet was very good-natured to her servants; she threw herself into a chair, stifled a strong inclination to laugh, and begged to know what was the matter. [Pg 140]

"If you would please to speak for me, Miss Conway," sobbed the agitated Charlotte.

"Speak for you? Do you mean that you wish me to give you a character? Certainly, when you leave, if you mean to leave me. I did not know you wished to go away."

Charlotte shook her head.

"What can be the matter then, Charlotte; is my Aunt Singleton displeased with you?"

Another shake, and a burst of sobbing.

"Are you ill! You had better let me give you some medicine," said Harriet, looking for the key of her medicine chest.

"Perhaps, Miss Conway, did not know that Mr. Gage was going to leave Singleton Manor."

Harriet turned pale. No she did not know it. "When was he going?"

Charlotte knew nothing about Mr. Gage; she only knew that his horses were to set off for Chirke Weston the day after to-morrow. [Pg 141]

"But you are hardly crying after Mr. Gage's horses," said Harriet, making a desperate effort to

rally her spirits.

"Mr. Thompson!" sobbed the damsel.

"Oh! he is the objection—what have you to say against Mr. Thompson? Mr. Gage's groom, I conclude."

Mr. Thompson had made Charlotte an offer; very respectful, and very devoted, Charlotte said he was. She confessed that Mr. Thompson was not indifferent to her, but he was so much in awe of his master, that he could not muster up courage to confess his weakness.

"But why does he not give Mr. Gage warning?" asked Harriet.

"Because," Charlotte said, "Mr. Thompson had a very good salary; (Charlotte was always genteel in her language; she never hinted at wages,) and it might be a very long time before he got such another situation, and he could less afford to lose it, if he had a wife to support." [Pg 142]

"Then, Charlotte, you must wait," said Harriet with decision; "it is no great hardship, how many ladies are obliged to wait—Mr. Gage will never suffer a married man in his service, moving as he does from place to place. You can never expect to have every thing you wish, I shall be happy to forward your interests when it is in my power, but just now it is clearly impossible."

"If you would only speak to Mr. Gage for Henry," said Charlotte, hiding her face in her apron.

"I do not believe an angel would be able to persuade him to keep a married man in his service," said Harriet, "as for me I have no influence at all with Mr. Gage—Thompson and you must wait."

"We were married this morning!" cried the waiting-woman with another torrent of tears.

Harriet felt very angry at first; and she exclaimed, "Charlotte, I am ashamed of you!" but she disliked to see people cry, and it occurred to her that it was rather a dreary method of spending one's wedding-day; so she softened down, said that she would consult with her aunt about them, and try to make the best of a bad bargain. "But I warn you," she said "that you will both lose your places, the only thing left is for us to try and find you others." [Pg 143]

"If Miss Conway would be so good as to break the news to Mr. Gage, for Henry dared not."

"Very good," said Harriet, "I have no objection. Thompson need not be afraid that Mr. Gage would shoot him; but if he is too delicate, I will undertake it, *I* am not afraid of Mr. Gage. But how, in the name of goodness, Charlotte, did you become so intimate with Thompson. Living as you do in the housekeeper's room, where Aunt Singleton does not allow any of the men?"

For Mrs. Singleton had a peculiar custom of having every female servant under the eye of the housekeeper, at meals, and other leisure times; while the butler presided over the men servants, both high and low, in like manner; so that they had no business together at all in that house. [Pg 144]

Charlotte blushing very much, said that "Mr. Gage was in the habit of sending Thompson to enquire of her how Miss Conway was, three or four times a day, during her illness; in consequence of which he was always laying in wait for her, first on his master's account, and next upon his own. So that it was Mr. Gage's fault after all."

"Beg Miss Capel to come to me," said Harriet, with sparkling eyes; "and then let Mr. Gage know that I desire the favour of his company for half a minute. But first, Mrs. Thompson, wipe your eyes if you please, or Mr. Gage will think I have been beating you."

Charlotte with a smiling face, departed upon her errand; and Harriet walked to the looking glass.

"Come, I am not so very much pulled down by my illness," said she with a smile. [Pg 145]

Margaret came in, heard the delinquency of Charlotte with much surprise; and readily agreed to ply her worsted work in the boudoir during Mr. Gage's visit. She anticipated, with some pleasure, the scene that was about to be enacted. Harriet began to grow nervous, as he did not come directly, and turned over in her mind how she should introduce the subject—a rare occurrence with her.

At last Mr. Gage who had been found in the park, and forwarded up-stairs by the butler, made his appearance, walked calmly in, shook hands with Harriet, on the strength of her absence, and "trusted that she was recovering."

"Oh, yes, quite! I am much better, I shall be able to go to the Veseys on Thursday, Mr. Gage, which is the extent of my ambition at present."

Mr. Gage rather wondered whether she had sent for him into her own particular sitting-room to talk to him about the Veseys; but he merely remarked that he was going into Devonshire on that day, or he believed he should have joined their party, as Mrs. Vesey had been so polite as to ask him. [Pg 146]

"Ah! so I hear," said Harriet, in a friendly tone. "How dull poor Chirke Weston will look, now they are all away."

"Dull enough," said Mr. Gage; and he sighed, thinking of his sister, and all the troubles she had gone through.

"I have not heard from Bessy, I don't know when," said Harriet.

"Nor I," said Mr. Gage. "I imagine she has not much to say."

"And writing is such a bore," said Harriet.

"A great bore," said Mr. Gage.

"I will tell you who writes a great number of letters," said Harriet. "My brother, Evan."

"And really clever ones," replied Mr. Gage.

"No! Does he ever write to you?" exclaimed Harriet. [Pg 147]

"Now and then," said Mr. Gage. "I think he writes to Hubert more than to any of us."

The conversation had been very placid hitherto: Margaret hardly thought it could last.

There was a short pause; during which Harriet sat playing with her rings. It was such an unusual thing for Harriet to appear constrained in her manner to any one, that Mr. Gage was considerably puzzled.

Although by no means addicted to holding himself in low estimation, he did not suppose that Harriet had sent for him to make a pathetic declaration; more particularly as Margaret was present, and did not appear likely to leave the room.

"Well, Mr. Gage," said Harriet, looking up, "I heard something this morning which surprised me very much."

"Really!" said Mr. Gage, bending for wards; "I trust, nothing of an unpleasant nature?" [Pg 148]

"Oh, yes! I was displeased too," said Harriet.

"Can I be of any service?" asked Mr. Gage, very civilly.

"Oh, dear me, George, no!" said Harriet, suddenly. "The thing is past mending. Your plague of a groom has been making love to my Charlotte, and married her this morning."

Mr. Gage never swore before ladies; though he had seldom felt more inclined to relieve his mind by that simple process. But after the angry pause of a minute, he ejaculated, with raised eyebrows, the words, "Highly impertinent!"

"And so ridiculous—so imprudent!" said Harriet; "how are they to live, I wonder?"

"Oh! Heaven knows how they are to live," said Mr. Gage, drawing his chair wonderfully near to Harriet; "that is their affair—not ours, you know." [Pg 149]

"Our affair!" How odd the words sounded. Harriet blushed.

"I am so sorry about Charlotte," she said; "she does know how to dress hair!"

Mr. Gage cast an admiring glance upon Harriet's shining tresses, and added:

"I am sorry, too, to lose Thompson. He understands his business very well."

"It is very provoking. Such things are the last extent of folly," said Harriet.

"In that class, certainly;" said Mr. Gage.

"Well, but, George, what is to be done?" asked Harriet, suddenly.

Now, if she ever desired Mr. Gage to exert himself to the utmost in her service, she had only to call him George. The effect was cabalistic.

"I must get rid of Thompson, you see," he said, in a deprecating manner. "The man never could wander about with a wife and children at his heels."

"It is very odd how my maids always do marry," said Harriet. "One would think Aunt Singleton kept them close enough. You remember, Anne?" [Pg 150]

Yes—he remembered Anne, perfectly; and it was very probable that Anne remembered him, for he had often given her a guinea to convey flowers and notes to her young lady's dressing-table, in the days of their early courtship.

"Well! two have actually married since Anne's time," said Harriet, in an injured tone; "and now Charlotte, whom I always did consider rather a plain woman; she must needs do just the same."

"It is too annoying," said Mr. Gage, examining the fringe of Harriet's beautiful shawl. "I am very sorry you should be so put out of your way."

"Shall you take Thompson away with you, on Thursday?" said Harriet, looking up in his face.

"Oh! I think I had better pay him off at once, and have done with him," said Mr. Gage.

"But I am interested for the bride and bridegroom," said Harriet, "I want to know what they had better do." [Pg 151]

"Thompson should get into a gentleman's family, where his wife could be lodge-keeper," said Mr. Gage.

"I'll tell you what," said Harriet, who had observed Mr. Gage's arm on the back of her chair, and whose restless spirit delighted in mischief; "I will ask that dear Mr. Humphries to look out for such a place. I am sure he will use his best endeavours; kind, good creature that he is."

"Then you have no farther commands with me," said Mr. Gage, rising directly, and preparing to leave the room.

"Not any; only you won't be very angry with poor Thompson!" said Harriet, her eyes flashing with merriment as the door closed upon Mr. Gage.

"Come here to me, Margaret, and don't shake your head at me in that way, for I will not bear it." [Pg 152]

CHAPTER VIII.

El. Lo. Mistress, I came to see you.
Lady. That's happily dispatched—the next!
El. Lo. To take leave of you.
Lady. You need not have despaired of that, nor have used so many circumstances to win me to give you leave to perform my commands. Is there a third?
El. Lo. Yes! I had a third, had you been apt to hear it.
Lady. I? never after—Fast, good servant, fast.
El. Lo. 'Twas to intreat you to hear Reason.
Lady. Most willingly—have you brought one can speak it?
El. Lo. Lastly, it is to kindle in that barren heart Love and Forgiveness.

THE SCORNFUL LADY.

"I am sorry you are going to-morrow," said Mr. Humphries the next morning at breakfast to Mr. Gage; "I wanted you to see my Arab."

"I will ride over this morning," said Mr. Gage, "I have nothing else to do." [Pg 153]

"He was so sick on the passage, that they did not think he would have lived," said Mr. Humphries, turning to Margaret. "He's better now."

"Poor creature! I didn't know horses were ever sea-sick," said Margaret.

"They are wonderful animals," said Harriet, "I wish somebody would write a novel about a horse."

"You used to be so fond of horses," said Mr. Singleton.

"So I am, comparatively," said Harriet, glancing around at the gentlemen present.

Margaret had often a hard matter to preserve her gravity, but now she was vexed with Harriet, who had employed herself ever since she came down stairs in petting Mr. Humphries, on purpose to pique Mr. Gage. She offered him cream and sugar; she gave him advice about his diet; showed him the best way to eat a smelt; fussed about his toast; and took more trouble to make him comfortable, than she had ever done with anybody before.

Mr. Singleton, from his partiality to Mr. Humphries, took it all in good part; but Mr. Gage looked very cloudy. He rose as soon as possible and left the table, and walked up and down the room, keeping his eyes fixed upon Mr. Humphries and Harriet. [Pg 154]

Harriet rose and looked about among the dishes.

"You can tell me, Mr. Humphries," she said, "what is the best thing I can give my terrier. He only eats twice a day, and I never let him touch raw meat."

"Oh! I don't know—I—it does not matter what you give him," said Mr. Humphries.

"A slice of this cold beef then," said Harriet, "will you cut it for me?"

Mr. Humphries complied; nearly cut his own hand, as might have been expected, but succeeded in getting off a slice.

"A little bit more," said Harriet, looking coaxingly at him.

"Oh! upon my word, that is plenty!" said Mr. Humphries.

"No, just one little bit," said Harriet stretching out the plate. [Pg 155]

Mr. Humphries laughed awkwardly and cut it.

"You will spoil your dog, you know," he said.

During this little bit of coquetry, on her part, Mr. Gage had been increasing in rage, but she passed close to him without seeming to be aware of his presence, and left the room.

Her dog was fastened up in a small summer-room that looked into the garden, because it had a fancy for quarrelling with one of Mr. Humphries' spaniels that he had brought with him.

Harriet unfastened the little sinner, and it bounded up and down like a ball. She put the plate on a ledge under the window, and began to cut the meat into small pieces. While she was thus employed, Mr. Gage came abruptly into the room, and stood before her.

"Take care of the dog," said Harriet, stooping down, and catching Donald by the collar; "he is apt to snap at strangers." [Pg 156]

"Strangers!" exclaimed Mr. Gage, in great indignation. "This from you, Harriet! But you have deceived me—made me wretched long enough. It is well that all is at an end!"

Harriet stood up. To do her justice, she tried to look as grave as she could, though she had a great inclination to laugh.

"I did not give you credit, Sir, for knowing so much of your profession," she said, coolly; "you have learned, I see, that it is a better plan to attack than to defend."

"I—what have I to defend?" said Mr. Gage. "Can you deny that you long made me believe you were going to be married to Lord Raymond?"

"Really, Mr. Gage," said Harriet, "your remarks are very original; unexpected, at least. I believe, for a long time we have had as little confidential communication as any two persons in the world. People were at liberty to conjecture what they pleased from Lord Raymond's intimacy with my family." [Pg 157]

"People!" echoed Mr. Gage, highly offended at being thus classed with the multitude.

"Men, women and children!" said Harriet, very contentedly, and turning to the window ledge, she began to give Donald his dinner.

Mr. Gage's indignation was now at its height; but he endeavoured to veil it under an appearance of great calmness. Harriet, as cool as himself, went on mincing Donald's cold beef.

At last he said, that if it was not taxing her memory too far, he should be glad to know her motive for allowing Lord Raymond to be recognized as her lover; had she preferred Lord Raymond, he should have respected the feeling, although he should not, certainly, have thought very highly of her taste.

"As that preference has been entirely a little fancy of your own," said Harriet, with spirit; "I think it not worth while to defend my taste on an imaginary point." [Pg 158]

"Still," said Mr. Gage, "you suffered me to remain in error on a subject which you well knew to be of great importance to my happiness."

"As I am not appointed guardian to your happiness, Mr. Gage," said Harriet, with mock civility, "I do not feel any remorse upon that point. If you chose to compliment my taste, by inventing an attachment between me and a remarkably attractive man, I will take this opportunity, if you please, of returning you my best thanks."

Mr. Gage looked still more stormy, but he seemed determined, in popular phrase, to "have his say out."

"You never were attached to Lord Raymond then?" he said.

"Never, as it happened," returned Harriet, with great indifference.

"Then why give me to understand—" Mr. Gage began.

"Stop there!" said Harriet, "don't ring the changes, my good friend, upon your misapprehension. I was not likely to tell *you*, of all people, my family secrets. Lord Raymond was always on an intimate footing with me. I could not remove the confusion in his affairs, nor help his mother dying at the wrong time: and these were the only things that prevented his marriage with Lucy from taking place earlier." [Pg 159]

"You knew when I was at Chirke Weston," said Mr. Gage, "that my feelings towards you had undergone no change, and yet you not only suffered me to be in an error, but you encouraged my belief that you were engaged to that man to the utmost of your power."

"Well," said Harriet, "I am not going to tell any lies. Perhaps, I did. I was rather amused to see you making a blunder."

"You confess it," said Mr. Gage; "and now you are acting the same part with that wretched idiot, Humphries; though you still see that I cannot forget you, as I wish to Heaven I could." [Pg 160]

"Poor dear Mr. Humphries!" said Harriet, leaning against the window, and, throwing the pieces of meat slowly to her dog, "he is to be called an idiot, because I am commonly civil to my uncle's guests."

"I suppose I am not to be considered as your uncle's guest?" said Mr. Gage.

"Not when you behave so ill," returned Harriet.

"I—what have I done?" asked Mr. Gage.

"Recollect the ball, Sir!" said Harriet; "remember how you tricked me into dancing with you."

Mr. Gage smiled a little. "Allow that you brought it on yourself," said he. "You *could* not dance with Sir Hawarth."

"Could not?" asked Harriet. "I imagine I have every right to please myself in such things. Besides, you have been very rude to me ever since you came; and did not leave the house when I desired you."

"You know that it was impossible," said Mr. Gage; "besides, I gave you my reasons for not obeying you." [Pg 161]

"I did not want any reasons," said Harriet.

"I believe you," said Mr. Gage; "but Miss Capel was evidently on my side then, as well as at the ball. I wish you would speak to her on the subject. I never met any woman with more delicacy of feeling."

"It is a pity you don't marry her, then, if you think so highly of her;" said Harriet, perversely.

"I did not come here to marry Miss Capel, but to marry you," replied Mr. Gage, coldly.

The deepest carmine colour flew into Harriet's face, but she still remained pelting her dog with the little pieces of meat. Mr. Gage stood waiting to hear what she would say.

"Ah! but George, do you mean it?" said Harriet, looking up archly in his face.

"Do I mean it?" asked Mr. Gage; "when I give you the power of rejecting my hand again." [Pg 162]

This was so characteristic of the degree of estimation in which Mr. Gage held himself, that Harriet burst into a prolonged peal of laughter.

"Well, then, George," said she, holding out her hand.

"Well, then, Harriet," he replied, clasping it.

"But I tell you what," said Harriet, as she was leaving the room, "you may go and make your own story good to my Uncle Singleton, for if you think I shall take all that trouble, you will find yourself very much mistaken."

The next report current in the house was that Mr. Gage's horses were not going to Chirke Weston; and the presumption, therefore, was, that their master had determined to prolong his stay at Singleton Manor. [Pg 163]

CHAPTER IX.

Prin. We are wise girls to work our lovers so,

So, portent-like, would I o'ersway his state
That he should be my fool, and I his fate.
LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

"You are not going away on Saturday," said Harriet the next morning to Margaret, who was sitting with a letter in her hand, "do not think it. I have made up my mind that you spend Christmas here."

"Rather hard upon Miss Capel," said Mr. Gage, "considering that *you* will not be here at Christmas."

"Well, I don't know where I am likely to be, if not here," said Harriet; "I think there is some derangement in that family," she added, indicating Mr. Gage by a movement of her head:—"He is like the man in 'Nicholas Nickleby,' he insists upon marrying people, and I am his present object; it will go off, you know. Your turn will come next, Margaret, my dear." [Pg 164]

"You are so provoking, Harriet," said Margaret, trying in vain to look grave.

"But why should you go back to this Mrs. Fitzpatrick?" said Harriet.

"Because she is so lonely, Harriet. I told you she had lost her daughter; and I have already been here a long time."

"But supposing we are both foolish enough to keep in the same mind, and marry on the 18th, I shall want you to be bridesmaid," said Harriet.

"I would, gladly," said Margaret, "but I know Mrs. Fitzpatrick really wants me; and I decide in her favour, because you are happy and well, and she is so desolate alone."

"It would give us both so much pleasure if you could stay," said Mr. Gage lowering his newspaper.

"I wonder who he includes so familiarly with himself," said Harriet, "I think it must be Thompson; [Pg 165]

he is very intimate with his groom. Won't you stay to oblige Thompson?"

Margaret laughing, protested "that she really could not."

Mr. Gage wondered how Harriet could be so ridiculous.

"Thompson and Charlotte are forgiven for the present," said Harriet. "I wondered what made George so very lenient; it seems that he had it in view to commit a similar folly, and that reminds me I must learn to smoke again."

"Oh! do not, Harriet."

"My dear, it is in self-defence; unless, indeed, I break off the match. He lives in a barrack. I dare say his room is not half the size of my uncle's kennel: there he sits with all his intimate friends, smoking till the place is like a lime kiln; if I cannot join them, what is to become of me? Mr. Gage, have you a cigar about you? I will lose no time in learning the art again." [Pg 166]

Mr. Gage not noticing the last part of the speech, said "he did not suppose it to be a very likely thing that he should permit his wife to live in a barrack."

"Ah!" said Harriet shaking her head, "I have a conviction, a presentiment, that I shall live in the little lime-kiln we were speaking of. Uncle Singleton always said that would be my fate. And if it was not for the bracelet-watch which George is having made for me, I assure you it weighs so heavily on my spirits, that I would never speak to him again. Just look behind the newspaper, my dear, and see if he is crying."

Mr. Gage dropped the newspaper, and laughed without restraint, but he told Harriet that "she had now effectually frightened Miss Capel from ever coming to see her, when she was settled."

"Oh! I have provided against that;" said Harriet, "I don't know at all what Mr. Gage's plans are; but for myself, I mean to go to Wardenscourt early in the summer. Now I must have you solemnly [Pg 167] promise, that directly I summon you, you will instantly join me there. You know Mrs. Fitzpatrick is connected with Lord Raymond, so that if she is invited, I suppose she will make no scruple of accepting; then we will really enjoy ourselves."

"I should like it very much," said Margaret.

"And you promise?"

"Yes, I do, indeed."

Margaret's approaching departure was a source of regret to every one. Harriet told her that they looked upon her as a kind of hostage for her own good behaviour, and that she had some ideas of the same kind herself. She was sure that she should do something outrageous when she was deprived of Margaret's overlooking eye. That neither she, nor Mr. Gage had at all made up their minds, and that she knew there would be a violent quarrel as soon as Margaret was out of the house.

Margaret thought, and said that if Mr. Gage meant to quarrel he would have begun already, for [Pg 168] there was not a single means of aggravation that Harriet had left untried ever since her engagement with him.

Sometimes she affected to consider the engagement as a delusion of his own; sometimes she told Margaret that they had agreed to feign it as long as he stayed at Singleton Manor, in order to amuse him; at other times, she said, it was all very well while the fancy lasted, but that George would change his mind in a day or two, and so save her the trouble of formally breaking it off.

Mr. Gage took refuge in the newspaper from all these attacks, and did not seem to think it worth while to be ruffled. Mr. Humphries was constantly at the house during the few last days of Margaret's stay. He looked very sorrowful, but his attempts to propitiate her were confined to a variety of strange faces, and gestures, which to say the truth, she was too much occupied to [Pg 169] remark. None regretted her so much as Mrs. Singleton; she had been so attentive to all her wants, and so skilful in making the old lady hear, that she felt in losing Margaret that she was parting with a luxury she could ill afford to do without.

Mason shed some silent tears when she received her orders to pack up. Whether they were on her own, or her young lady's account, she did not explain. She did say while she was packing the trinket-box, that a very general notion had prevailed in the housekeeper's room, that Ixworth—Mr. Humphries' place of residence—was shortly to have a mistress; and she believed it was never supposed likely that Miss Conway would be requested to fill that situation; not, she wished to observe, that any opinion prevailed derogatory to Miss Conway's charms, as might be proved by the circumstance that Mr. Gage had made her an offer—a very difficult and very high gentleman —but she had never heard any harm of Mr. Humphries, and no one in the whole country, she [Pg 170] believed, could say any-thing to his disadvantage, which she thought a great thing in favour of a young gentleman with so many clear thousands a-year. That Mr. Humphries' gentleman had remarked, the night that they had all made a party to go to the play at T——, that Mr. Humphries seemed to him to be rather low; and that the butler, who was considered literary, had observed, that "the course of true love never did run smooth;" that the company had not taken the liberty to mention any names, but that she could not deny that several of the party had looked as if they knew the cause of Mr. Humphries' lowness, and of the butler's quotation.

Harriet actually cried when it came to taking leave of Margaret, and between her sobs, affected to be very angry with Mr. Gage that he did not follow her example.

Mr. Gage made a polite speech, of course, and felt it too, which is not the case, with all polite speeches.

Margaret renewed her promise of going to Wardenscourt, twice in the library, and once at the [Pg 171]
hall door, whither her warm-hearted friend followed her; and then the carriage started from the door.

"Ah! there is poor Mr. Humphries," said Mason, as they swept out of the shrubberies.

Margaret looked up, and beheld the gentleman in question, leaning on a gate with his handkerchief in his hand. There was no time for a bow, so she passed him without his having the comfort of knowing that she had seen him.

They arrived late in the evening at Mrs. Fitzpatrick's. The musical dash of the sea, and the scent of the air, warned Margaret their near approach to home.

Her friend was delighted to receive her back. She had felt her absence more than she had cared to acknowledge in her letters, for fear of interfering with the pleasure of her visit.

Each had much to tell the other, though of a very different kind; and Margaret had several times [Pg 172]
to repeat the fact that she came back single-hearted. So strange did it seem to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, that her faultless beauty should not have been successfully sought before this.

A slight discrepancy between Mason's and Miss Capel's account made Mrs. Fitzpatrick rather suspicious, and many weeks elapsed, before she could give up the idea that a certain Mr. Humphries was likely to make his appearance at her cottage to conclude the preliminaries already entered into, of a marriage between himself and her beautiful guest.

Meanwhile, Margaret was busy ordering a handsome, gold Châtelaine, or Equipage, for Harriet; she drew the pattern, she corresponded almost daily with the jeweller; she knew no rest until it was finished according to her wish.

It so happened that Harriet had not seen one of these useful toys. It arrived the day before her [Pg 174]
marriage, and she was delighted beyond measure. In a few days, Margaret received a letter [Pg 173]
thanking her a thousand times for her beautiful gift, and saying that she had deferred writing till she could inform her that she was actually married, a circumstance of which she had entertained great doubts until she found herself at the church-door, when she supposed that even Mr. Gage could not well retract. That she begged Margaret to notice that a blot on the paper was of his making; that they were going leisurely through Wales, previous to embarking for Dublin, and that it was with the sincerest regret that she found herself obliged to sign her letters "Harriet Gage."

CHAPTER X.

> Still the clouds gather, still must fear and doubt
> Unwelcome partners, page her weary footsteps,
> Shall not time draw these curtains?
> ANON.

Time sped on at the Cottage as smoothly as it had done before Margaret left it. The spring came sooner than she could have believed; the beautiful early summer followed. She was out almost all day, rambling by the sea-side, working in the garden, visiting the poor. She heard at intervals from Elizabeth, and so traced her progress through the Italian States. At length, she said that her father and herself had it in contemplation to return to England in June; and that they had been very earnestly pressed by Lord and Lady Raymond to come at once to Wardenscourt. That her [Pg 175]
father inclined to this plan, and that for herself "all places were alike to her." This was the only intimation she gave that her loss still preyed upon her mind. "If she decided upon this plan," she added, "she hoped to have Margaret to meet her." A letter from Harriet followed this, very shortly. She stated that she had arrived at Wardenscourt three days ago, that Lady Raymond had written by the same post an invitation to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and that both that lady and Margaret were expected at Wardenscourt in three days' time. She said that Captain Gage and his daughter were on their road home, and that Bessy counted upon meeting Margaret when she came to England.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick was well contented to go. Margaret could not refuse; her heart sank, now that the time came, when she thought that Mr. Haveloc's estate was at no great distance from Wardenscourt; and that if he were not abroad, she might possibly be exposed to the chance of [Pg 176]
meeting him. When Harriet talked of her visit as a distant thing, she had fancied she could have borne it very well. Of course this agreeable prospect was kept to herself, and she tried to express a good deal of pleasure at the idea of the journey. They performed it in one day; there was no hardship in early rising those fine summer mornings, and it was not six o'clock when they arrived at Wardenscourt. The grounds were spacious and highly cultivated; the house rather too new for Margaret's taste. In front, there was a white portico built in with the house, and filled with plants; on the other side, a long verandah, the floor of which was raised by a flight of steps to a level with the drawing-room windows. Lady Raymond was in this verandah among her plants, and with her, a bold-eyed woman, who stared hard at the new comers, and then flung herself out of

the verandah and into the shrubberies, much as if they had been lepers. "My friend, Lady James Deacon;" said Lucy, after she had welcomed them, "the sweetest woman—when you know her." [Pg 177]

Margaret thought it almost a pity she was so careful to hide the sweetness she might possess; and she thought, with a smile, of the caustic remarks that Harriet would be likely to make upon her manner.

"Harriet is out riding with Mr. Gage," said Lucy turning to Margaret, "do wait here till she comes in; she will be so delighted to see you. But for you, dear Mrs. Fitzpatrick," she said, again taking her hand, "I should recommend, do you know, an hour's complete rest, before you dress for dinner."

Mrs. Fitzpatrick thought her advice very kind and excellent, and went up to her room. Margaret remained with Lady Raymond. In a few minutes, Harriet and Mr. Gage rode up to the steps. Harriet dismounted hastily, and ran up into the verandah.

"She is looking very well, is she not?" said Lucy. [Pg 178]

She looked brilliant, in perfect health, excited by exercise, the red and white of her fine complexion more intense; the dark hue of her chestnut hair, defining the oval contour of her forehead and cheeks. She sprang forward to greet Margaret, as warmly affectionate as ever.

"And you, ma mie—I wish I could say every thing I want at once. Lucy, love, the Sedleys were not at home; I say, George. Well, if he is not looking at the chestnut's fore foot! I never knew such a fidget about horses. George! how polite you are to Miss Capel."

"Miss Capel!" said Mr. Gage, coming up quickly into the verandah, "I am heartily glad to see you again."

His manner was so much more blunt and frank than before—he reminded her so strongly of Captain Gage, that she was quite astonished.

"Ah, how I have improved him!" said Harriet, who had been watching Margaret's countenance. [Pg 179]

Mr. Gage laughed, and told Harriet that she had nearly lamed her chestnut, and might be satisfied with her morning's work.

Harriet took off her hat, and sat down with her back to him, saying, that what she had marred, he might mend; he was good for nothing else.

Her voice, her face, so full of happiness, contradicted her words.

Mr. Gage went out to look after the horses, which were equally beloved by both of them.

Lady Raymond, coming up to her sister, stood arranging her hair, which was slightly ruffled by her hat.

"Well, Mrs. Gage, you took your time this morning," she said; "you find Mr. Gage's company very agreeable, I conclude; since you certainly give me but little of yours. Always, I assure you, my dear Miss Capel, rambling about with Mr. Gage." [Pg 180]

Margaret smiled at Harriet, who looked half bashful, half mischievous.

"It is very well it has turned out so tolerably," said she; "because I always tell George that you had a great hand in bringing things about."

"But you are quite happy, Harriet?"

"Yes; pretty comfortable. George really did take a house for me—a very pretty house. So that when he is obliged to leave Dublin, I shall let him go, and remain behind; for I like the society very much."

"How independently she talks," said Lucy, laughing.

"George has so many faults," pursued Harriet; "I fancy sometimes he must be jealous. If you knew the trouble I had to get any of his brother officers introduced to me. I only know two—such sweet young men! One of them plays the cornopean admirably, and the other makes the most excellent toffy."

"Might I ask what toffy is?" enquired Margaret.

"It is made, my love, by boiling treacle and sugar," replied Harriet. [Pg 181]

"Oh, and lemon-peel!" said Lady Raymond.

"No; almonds," replied Harriet; "that was the way we made it one morning when George was gone to a steeple-chase; and when he came back he could not think what made everything so sticky. That is the only objection to the compounding of toffy. You still like Mrs. Fitzpatrick, Margaret?" she said, turning to her with much softness of expression.

"Very much! I am truly attached to her," replied Margaret.

"I am glad of it. No doubt she is a delightful person," said Harriet. "But you are not going to be an old maid. I have my wits about me; and I will take any bet that any body pleases to offer, you don't go back single. Everard Gage comes here this very day, does not he, Lucy?"

"Yes; but Everard—" said Lady Raymond.

"I know he will be as hard to rouse as a polar bear," said Harriet; "but I pique myself on doing wonders." [Pg 182]

"But pray, Harriet, not for me," said Margaret. "Do not disturb Mr. Everard's tranquillity on my account."

"The best match decidedly about this neighbourhood is Mr. Haveloc, of Tynebrook," said Lady Raymond, laughing. "I strongly recommend him to Miss Capel's notice; and though he is at present in London, he is soon expected to return. Lord Raymond likes him extremely."

"Didn't I meet him at Chirke Weston, Margaret?" asked Harriet.

"I think you did," replied Margaret.

"Ay! you were too young then, or else it was really much neglect on your part—staying in the very house," said Harriet. "You will have it all to begin again."

This was very pleasant, certainly, to have two kind friends planning to throw Margaret and Mr. Haveloc together as much as possible.

Margaret faintly entreated that Harriet would make no matches for her; that she preferred remaining single, and, that strange as the fancy was, she begged to be indulged in it. [Pg 183]

"But about Mr. Haveloc," said Lady Raymond, drawing her chair close into the window. "As Mrs. Fitzpatrick is up stairs, I will tell you such a romantic story about him. You know Mrs. Fitzpatrick had a very lovely daughter. Well; Mr. Haveloc was devotedly attached to her; it was all settled—they were going to be married, when she fell into a rapid decline, and died. Raymond saw him there, and said—" Here Lady Raymond expressed Lord Raymond's sayings by lifting up her hands and eyes, and dropping them both together; "and I think that it was which made Mr. Haveloc rather religious."

"Is he religious?" asked Harriet, pulling the leaves carelessly from a geranium.

"Oh, I think so!" returned Lady Raymond, "he has been building schools on his estate; and is wild now about repairing a church—to be sure it is the family church, where all the old monuments are—the Crusaders, and even the Danish sea-king, they say. Harriet, remind me that we take Miss Capel to see the church at Tynebrook to-morrow, if it is fine. He has been laying down a tessellated pavement, and putting in stained-glass windows, and such an altar cloth! I am told there was never any-thing so beautiful; but I have not been yet, because it is a bad carriage road, except in summer." [Pg 184]

"Well, what an odd fancy," said Harriet, winding her riding whip round her fingers. "I always thought he was a moonshiny sort of a person. I suppose he was engrossed by Miss Fitzpatrick when I saw him. You know people gave him to Bessy about that time."

"So I remember; it was the first thing almost that I heard of him," said Margaret.

"Shall we dress, pet?" asked Harriet, fondly passing her arm round Margaret's waist; "we can come down and have a gossip before the people collect for dinner." [Pg 185]

Margaret assented, and Harriet left the room with Lady Raymond.

Margaret stood for a few minutes leaning against the window, trying to compose herself, or to appear composed. "Shall I never be wise or womanly?" she asked herself, "shall I never bear to hear his name mentioned without such a pang as I now feel? Is this, as one sometimes reads, to embitter my whole life—this wretched mistake? It is too severe a penalty for my folly! How can I meet him calmly, if I am thus agitated by the very narrative of circumstances that I have long known, and long made up my mind to forget?"

But as thinking did not seem likely to make matters better, Margaret roused herself, and went up stairs to dress. She was quite startled to find Mrs. Fitzpatrick in her room, in her black velvet, ready for dinner.

"I am late—am I not?" said she, coming up to her chair, and taking her hand. [Pg 186]

"Not early, my dear, but you will find time enough, you are always so rapid."

Mason set to work directly; Mrs. Fitzpatrick sat beside the toilet, talking.

At last, Margaret, who had scarcely replied, turned her head round, and said, "How long do we stay here?"

"How long, my dear? Why, we have but just arrived," said her friend with a smile.

"True," said Margaret, "there is no reason; only I do not feel very well."

"The journey, perhaps," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick, kindly, "we must see what a night's rest will do for you; but do not talk of going away, for I have made up my mind that you enjoy yourself very much."

Margaret smiled sadly, and accompanied her friend into the drawing-room. It was already lighted

up, and the scented air of the warm summer evening, struggled in through the closed curtains. The guests were standing and sitting in groups, talking and laughing. Lord Raymond on the hearth-rug. [Pg 187]

Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Margaret were presented to him, and he received them with kindness.

"You remember Miss Capel, at Chirke Weston, my dear, don't you," said Lucy.

Lord Raymond did not—but he said he did, and asked her, "if she left all her friends well in that part of the world."

Harriet came close to Lord Raymond, and whispered something in his ear, which made him laugh; and then seizing hold of Margaret, she exclaimed to some one reclining almost at full length in an easy chair: "Everard—wake up! this is Miss Capel!"

Margaret blushed crimson; the person addressed, who appeared to be in the last stage of exhaustion, forced himself into a sitting posture, smiled favourably on Margaret without speaking, stared; and sank back again.

"What a wretch he is," said Harriet, standing quite close to him while she made her remarks, "does he not look like a great wax doll, perfectly well dressed. He ought to be tired, because he came a good many miles by railroad to-day, and as much as seven or eight more in a post-chaise from the terminus. Miss Capel has travelled farther than you to-day, Everard." [Pg 188]

"Ah!" said the person appealed to. At that moment, he was directed to take Miss Capel to dinner, which great exertion he underwent. Harriet, on the other side, allowed him but little peace. She contrived to make the most provoking demands on his memory and his descriptive powers, neither of which were particularly vivid. She would ask how far it was from Halifax to Quebec? What the falls of Niagara looked like? How many miles an hour one could go in a sledge? All these questions were easily despatched by the words: I don't know—I can't tell—I forget. And then a slight pause, while Harriet ate her dinner; but as she ate little, and talked much, her attacks soon began again.

"I say, Everard, are the ladies pretty over in Canada?" [Pg 189]

"Some of them."

"But now, answer me on your word of honour, have they not red noses?"

A laugh.

"How do you think George is looking?"

"Oh! very well."

"What a touching thing it was to see you two meet."

"Did you think so?"

"Margaret, just fancy two brothers who had not seen each other for three years, George comes into the room with his mouth full of something about my chestnut, and seeing Everard in the arm-chair, asleep, says: 'Ah! Everard, you there!' Upon which my friend to the right, answers: 'Eh! George how are you?' I shed tears. Two horses, I need not say, would have been more affectionate."

"I am sure I kissed *you*," said Everard, anxious to defend himself.

There was a general laugh.

"Of course," said Harriet, quickly recovering from her confusion, "very proper to a sister. Lord James, I shall call you to order." [Pg 190]

Lord James, who looked as bold as his wife, which was saying a great deal for him, was stopped in the act of launching some witticism on the public, and contented himself with laughing longer and louder than any body else.

"How do you like Everard? Don't you think him very handsome?" inquired Harriet as soon as the ladies left the dining-room, "he is considered the best looking of the Gages."

Margaret smiled at Harriet's eagerness to provide for her, but begged again with genuine earnestness to be left to her fate.

Lady James Deacon came up to them, was named to Margaret, and became gracious in her manner. She showed her a new species of knitting, and on Mrs. Fitzpatrick standing by to learn it, she transferred her instructions to her with great good humour. She rallied Harriet, in the pauses, upon her handsome brother-in-law, and alluded to some other conquest, which she had heard Mrs. Gage had made in Dublin. [Pg 191]

Margaret felt and looked pained; she disliked all jests upon what she could not help considering as sacred subjects; and she thought a wife's vows too important to become the object of such light discourse. She looked uneasily at Harriet, who stood laughing at all Lady James chose to say, or hint. Mrs. Gage saw this in a moment, and with her usual abruptness, she drew Margaret out upon the terrace.

"Look you, little Oracle," said she, "I am not used to do any-thing by halves; I love my husband a great deal more than he deserves; but I am not going to pull long faces every time a woman of that sort makes a jest upon me. She could not understand me if I did. She has no delicacy herself, and does not know when to give other people credit for it. So now come back, and see what you can make of Everard. Captain Gage gives them all a very liberal allowance." [Pg 192]

CHAPTER XI.

Theo. To this man, my fortune,
My more than purblind fortune, gave my faith,
Drawn to it by as many shows of service
And signs of truth, as ever false tongue uttered:
Heaven pardon all.
LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE.

There was no public breakfast at Wardenscourt. People took that meal in their several rooms. Margaret was just giving Mason her simple directions, when in swam Mrs. Thompson, with Mrs. Gage's compliments, and "would Miss Capel breakfast with her in the Oratory?"

Miss Capel was pleased to renew her acquaintance with Mrs. Thompson, who rustled about in a smarter silk, and finer cap then ever was seen before. She accepted the invitation, and sent the lady's-maid on to say so.

The Oratory was a little octagon room, adjoining Harriet's bed-room, which she used as a boudoir. She could not help smiling at her friend's pertinacity; for there, reclining on a sofa, was Everard Gage, while Harriet looked triumphant from behind the urn. Mr. Gage was reading the paper by the window. [Pg 193]

"Come, Margaret, lose no time," said Harriet, with a distinct glance at Everard.

Margaret took her speech literally, glided into a chair, and drew her plate towards her. Mr. Gage came to help her.

"Everard!" said Harriet, "have you found the head we all think so like Miss Capel?"

"No," said he, looking up from the 'Book of Beauty,' which he was turning over; "there is nothing here pretty enough."

"Brava!" exclaimed Harriet; "we shall do."

"Where do you think of going to-day?" said Mr. Gage to Margaret.

She could not bring herself to mention the church at Tynebrook, but Harriet saved her the trouble. [Pg 194]

"Lucy thought of going to see Mr. Haveloc's new church," said Harriet. "I don't know whether it is settled, because if he is out, we shall have to find the beadle, or the sexton, or somebody, to show it us. But, to be sure, we can take Everard with us, to run about and find the proper people. I wonder when *you* will grow good enough to build churches, Everard?"

"I don't know. I must grow rich enough first," he said.

Mr. Gage did not despise Mr. Haveloc for this fancy; he only pitied him. If he had spent so much that he had not enough left to buy a proper number of horses and carriages, then it would have been something to despise. But, as he had not deprived himself of any luxuries in the prosecution of his whim, he contented himself with the softer emotion of pity.

"I suppose we shall not have you with us, George," said Harriet.

"No." [Pg 195]

Mr. Gage confessed he saw nothing very attractive in a damp country church, full of workmen. And he happened to be engaged to go somewhere with the Deacons.

"And you, Everard?"

"No." The day was so hot, he thought he should stay at home.

Harriet looked for a moment undecided whether she should permit this act of rebellion to pass unnoticed; but seeing Margaret about to leave the room, she joined her, and they went down stairs together.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick declined being of the party to the church. She would wait till Mr. Haveloc returned from town; and then he should be her cicerone. She was not so very fond of architecture for its own sake—but Margaret was. She had no doubt the expedition would delight Margaret.

So they set off—Lady Raymond, Harriet and Margaret—through a most beautiful country, and a great many steep, uneven, narrow roads. At last, the church, low in a valley, and buried among old trees, came in sight. [Pg 196]

"I never was so glad to see a steeple before," said Harriet. "Why it is twelve miles off! I am knocked up, and so are you, child. How pale you look!"

A low, heavy oaken gate admitted them into the church-yard. They left the carriage without, and stood looking at the building. It was a beautiful church. The pencil of Cattermole might almost weary in recording the elaborate carving of the stonework about the windows, and the deep porch. The doors were open, for the workmen were about some of the pillars and scaffolds, and tools still announced their occupation within.

The organ was pealing, and the rich sound swelled into the quiet church-yard.

"They have a blind organist here," said Lucy. "He plays admirably. Listen—Mozart's mass in C."

"Beautiful! how fine the Gloria sounds," said Harriet. "What a movement!" [Pg 197]

"I wish the Protestant Church was musical," said Lucy, as they walked up the aisle.

"Is that you, Lady Raymond?" asked the player, coming to the front of the gallery. It was Mr. Haveloc.

Margaret's start—the mist that rushed before her eyes, were unobserved by her companions.

Lucy went on. "We were praising your playing so much, Mr. Haveloc. We thought it was your organist."

"I will come down to you," he said, and disappearing from the gallery, he joined them in the aisle.

"So, you have found your way here at last, Lady Raymond," he said as he shook hands with her. "Confess that the road was very tolerable, after all."

"Bearable," said Lucy. "Mrs. Gage and Miss Capel are behind."

He advanced to Harriet, bowed to Margaret in passing, and went on speaking to Harriet.

"And you did not come on horseback, Mrs. Gage? I thought from Lady Raymond's account, you were never out of the saddle." [Pg 198]

"It is so very warm to-day," said Harriet, "how nice and cool the church feels. But, how very odd! What a mint of money this must have cost!"

"Aye. But one never cares what one spends upon a fancy. I am not so satisfied with the bills my gardener brings me in for plants. I dare say, now, you did not grudge what you gave for your favourite horse."

"My chestnut was a present from Uncle Singleton," said Harriet, "but it is shocking to think what he cost."

"I always think it very extravagant to spend much upon horses," said Lady Raymond, "they are such uncertain things. They fall lame, or die; or, something—"

"Not more uncertain than Blenheim spaniels," said Harriet, laughing.

"Ah! true, Lady Raymond; recollect the fifty guineas for Flora," said Mr. Haveloc. [Pg 199]

"You certainly saved her life that day," said Lucy. "Raymond did not know what on earth to do for her, poor little love!"

"You will stand up for the cold water cure after that," said Mr. Haveloc.

"I shall, indeed," said Lady Raymond, "I sing your praises every where."

"But I am dying to see the tomb of the Danish sea-king," said Harriet. "Where is it?"

"It was in the chancel," Mr. Haveloc said. "He would show them the way."

Margaret gathered from this trifling conversation, on what an intimate footing he was at Wardenscourt. She felt sick to death. She never lifted her eyes from the pavement, and scarcely knew where she was going, nor what her companions were talking about. She was occupied with one feeling, that he must think it strange and indelicate that she was of the party, and that she wished that some one would tell him that they believed him to be in London.

But they were too much engrossed with the strange old tomb. [Pg 200]

"This granite chest—look, Lucy! how curious!" exclaimed Harriet. "And what a sword—immense! can you lift it, Mr. Haveloc?"

He raised it a little off the lid.

"It is chained down, you see," he said, "because it was once stolen. And my ancestor had more trouble than it was worth in getting it back again."

"What time was that?" asked Lady Raymond.

"In the reign of William the Third," he replied.

"Has this tomb ever been opened?" asked Harriet.

"Yes. In my father's time."

"And what did they find within?"

"A good deal of armour, and a few bones."

"Delightful! If I were you, Mr. Haveloc, I would make a point of being buried in it myself," said Harriet, laughing. Those persons who think little of preparing for death, are always the most [Pg 201] cheerful and ready in talking about it.

"I would not intrude upon him," said Mr. Haveloc. "I should be very scrupulous of usurping the last home of any man."

"Oh! you are quite a saint, I hear, Mr. Haveloc," said Harriet, gaily.

"Very good hearing," said Mr. Haveloc; "but, saint, or not, I have no idea of squeezing into this tomb along with the old Dane!"

Margaret, feeling more and more sick and faint, held by the altar rail while they were talking. His neglect of herself; his easy intimacy with the others, struck her to the heart. She had no reason to expect that he would meet her with any emotion, but still this coldness, all the keener from being perfectly unstudied, affected her more than she could have anticipated.

Now, the fact was, he had not recognised her; being extremely near-sighted, and not at all expecting to see her, he had imagined Lady Raymond had said "Miss Campbell," when she named [Pg 202] Margaret; a young lady whom he had met at her house, but of whose person he had not a more distinct idea than of that of the Empress of China.

The first thing that started her from her reverie, was a laugh from Mr. Haveloc.

"Look at Mrs. Gage, with all those orange and green panes upon her face," he exclaimed.

Lucy laughed heartily; Harriet started on one side: "Do go back again, Harriet," she cried; "you have no idea how droll it looked."

"Thank you; take your turn, if you please," said Harriet.

"How vain she is!" cried Lucy; "do you stand there, Mr. Haveloc?"

He complied with her request; and both sisters were extremely amused by the effect produced. Any trifle would serve to set them laughing; they were always in high spirits.

"Oh! but we have not seen the altar-cloth," said Lucy, recovering herself.

It was covered with brown Holland, and Mr. Haveloc went to the rail, where Margaret was [Pg 203] standing, to go up to the altar and take off the cover.

"Permit me," he said politely to Margaret, as he passed her.

The tears rushed to her eyes, but she bravely forced them back, and tried to still her agitation.

"Good gracious!" said Harriet, far more struck with this finery, than the exquisite architecture of the church; "where did you get this beautiful work?"

"At Bruges," he replied.

"Oh, Heavens! done by Roman Catholic fingers. How horribly wicked you are—and yet it is so exquisite, that I really—"

"What day will you dine with us, Mr. Haveloc?" said Lucy, leaning over the rail.

"Whenever you please to command me, Lady Raymond," he replied.

"Raymond would be so pleased if we brought you back with us; he thinks you still in town," said Lady Raymond.

Poor Margaret! the idea of driving back with him in the same carriage. [Pg 204]

"I cannot make it out to-day, I have so many things to do," he said.

"You will like to come," said Harriet, "because Everard is staying with us, and you knew all the Gages, did you not?"

"*You* are staying there, Mrs. Gage, is not that sufficient?"

"Oh, if I was but single," exclaimed Harriet, who never hesitated saying what was uppermost in her mind, "how I would try to catch you!"

"Why did you never do me that honour when you had it in your power, Mrs. Gage?" said Mr. Haveloc, laughing.

"Because, Mr. Haveloc, I had not then seen your altar-cloth."

"Your sister uses me very ill," said he, turning to Lady Raymond; "she would have me believe that all my merits lie in that altar-cloth."

"What did it cost, Mr. Haveloc?" said Harriet.

"Will you confess to the cost of your chestnut, if I tell you?" [Pg 205]

"Agreed."

"Three hundred guineas."

"You don't say so!"

"And the chestnut?"

"The very sum."

"But my cloth will outlast your horse."

"Well, I allow that," said Harriet; "but it does not follow that you are the less extravagant of the two."

"You are both horridly extravagant," said Lucy, "but say when you will dine with us."

"Mr. Haveloc," said Harriet, beckoning him close to her, "another attraction, Mrs. Fitzpatrick is with us."

His agitation quite satisfied Harriet; he started, coloured, tried to speak very calmly, and turned to Lady Raymond.

"Will your ladyship allow me to say to-morrow?"

"By all means," she said, "if you cannot really come to-day."

"I wish I could," he replied.

Another confirmation for Margaret, if she had needed it. The whole chancel seemed swimming round. [Pg 206]

She asked Harriet in a low voice if she knew how late it was.

"No, ma mie, enlighten me," said Harriet.

Margaret showed her watch.

"The fact is, you are quite tired child," said Harriet, looking attentively at her face.

"Quite—the heat—" faltered Margaret.

"Then we will go at once," said Mrs. Gage with her usual decision.

Mr. Haveloc was trying to persuade Lady Raymond to go on to Tynebrook, to see some Vandykes, and taste some particular black grapes.

Lucy was hesitating.

"No, no, no!" said Harriet, coming between them, "you will be late, I tell you; and you know that half a hundred formal people are coming to dinner. You will get into sad disgrace."

Lucy decided at once to go home, and Mr. Haveloc gave her his arm, and walked with them through the church-yard to the carriage.

"Mr. Haveloc," said Harriet, "we are going to act a French vaudeville; the parts are not all filled. Will you take one?" [Pg 207]

"I regret that my genius does not lie that way;" he said, "what is the play?"

"'La Demoiselle á marier.' Lucy is too idle to act—her forte is in tableaux. I am going to be the mother; Lord James Deacon, the friend; the father is to be forthcoming when we want him, and as Lady James won't take the lover, which is a shame, for she has an excellent figure for it; I don't very well see how you can be off—"

"I should put you out. I have no turn for the stage; and, besides, I am not familiar with French," he said, "if it had been Italian now—"

"Oh! you speak it as well as we do, I dare say," said Lucy, "you had better take it, I think."

"We will talk it over to-morrow," said Harriet as he put her into the carriage.

"And who plays the 'Demoiselle á marier?'" he asked. [Pg 208]

"We want to persuade Miss Campbell," said Lucy, "because she sings well, and speaks French beautifully; better, I believe than any Englishwoman ever did."

"Ah!" said Mr. Haveloc, turning with a smile to Margaret, "and are you so very difficult then to persuade?"

He was handing her into the carriage as he spoke; as she seated herself her face was directly before him, pale as a marble statue—dim—reproachful.

"Spectre-smitten!" said Harriet as the carriage swept away, "what was the matter, Margaret?"

"The—matter—" said Margaret, speaking with difficulty.

"I am sure we will not let him off acting, after that start," continued Harriet. "Hamlet is nothing to him. I wonder which of us is so very horribly ugly," she continued, laughing, "depend upon it,

[Pg 209]

the man has murdered somebody in his day."

"Harriet! what horrid ideas you have," said Lucy, leaning back very comfortably, "the notion of poor Mr. Haveloc having murdered any one. Don't you think, Miss Capel, it is a beautiful church?"

"Very," said Margaret.

"She has a head-ache; don't talk to her," said Harriet, decidedly.

Lady Raymond was shocked and concerned; and offered Margaret her vinaigrette and her Eau de Cologne, and reproached herself for undertaking so long a drive in the heat.

Margaret tried to smile and thank her, and by the use of the flaçon to still the trembling of her nerves.

"Oh! I see, Margaret," said Harriet, suddenly, "he took you for Miss Campbell, and when he was putting you into the carriage he found his mistake; that made him look so èbahi; but I should not have fancied him to be such a shy person."

"Never was anybody less shy," said Lucy.

"He did look thunderstruck, to be sure," said Harriet. "Margaret, why did you not speak to him before?" [Pg 210]

Margaret roused herself. "I believe I am shy Harriet," she said.

"Do you think him handsome, Harriet?" asked Lucy playing with the fringe of her parasol.

"Of course not," said Harriet, "he is as dark as a Moor."

"I don't think that an objection," said Lucy. "I rather like that sort of expressive face. I fancy a painter would never be tired of watching him."

"We must get him for Alphonse;" said Harriet musing, "he looks foreign; and he is graceful in his gestures. Then, if Margaret prefers Everard, what a chance for Miss Campbell. Lucy! Ah! stop the carriage! Thompson, a glass of water—there is a cottage—run—Miss Capel has fainted!" [Pg 211]

CHAPTER XII.

Org. Time can never
On the white table of unguilty faith
Write counterfeit dishonour.
FORD.

"It was the heat, Harriet, indeed. Mrs. Fitzpatrick will tell you that I cannot bear hot weather," said Margaret earnestly.

"Mrs. Fitzpatrick is not in the room, *ma mie*," said Harriet, taking a chair just opposite to Margaret. "I certainly never knew such a heroine as you are. Going down to dinner after an obstinate fainting fit; divinely dressed, and looking like a very pale angel. Now I have said a generous thing, because I see your white dress is more prettily made than mine; but I make a great exertion and forgive you."

Margaret smiled.

"Well now, Margaret, what was it? This is the second time of asking. Beware of the third." [Pg 212]

"I have told you, dear Harriet," said Margaret. "I was not well when I came. I felt wretchedly all yesterday, and Mrs. Fitzpatrick thought the journey had been too much for one day; she means to divide it when we go back."

"When you go back! That will not be while I am here, I can tell you," said Harriet. "Oh! I do wish Margaret that you were married. I hate single women!"

"I really cannot help that, Harriet," said Margaret.

"I told you all about my affair with George;" said Harriet with emphasis.

"True, dear Harriet, but I was not a married woman!" said Margaret, trying to rally her spirits.

"If you think I should repeat any-thing to George, you are quite mistaken," said Harriet, "he may think himself very well off if I confide to him my own affairs." [Pg 213]

"But, indeed, dear Harriet, I have no affairs to confide;" persisted poor Margaret.

"You cannot be in love with Mr. Haveloc;" said Harriet musing, and trying to recall what happened at Chirke Weston, the only time she saw them both together.

"In love with him—no!" said Margaret drawing herself up, and speaking with energy.

"Brava! you handsome little creature;" cried Harriet catching her in her arms, and covering her with kisses, "but come, it is a dull party to-day, but we will make up for it to-morrow."

If it was a dull party, it was at least a very large one. The drawing-room was full. Lady Raymond, with jewels in her dress and hair, was standing by a vase of flowers, showing something choice to one of the guests. Lord Raymond came in quietly, spoke to the company, went up to his wife and looked at her dress, took hold of one of her ornaments, with some curiosity, and then stood on the hearth-rug until dinner was ready. [Pg 214]

Margaret was assigned to Everard Gage, who never talked if he could help it; and she felt the luxury of repose and silence during this grand, tedious dinner.

When they were again in the drawing-room, the ladies divided into little knots according to their tastes and degrees of intimacy. Mrs. Fitzpatrick was seated in one of the windows; Margaret at a stand near her, looking over some prints; Harriet was discussing, with Miss Campbell and Lady James Deacon, the French vaudeville they meant to act.

Lady Raymond, whose feelings, though not very deep, were kindly, seated herself beside Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

"We met a very old friend of yours to-day, quite unexpectedly," she said in a low voice.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Fitzpatrick with great interest. "Was it Mr. Haveloc? Is he at Tynebrook?" [Pg 215]

"He is just arrived," said Lucy, "and he dines with us to-morrow. I thought you would like to know."

"Thank you; I shall be truly glad to see him;" said Mrs. Fitzpatrick with a sigh.

"I know it all," said Lucy in a sympathising tone. "Raymond told me he was engaged to my poor cousin." For Lady Raymond having adopted Mrs. Fitzpatrick to that degree of relationship, extended the kindred to her lost daughter.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick was truth itself; there was no occasion to enter into detail; but she could not avoid correcting an erroneous statement of facts.

"He is a very intimate and tried friend of mine," she said; "but he was not engaged, nor even attached to my daughter in the common sense of the word. He did not form our acquaintance until after Aveline had too clearly shown a tendency to the complaint which destroyed her. There could have been no thought of marriage between them; but being in my neighbourhood, during the latter part of her illness, he paid me such frequent visits, that, had there been any gossip in that solitary place, I dare say it would have ascribed such a reason for his conduct. I am sure he was like a son to me, at a time when I was deeply in need of support. And it is possible that under other circumstances, if his heart was disengaged, of which I am entirely ignorant, the regard and respect that he felt for my daughter might have ripened into a permanent attachment." [Pg 216]

"Of course it would; it is just the same thing. How melancholy!" said Lucy, with the usual amount of pity in her voice. "And so after all, my dear Mrs. Fitzpatrick, you are to be the future mistress of Tynebrook."

"Do be reasonable, my dear Lady Raymond," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick, laughing. "I have always heard it considered hazardous for ladies to think of single men as their brothers: but I never heard that the same danger existed when they looked upon them as sons."

The prints fell from Margaret's hands. She sat listening—breathless—with parted lips, and eyes fixed, to every word that Mrs. Fitzpatrick uttered. [Pg 217]

At first she could not think; she seemed turned to stone. Her next feeling was a sense of oppression, which made her find the crowded room intolerable. She looked cautiously round, and seeing every one engaged in their own pursuits, she made her escape through one of the open windows into the shrubbery.

And all this she might have known easily before. She must often have been within a hair's breadth of knowing, when any-thing moved Mrs. Fitzpatrick to some distant allusion to her daughter.

And two years had passed, during which she had been guilty of such injustice, such baseness; for had she loved nobly, would she have believed appearances against him? She, who was so slow to believe evil of the most casual acquaintance. All her sorrow, all her agony had been nothing to this corroding sense of shame to which she was now delivered. [Pg 218]

When she had believed herself sinned against, she knew where to seek for alleviation; but how shield her heart from the intolerable sting of believing herself to be the one in fault? To have ruined her happiness for life through a narrowness of soul that refused to trust implicitly the heart and honour of the man she had chosen!

To her high generosity of feeling the anguish that these reflections brought with them was intolerable.

Sinking on a seat, she remained motionless—tearless; endeavouring to still by the pressure of her hands, the wild beating of her heart. And few people, after committing some deadly crime, would have felt more conscience-stricken, more self-debased, than Margaret, when she reproached herself for the ungenerous want of a romantic confidence.

How long she sat there she knew not; but she was roused by the clear voice of Harriet, among [Pg 219]

the shrubs exclaiming:

"Run, Everard! Why don't you run? How can you expect to find any one at this snail's pace?"

"I do run," was the faint reply.

Margaret, thinking it better to declare herself, called to Harriet, who was presently at her side. Everard Gage creeping slowly after.

Harriet turned to look at him.

"Come, make haste, and give Miss Capel your arm—or, no; run as fast as you can to the house, and bring out a shawl."

Everard turned, and disappeared slowly down the walk.

"Well, now, ma mie," said Harriet, sitting down beside her; "was the room too hot?"

"Yes; but it was rather the sound of so many voices that disturbed me," said Margaret.

"Well, then, little one, go to bed," said Harriet. "If you sleep soundly, you will be well to-morrow. I [Pg 220] can't think what is come to the child; her hands are as cold as ice."

Margaret took Harriet's arm, and returned to the house. At the portico, they met Everard Gage, who had just succeeded in finding a shawl. Harriet rallied him upon the haste he had made, attempted to push him out of her path with the points of her slender fingers, and led Margaret up the great staircase.

She helped to undress her with great care and quickness, brought her some coffee, saw her drink it, and then desired her to go to sleep.

Strange to say, she had not long been out of the room, before Margaret obeyed her directions, and fell into a profound slumber.

Yielding to the advice of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, it was late in the morning before she went down stairs.

As the day was very hot, the ladies had all agreed not to go out. The evening was the gay time at Wardenscourt; and it was good policy not to look fagged, when there were so many people [Pg 221] always to dinner.

Margaret found the ladies assembled, all at their worsted work, except Harriet, who was playing with Lady James Deacon's little boy, and enticing him to do all sorts of mischief to the ladies' work-baskets.

Lady James had no objection that her darling should be amused at the expense of worsteds and floss silks, so long as he kept his hands out of her particular basket; and Harriet raced him round the room like a kitten, trailing after him half a dozen brilliant-coloured balls.

Miss Campbell, who was pretty, in spite of her red hair, and possessed all the mysterious powers of attracting the other sex, common to ladies of that hue, became an object of serious interest to Margaret.

She remembered Mr. Haveloc's smile, when he thought he was speaking to Miss Campbell; she recollected that he had not positively declined the part of Alphonse, and Miss Campbell seemed [Pg 222] only to be uncertain about accepting Camille, until she knew definitely, who was to enact the lover.

As she reclined in a low arm-chair, displaying the most slender ancle conceivable, and a thin foot incomparably shod, with her delicate blue muslin dress, her exquisite collar, and piquante cap of blue gauze artfully commingled with lace, Margaret thought that no one could deny her the meed of remarkable elegance. True, that extreme slenderness of form was adverse to an evening toilet, the neck and arms gained considerably by being left to the imagination; but she was exceedingly clever—talked good nonsense, laughed prettily, and sang with great archness and point. She was certain of a crowd of gentlemen round the piano, whenever she went to it: and Margaret who had scarcely ever seen Mr. Haveloc in society, did not know at all the style of person he generally admired. Harriet called her a knitting pin, a javelin-woman, and every other term she could coin [Pg 223] expressive of her distaste for that style of beauty; but Harriet was no guide in the present instance; no test of what Mr. Haveloc might like. And feeling sure that she was, by her own act, for ever divided from Mr. Haveloc, she was conscious of a feverish desire to know on whom his choice would fall.

The ladies dispersed to dress rather earlier than usual, there were three or four officers coming, and women seem aware that fine clothes are never wasted upon men in that profession.

Margaret whose dress was always simple, came down soon into the deserted drawing-room, and finding Mrs. Fitzpatrick reading at a table, she joined her, and read over her shoulder. It was the "Records of Woman." They looked as if grouped for a picture, and Harriet who was coming in at the door-way with Mr. Haveloc, who had just arrived, stopped him and bade him admire the attitude.

Margaret's face was turned from them, but her extended arm, as white and rounded as that of a [Pg 224] statue, was passed over Mrs. Fitzpatrick's shoulder, tracing the lines with her finger. Mr. Haveloc stayed a moment, in obedience to Mrs. Gage, then came abruptly up to Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

"My dear Mrs. Fitzpatrick!"

"Mr. Haveloc—this is a pleasure!"

Margaret withdrew her hand softly, and passing behind them, went to one of the sofas and sat down beside Harriet. Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Haveloc continued in earnest conversation. Directly after he had spoken to her, he looked round as if to address Margaret, but finding her gone, and people scattered between them, for the room was now filling, he turned back again.

Margaret tried to keep up a conversation with Harriet; she took up her fan, and asked Mrs. Gage to show her some of the Spanish movements with it. Harriet, full of fun, complied. She showed her how to say, "How are you—come, and see me," and other little sentences of the kind; but she warned her that this accomplishment did not depend solely on the dexterous handling of the fan, but required to be seconded by the expression of the lady's eye. [Pg 225]

Lord James Deacon wished to share the lesson; but at the first trial, he endangered the ivory sticks, and Harriet took the fan from his hand. Lucy declined a trial, and Everard got to the farthest end of the room, behind the piano, because Harriet had already called to him for a footstool. Lord Raymond said gravely that he did not think the Spanish women could be much better than they should be; and that he thought these tricks with fans were as bad as sending about tulips, and cinders, and rubbish, as the women did in Turkey.

Lady Raymond laughed at him, and so did all the others. Miss Campbell was wild to learn, and Margaret surrendered her place to her; but dinner was announced before the lesson could proceed. Margaret, as usual, was assigned to Everard Gage, and as usual they went on very peaceably. [Pg 226]

Mr. Haveloc was between Miss Campbell, and Mrs. Fitzpatrick, but he appeared to devote all his attention to the latter lady. Lord James Deacon treated Margaret with his usual insolent neglect; staring hard at her when it suited him, and at other times neither addressing a word to her, nor helping her to what she wanted at table.

In the evening, Lady Raymond came up to Mr. Haveloc who was standing by Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and renewed her entreaties that he would take the part of Alphonse.

He declined, laughing—she pressed the point; she bought Lord Raymond to press the point—still he laughed it off.

Nothing he should like better than to play, if he could; but it was a weakness of his, that he could not overcome. He was too diffident to succeed on the boards.

Harriet accused him of being a Saint.

He bowed to the compliment, and said he saw neither reason nor precedent for saints to put on the buskin when they had no turn for wearing it. [Pg 227]

Lady James Deacon who had secretly destined him for her friend Miss Campbell, now called on that young lady to persuade him.

Miss Campbell was sitting on a sofa making pencil alterations in a song. She looked up with her quaint expression.

"Oh, don't teaze him!" she said, "I would not. Put his name down, and send him a part-book, if you cannot get a *better* Alphonse."

She gave her speeches all the point in tone and manner of a good actress. Mr. Haveloc took a seat by her side.

"Is that your advice, Miss Campbell?" he said, "they should make you stage-manager."

"Lord James is stage-manager," she replied, without raising her eyes from the sheet of music she was marking.

"Are you going to sing, Miss Campbell?" he asked.

"Oh! if I'm properly begged and prayed;" she returned, still making dots on the paper on her knee. [Pg 228]

"How much begging and praying do you require?"

"*Try*," she said, suddenly raising her quaint eyes.

Every body laughed, Mr. Haveloc as much as the rest.

"Everard!" cried Harriet, making way for him, "see if *you* possess sufficient oratory to persuade Miss Campbell."

"*Do*," said he, putting on his softest look. They all laughed again. Miss Campbell rose, and walked idly to the piano.

"No eloquence like the laconic," said Mr. Haveloc to Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

"So I perceive," she said smiling, "it was equal to the Spartan—*If*."

But Miss Campbell having tried over the embellishments with her right hand, rose from the

instrument.

The officers surrounded her with various exclamations, she paid no sort of attention to them, and resumed her seat beside Mr. Haveloc. [Pg 229]

"What have we all done," said he, "that you disappoint us in this manner."

"Nothing at all," said she, putting the music in his hand, "but Schubert has done something, he has written this accompaniment in so many flats, that it is beyond me to read, and sing at once."

"Then let some one accompany you."

"La chose est faisible," said she, "go and canvass for me."

"What do you want," asked Lady Raymond.

"Only a player," he returned, "will you be so charitable?"

"Oh! not at sight, I wish I could. Harriet!"

No; Harriet would not volunteer, she had her own private reasons, which she would not reveal. The fact was, that she had made up her mind to forward Margaret's interest with Mr. Haveloc, and to cross Miss Campbell in her endeavours.

Lady James would not undertake Schubert, nor would Mrs. Leslie, nor any of the Miss Veseys. [Pg 230]

"Margaret will, I am sure," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

Margaret who had been detained in conversation by one of the officers, who had heard she had a good fortune, rose, and proffered her services. The officer, knowing he must undergo a certain amount of trouble if he hoped to get her money, led her to the piano, and arranged the music. Margaret took her place with the pleasing consciousness that Mr. Haveloc was about a yard behind her, listening with eager delight to the singer. It was well worth listening to, never was a clearer, or sweeter voice, and her German was perfect. Even Everard said, "He never had—" which was rather a long sentence for him, and all united in begging for something else.

Miss Campbell allowed herself to be persuaded, and selected one of Vestris's ballads.

"You will not want me for that, I think," said Margaret, looking up to Miss Campbell. [Pg 231]

"No, thank you very much, how beautifully you play," said Miss Campbell, making way for her.

Some one moved a chair out of her path, it was Mr. Haveloc. She bowed, glided quietly across the room, and sank into a chair, heart-sick. Mr. Haveloc, who had followed her, leaned against a table by her side. She felt so humbled now that she knew the real motives of his conduct, that she did not venture to lift up her eyes, but sat with her hands clasped listlessly in her lap, trying to feel calm and composed. He remained silent for a few moments, finding it as difficult as she did, to be calm.

"I did not know you, yesterday, Miss Capel," he said at last, "at least, not till I had put you in the carriage. I am very near-sighted."

To tell her so! This was, indeed, proclaiming that he had forgotten all their former intimacy. She looked up, trying to speak. There was a pause. He stood playing with his eye-glass; he seemed to have something else to say, and Margaret only hoped he would make haste, for she felt as if she could not bear up much longer. At last he said in a very low tone: [Pg 232]

"We can never be entire strangers to each other; we have one memory between us—the memory of your uncle."

Margaret tried to reply in vain. She was trembling so much, that she feared she should fall from her chair. Mrs. Fitzpatrick came up to her at the moment.

"Come, my child," she said, "I must send you to bed early until you are quite strong again. Good night."

Margaret rose, gave a bow in passing to Mr. Haveloc, without daring to raise her eyes, and made her way through the officers who were standing round Harriet. Mrs. Gage relating to them the history of the altar-cloth, and the officers laughing almost into convulsions, and declaring that Mrs. Gage and the altar-cloth would certainly be the death of all of them. [Pg 233]

CHAPTER XIII.

Mary. Why thinks King Henry's son that Margaret's love
Hangs in the uncertain balance of proud time?
That death shall make a discord of our thoughts?
GREENE.

Faithe is the first, and principally to tell,
And verie love requirith soche credence,
That eche beleve othir true as the gospel,
In true menyng and trustie confidence.

Margaret had promised to breakfast with Harriet every day in the Oratory. When she went in the next morning, the room was vacant; the table spread, the urn steaming, the tea made, and newspapers laid ready. She took up one and seated herself to wait. Presently she heard voices in the passage which divided the Oratory from Harriet's room. The speakers were Harriet and Everard Gage. [Pg 234]

"Why do you interfere with me?" said Everard, in a tone that would have been cross but for the exertion.

"Because you are a slug," was Harriet's flattering reply, "I gave you every chance for two days, and now I will take her away from you. You shall not have her."

"A man can't make an offer in two days," said Everard.

"No, but he can make himself agreeable in half a day, instead of that you have behaved like a stupid wax doll; and so I have settled to give Miss Capel to some one else. And you can't help yourself!" said Harriet in a tone of exultation that it was very difficult to bear temperately.

"I like that," said Everard, "I shall ask George if it is right for you to make matches."

A peal of laughter from Harriet, that threatened to be interminable—in the midst of which George Gage, coming through the passage on his way to the Oratory, was stopped by the disputants—and then ensued a great deal of laughing from himself and Harriet, mixed with a low, complaining noise from Everard, which soon sank into silence. Margaret not caring to be found there, escaped to her own room, and when she was summoned by Mrs. Thompson, she found all three seated peaceably at the table. Everard sat next her, and after handing her all she wanted, took a moss rose-bud from his coat, and presented it to her. Margaret thanked him, and laid it by her plate. Harriet snatched it up and put it in her own dress. Mr. Gage tried to look serious, and Everard did not seem to know how to take it. But he made no more attempts at conciliating Margaret during breakfast. It was hard work at the best, but when there was another person counteracting all you did, it was too gigantic an adventure. [Pg 235]

"I will tell you some news, ma mie," said Harriet, "Bessy and Uncle Gage will be here next week. Mr. Haveloc stays for the pigeon shooting, the day after to-morrow; and Everard says he will read the part of Alphonse at our rehearsals. And the play is to come off on Monday." [Pg 236]

"Haveloc will stay for the play, I suppose," said Mr. Gage.

"Oh, true!" said Harriet, "Lucy settled that with him, the last thing. But he will not act—so provoking; I shall have to teach Everard, at last."

"I cannot learn all that by heart," said Everard.

"Oh, yes, you will to please me!" said Harriet, "you will be so much admired. Think how well you will look, so like a dear wax-work!"

"Then you must do something for me in return," said Everard.

"Oh! that is Jewish; but I will do several things, if you are quite perfect."

"You know what I mean," said Everard.

"Yes, I know all about it," said Harriet, "there, take my part-book, go down into the library, and have all that scene perfect before I come." [Pg 237]

"Well, but where are you going? I could sit here, and you read it out to me, I should learn it faster that way."

"Take him away, George, do!" cried Harriet stamping her foot.

The brothers disappeared together, and Harriet remained leaning against the window, making some mental calculations, which she seemed counting on her fingers.

"Yes," she said to herself, at last, "I will amuse Everard with Miss Campbell, and then Margaret —"

Margaret started in fear.

"Margaret!" said Harriet, "I have resolved that you shall be mistress of Tynebrook."

Margaret burst into one of her rare passions of tears. Harriet was frightened, and distressed, and still more puzzled.

"I do declare, little one, I cannot make you out," said she, as soon as she had caressed Margaret into something like calm ness again; "first you faint, and then you cry, and all for some mysterious reason I cannot fathom. If I do find out your secret, I will have no mercy on you." [Pg 238]

"But listen Harriet," said Margaret, "I am so vexed when you plan such things; and not being well, everything agitates me."

"Well I won't teaze the little beauty," said Harriet; "let us go down and find something to amuse you. But Margaret," said she, hanging on the threshold, "remember I have had the disorder, and

am familiar with the symptoms."

Lord James was in the library acting with Miss Campbell, Lucy holding the book. The father was to ride over in the course of the morning; he was the officer who had shown some disposition for Margaret's money the evening before. Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Haveloc were walking in the shrubberies. Margaret took out her netting, and sat down in the shade, out of every one's way. Harriet threw herself on the scene, made Lucy read the part of M. Dumenil, until the officer should appear, and commanded the play to begin again. Everard was forced forward, and laughed at by Harriet, who called him a wax-work, and offered him a letter of introduction to Mme. Tussaud, and then praised him into good humour again; and recommended him to Miss Campbell for instruction, which that young lady willingly undertook. The officer came in, and had no time to molest Margaret, for he was seized upon by Harriet, and had his part-book snatched from him, and marked full of stage directions, and was turned on among the tables and chairs, to blunder through his rôle, before he had time to look round, or discover who was in the room. [Pg 239]

Harriet's acting was inimitable, like every thing she undertook. The officer was not very bad; Lord James pretty well, and Miss Campbell full of an arch simplicity, that showed her as accomplished on, as she was off the stage. In the midst of it all, Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Haveloc entered with Lord Raymond. [Pg 240]

His Lordship was delighted at the amusement provided for him so unexpectedly. He signed his companions to chairs, and sat down and clapped with great vigour. Then down came Lady James, who took a chair next to Mr. Haveloc, and began to abuse him on his want of gallantry in declining the part of Alphonse. She believed he was the only man who would refuse an opportunity of playing with her friend Miss Campbell.

Mr. Haveloc said that he was selfish enough to wish to enjoy Miss Campbell's excellent acting thoroughly, which he could not have done, had he played with her.

Lady James was appeased by this answer, which, did not, however, sound quite sincere to Margaret's ear, proceeded to give him a catalogue of all her young friend's merits, which lasted, so numerous were they, until the play had been read through. Then the actors dispersed, the officer to the back of Margaret's chair, Everard to the nearest sofa, Lord James to Lady Raymond, and Harriet to Mr. Haveloc. Yes, just as Lady James had called Miss Campbell to her, and assigned the seat next that gentleman, Harriet beckoned him to the window, and swept him out upon the lawn. [Pg 241]

"I say, do you know the name of this red thing," said she, pointing to a flower in one of the beds.

"No, I don't. I have it, but I have forgotten the name," he said.

"How long have you been at Tynebrook?"

"About two months."

"What! have you done all that to the church in two months?"

"Every bit of it. I was in Norway three months ago."

"Ah! You are a great traveller, I believe."

"I have done little else for the last two years." [Pg 242]

"Well, that is a very pleasant way of passing time."

"I don't know that it is quite right," said Mr. Haveloc. "One leaves all one's duties behind in travelling; that is one of its great attractions." Then feeling that his companion was not very likely to sympathize with him, he changed the subject.

"I saw your chestnut this morning, Mrs. Gage. He is superb. I hardly know such a beautiful head."

"Has he not? And so tame. Did George go with you?"

"He did, and the chestnut held a very rational conversation with him?"

"You admire him, as much as I did your altar-cloth."

"I do, indeed."

"I think you must have got it on purpose for your wedding, Mr. Havleoc," said Harriet.

"I am afraid it will not serve that turn," he replied; "for there is no lady in my parish above the condition of a small farmer's daughter. Tynebrook is a wilderness." [Pg 243]

"Ah, true! the lady must be married in her own parish," said Harriet, narrowly regarding his countenance.

"That is the etiquette, I believe," he said, gravely; and as she did not speak again directly, he turned quietly and courteously away, and walked to the library.

As soon as Harriet made the move, most of the party strolled away under the trees. The officer, who was unusually disagreeable in Margaret's eyes, asked her if she would not follow their example, and offered his arm, as if to decide her choice.

Margaret thanked him, but said she preferred sitting quiet, as the day was hot; and she was in a hurry to finish her netting.

The officer said she was very prudent, and taking a chair, offered to read to her.

Margaret's vexation knew no bounds, but she was not aware that the man wanted her money, and she thought he really meant it as a civility, so she composed herself to listen. But after a few [Pg 244] sentences, horribly read, her impatience could not be controlled. She rose, muttered something about wanting more silk, and went to her room to be quiet.

Mr. Haveloc came in the moment after, found Everard asleep on a sofa, and the officer, still seated with the book in his hand, wondering how any girl could go away while he was sitting by her.

Margaret did not leave her room till dinner time. Harriet paid her a visit when she thought it proper. She should have some luncheon, with sandwiches, and a plate of delicious ice.

Margaret was thankful for the ice, and gratified by Harriet's kindness. Her friend told her that Miss Campbell was gone into the paddock to see Lord James shoot pigeons, to practice for the match; and that Mr. Haveloc, when it came to the point, declared he could not shoot, and was sitting with Lucy, nursing Flora. But though she told this as carelessly as any other piece of news, [Pg 245] she saw by the warm colour that rushed into Margaret's face, that she had set her mind at rest for the present.

"Well, Miss Capel," said Mason, as she put the finishing touch to her hair, "you do look splendid to-day, ma'am;" and Mason pushed down the cheval-glass, that her young lady might take a survey of herself.

"Yes, I am a little flushed by the heat," said Margaret, looking carelessly over her shoulder into the glass; "put a white rose in my hair."

Mason obeyed. Margaret lingered about the room until she thought dinner was on the point of being announced, and then went quietly into the drawing-room, and sat down out of the way, as she hoped. But Harriet's quick eye detected her in a moment. Leaving her fan in Mr. Haveloc's hands, she crossed over to her directly.

"Child! what have you done to make yourself so beautiful," she asked. "You are all steeped in lilies and roses." [Pg 246]

"I have recovered my journey by this time," said Margaret, smiling; "that is all."

"I am playing a game against Lady James," said Harriet. "It has been my amusement all day long to cross her. She is trying to get Mr. Haveloc for Miss Campbell. You will see how I manage. I want him for myself."

"For yourself, Harriet?"

"Yes, to flirt with. Now look!"

Dinner was announced. Lady James glanced at Miss Campbell, who was seated by her, and then at Mr. Haveloc, who was standing before her talking.

"My fan, please, Mr. Haveloc!" cried Harriet from the other side of the room.

He had laid it down on one of the tables, and started off to find it. While he was searching about, with his glass at his eye, Harriet came up to him.

"Why, there it is. Good gracious! Come, we shall be late;" said she seizing the fan, and taking his arm, she sailed past the discomforted Miss Campbell and Lady James. [Pg 247]

Margaret was next to Mr. Gage at dinner, and he entertained her with an account of the morning's shooting.

He said he was quite sorry for Mr. Haveloc; actually, he had confessed he could not see a pigeon five yards off—so unusual! Mr. Gage had strongly recommended him to have a glass fixed on his gun, but he had remarked that "le jeu ne valait pas la chandelle." Mr. Gage considered it a real affliction to be deprived of almost every rational means of amusement. Pigeon shooting was only one branch of the rational pursuits, there was shooting in general. He scarcely knew, indeed, how a man could hunt if he did not see a few feet in front of his horse's head. And yet Haveloc was a fair shot with a pistol. But then Miss Capel would recollect that in pistol shooting, the mark was stationary.

Miss Capel gave due attention to these items of discourse, and then Mr. Gage went on.

Really Haveloc was a very good fellow. He did not think him so religious as people made out. He [Pg 248] had persuaded them to go to Tynebrook for trout fishing to-morrow. They were to dine there late, and return the next morning—a late dinner even in these days—ten o'clock—that was Raymond's idea. He said anglers lost the best part of the day when they left off before the cool of the evening. He remembered having himself caught the finest trout he ever saw, one evening about nine o'clock. He always regretted he had not that fish weighed.

Margaret acceded to these remarks with a proper degree of interest. She felt better, stronger than she had done before, more able to be amused with what passed around her. The fact was,

she said to herself, that now her meeting with Mr. Haveloc was over—she had been in dread of it; and though in the same house, they hardly saw or spoke to each other, therefore there was nothing more to fear or hope—no suspense left.

Harriet meanwhile was keeping up a lively conversation with Mr. Haveloc, at last she said: [Pg 249]

"Are you one of Miss Capel's admirers? Every one here thinks her very beautiful."

"Very much so," replied Mr. Haveloc, without looking towards Margaret.

"You knew her uncle very well. I suppose you must have seen a good deal of her at Ashdale?"

"I did. She was very young then."

"Do you find her much altered?"

"A little—a very little."

Come! thought Harriet, whose keen ear discovered a slight faultering in his carefully guarded tone. It is mutual whatever it is. That is just what I wanted to discover. Whether or not this discovery tended to put her into good spirits, she was unusually brilliant that evening at the rehearsal. Everybody seemed animated by her.

Miss Campbell tried to play up to her, as the actors call it. The officer repeated his assurance that she had a great genius for the stage, and even Everard read his part a little as if he meant it. [Pg 250]

Margaret was sitting by Mrs. Fitzpatrick, holding Harriet's part-book, when Mr. Haveloc and Mr. Gage came in together. Mr. Haveloc came to Mrs. Fitzpatrick's chair, and Mr. Gage to Margaret's.

"You have not been prevailed upon to lend your aid, Miss Capel," said Mr. Gage.

"No," said Margaret, "happily I was not wanted."

"I could not fancy Margaret acting," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

"Nor I!" said Mr. Haveloc, suddenly.

Margaret blushed, and kept her eyes fixed on the book without distinguishing a word.

"Where am I, Margaret?" asked Harriet. "What do I say next?"

Margaret had lost the place, and now her fingers trembled so much, she could not find it. Mrs. Fitzpatrick laughed at her.

Mr. Gage took the book, and gave Harriet the cue. At last the actors came to a conclusion. They dispersed about the room. Harriet and Miss Campbell were drinking coffee, and declaring themselves parched with thirst. [Pg 251]

The officer brought himself and his coffee cup to Margaret's chair, "and hoped she had been amused, and trusted he should presently hear her sing; and begged that she would not laugh at him when he acted on Monday."

Those who knew her well, could have detected beneath the passive civility of her manner, that she was very little disposed to laugh at him, for there was something in the texture of her mind that made common people exceedingly repulsive to her, and a coarser piece of Dowlas than this officer seldom issued, even out of a barrack.

The chords of the harp were now heard from the adjoining drawing-room. Miss Campbell was performing a fantasia. Harriet came into the library snapping her fan, and looking discomposed.

"She is a fixture," said Mrs. Gage, pointing with her fan in the direction of the sounds; "it is so vexatious, for I had set my mind on Margaret singing the scene from 'Der Freischutz.'" [Pg 252]

Lucy, to whom this speech was addressed, laughed; and Margaret, escaping from the officer, joined them, and learned the cause of offence.

"My dear Harriet," said Margaret, "I will sing to you at any time. Do forgive, Miss Campbell."

"I will not, she does it on purpose, it is managed between her and Lady James, to keep you from the piano. How I detest red hair!"

Margaret laughed: "Do not detest it in the present instance, while it is connected with so charming a voice. If I had been quite—well—last night, how I should have enjoyed that romance of Schubert's."

There was something in her voice, her slight hesitation, that was very touching. Harriet caught her hands in hers.

"Is she not, Lucy?" [Pg 253]

"That she is, indeed," said Lady Raymond, affectionately.

"Is—what?" said Margaret, looking frightened.

"Is a very dear little creature," said Harriet, turning away.

"I think you have quite made a conquest of Captain Smithson," said Lucy, smiling.

Margaret shuddered.

"Oh! you shall not have him, if you don't wish it," said Lady Raymond; "come and sit by me, until Miss Campbell has done singing. Is that you, Mr. Haveloc? Tell us something to amuse us. Is it true that there is a ghost at Tynebrook?"

Mr. Haveloc started, drew a chair near Lady Raymond's, and sat down:—"A decided ghost, and no end of mysterious sounds and footsteps."

"Indeed! I hope Raymond will hear some to-morrow night. Ah!"

Lady Raymond uttered such a scream, that every one hurried into the library, Lord Raymond among them. She had seen a flash of lightning. [Pg 254]

"Nonsense," said Lord Raymond.

"All fancy," said Harriet.

"Talking of ghosts," said Mr. Haveloc.

"No one else saw it," said Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

While they were all speaking, and persuading Lucy that it was impossible, such a crash of thunder burst over the house, as convinced them that her statement was correct. Flash followed flash, and peal rolled hoarsely after peal. Lucy and Harriet were both very much afraid of thunder, it ran in the family. They sat white and trembling, Lucy holding Lord Raymond's hand, and Harriet keeping Mr. Gage standing close to her.

Now Lady Raymond was in an interesting state of health, and all the matrons of the party surrounded her, and urged her to take some sal volatile, and go to bed. Lucy consented to the sal volatile, but she would not hear of going to bed—impossible! she never could sleep during a thunder-storm. [Pg 255]

And it was rather unfortunate that she not only refused to go to bed herself, but would not allow any one else to do so; all the guests must sit round, and bear her company. She suffered herself to be laid upon a sofa, and Lord Raymond was to sit by her side, and hold her hand. She would not ever hear of the officer going home. She said it would be tempting Providence; and was quite miserable till he seated himself in an arm-chair among the others, thinking of the day of Judgment, and wishing he could drown the thought in brandy and cigars.

It was a dreadful storm; there were no pauses between the rapid explosions, the intolerable glare of the lightning. Even Mrs. Fitzpatrick sat with white lips. Harriet was crying on Mr. Gage's shoulder; Everard, tired of sitting up, was snoring in an arm-chair. Margaret looked round, wondering at the terror they all seemed to feel. They must be *very* happy she thought to feel such fear at the remote danger which attends such a scene. [Pg 256]

She looked involuntarily for Mr. Haveloc, he was not in the room. Still the storm did not abate. George Gage, who had been supporting Harriet for an hour without repining, now looked at his watch.

"Twelve o'clock! I say Harriet, would you mind Everard looking after you, while I went to smoke a cigar?"

"Oh! hear him—how profane he is!" sobbed Harriet, "to talk of smoking, with that—oh, gracious! that dreadful noise going on!"

"Well, I will not if you have any dislike—"

"By Jove, I must be off now," said Captain Smithson rising.

"No! for Heaven's sake don't be imprudent, Captain Smithson," cried Lucy, looking up, "you will be killed."

"And if you are," said Harriet, drying her eyes, "it will never do; for we shall not be able to find another 'father,' by Monday." [Pg 257]

"No, no, come with me Smithson," said Mr. Gage. "There Harriet. I am sure you don't mind it now, only look at Miss Capel."

But not an inch would Harriet let him stir. Captain Smithson longing for something to drink, made a sign to Mr. Gage, and slipped out. Margaret did not like the idea of waiting there till morning. She remembered that the conservatory commanded a very extensive view that reached to the sea; and she thought how grand that rich expanse of country would look, when summoned into life by each vivid flash of lightning.

Miss Campbell well knowing that the sickly fairness of her complexion would not stand late hours, had managed to steal off to bed. Margaret thought she should be able to follow her example—she moved gently to the door, and as no voice was raised in disapproval of her attempt, she hurried through the empty drawing-room, gained the hall, ran across, and into the large conservatory. As the house stood upon high ground, nearly twenty miles of country were visible between the windows and the sea. On one side a steep hill rose clothed with trees, so as almost [Pg 258]

to shut out the sky, and swept abruptly down to the level ground, where copse and thicket, and fertile meadows succeeded each other in many tinted chequer work, mingled with hamlets and solitary church spires. All was dark as night—a lamp hung over the door which led to the conservatory, but this did not serve to light more than a few yards of the marble pathway, which led between the orange trees. Margaret walked to the end of the path, and waited for a flash. It came, and for a single moment every tree and every roof in the wide land-scape was seen bathed in light beneath the angry sky—the silver strip of sea on the horizon glancing like a mirror, beneath the black clouds. It was a grand spectacle, as the keen lightning was seen ripping up the [Pg 259] dark masses, or dropping like a quivering dart into the thick tree tops. And the sudden darkness, and the solemn thunder rolling fainter and more faint, seemed to complete the magnificence of the hour.

At length, the interval between the peals became longer, and Margaret who had been conscious of no fatigue while watching the storm, began to feel sleepy and exhausted. After waiting some minutes, during which, such was the stillness, she could hear her own pulse, she turned away, and saying half to herself, "It is over, now;" she moved slowly down the path.

All at once a sharp light blazed across her eyes—a peal that deafened her—a crash—a sound as of musquetry just over head—a quick shower of hail and broken glass together, rattling upon the marble pavement. She raised her arms, as if to save herself, when she was suddenly seized, and whirled out into the hall so quickly, that she lost her breath, almost her senses.

"Are you hurt?" [Pg 260]

Margaret looked up at her questioner. The rattling noise of the breaking glass—the tremendous sound above, that seemed to rock the walls of the house, so sudden, so bewildering, frightened away her voice. She looked round in complete amaze. She was sitting on one of the hall chairs, and Mr. Haveloc supporting her, kneeling by her side.

"Are you not hurt?" he asked again.

She passed her hand over her eyes, and gazed around, still confused. "No," said she, "what was it?"

"The hail came suddenly," he said.

"Yes, it did—but—were you there?" she asked.

"I was."

"The storm was—very—beautiful," said she losing her voice in tears before the words were ended.

"I was not watching the storm," he replied.

Overcome by agitation and fright, her nerves thoroughly unstrung by the feelings of the few [Pg 261] preceding days, she covered her face with her hands, and gave way to her tears. There was a silence, only broken by her heavy sobs. The thunder had ceased,—the hail was over, only the large fast drops of rain fell splashing among the stiff orange leaves.

"Margaret," he said, "tell me now. What have I done?"

"Nothing—nothing!" she faltered through her tears.

"Then it was for no fault of mine; the change was in yourself," said he suddenly. "You had seen—you had loved; and it has been your turn to suffer."

"I have suffered, Claude," said Margaret withdrawing her hands from her face.

Her voice, her aspect, so inimitably tender and mournful, struck him to the heart.

She had gained courage and composure, and went on.

"And it is a comfort to me to have seen and spoken with you once again," said she; "because [Pg 262] having done you an injustice, in my thoughts, I am glad to tell you so. I am pleased to think that you acted as I should have most desired, had I known the facts which were so cruelly perverted to me. But still—I hope," she added, as she rose to go, "that as I must remain here for the present, you will not often come to the house, because the sight of you reminds me too forcibly of those old times."

How exquisitely graceful she looked; with that imploring attitude—that bashful entreaty in her gesture.

"But, I don't understand—" he said, detaining her.

"No—it is a long story," said Margaret sadly.

"But why not tell it me? Have I not a right to know it? I, who love you better than any-thing in the world?"

Her smiles came back—her blushes.

"If you wish it," she said, "only not now. Still I must say for myself, that every one believed as I did. Even your friends here, entirely thought so till Mrs. Fitzpatrick set them right." [Pg 263]

"But—believed what?"

"That you were engaged to Miss Fitzpatrick."

"What—engaged—and when? Good Heavens! And you, Margaret—to Miss Fitzpatrick! How could you believe such an incredible lie?"

"Don't ask me, Claude," said Margaret, feeling as if it really had been too bad in her to credit her own eyesight, as well as the assurance of every one she came near.

"And this is what has parted us for two years. Miss Fitzpatrick—but it is all clear now. You are satisfied—you are mine again—say so."

"You are a tyrant, Claude."

"But say it."

"I do say it—there, some one is coming. I must go."

Margaret flew up stairs. The ladies, satisfied that the storm was over, now came out, pale with fear and watching. Harriet's keen eye espied Mr. Haveloc leaning against the door of the conservatory. [Pg 264]

"Marius among the ruins of Carthage," said she with a laugh.

"Marius! Mrs. Gage, can you say nothing better for me than that? Will you come to-morrow and fish with us?"

"Well; that is not a bad idea. I can throw a fly in a way that will make you jealous. Can you lend me a fishing-rod?"

"Twenty."

"And you don't mean to set out at an uncouth hour to-morrow?"

"Not at all—two or three o'clock."

"But I shall be jealous," said Lucy. "Do you not ask me to come too?"

"By all means; bring all the ladies who like angling. Lady James, will you answer for Miss Campbell?"

"I shall bring Margaret, I know;" said Harriet quickly.

"Do—if Miss Capel will come;" said he with a peculiar smile.

"I shall ask no questions;" said Harriet coolly. "I shall pack her up in a band-box, and take her; though she cannot angle like some people!" [Pg 265]

"No; she cannot angle," said Mr. Haveloc; laughing at the angry expression in Harriet's face.

"Ah! you think yourselves, too deep for me;" said Harriet turning and walking up-stairs; "but I would have you look sharp; for I know the symptoms." [Pg 266]

CHAPTER XIV.

And though our joy is all too new to wear
The golden sweetness of assured repose,
Since the good Gods have steered our bark of life
Through the rough storm and the deceitful calm,
We may together stem the tranquil wave
Not fearful, not secure—but grateful ever;
While in the roseate light of new born hope
We steep the shadows of the coming time—
Most blest, that whatsoe'er our future lot
Love gilds the present, sanctifies the past.

ANON.

"I say, little one," exclaimed Harriet, as Margaret entered the Oratory to breakfast the next morning, "Will you go fishing with us to day, to Tynebrook?"

"With you—to Tynebrook, Harriet?" said Margaret quite surprised.

"Yes; did you never hear of such a place? Perhaps, you don't know that I saw Mr. Haveloc last night, and made a fishing party for the ladies?" [Pg 267]

"Last night, Harriet!" said Margaret colouring.

"Yes, child," returned Harriet. "I suppose you think nobody can have interviews with a gentleman but yourself."

Never was a more random shot, but it had the effect of covering Margaret's face with blushes.

"How you love to torment Miss Capel;" said Mr. Gage, who was in the room. "I wonder she ever

comes near you."

"I never saw any-thing like your cheeks, child," continued Harriet,

'They'll be in scarlet straight at any news.'

"Do have a little mercy, Harriet," said poor Margaret. "I cannot tell what you mean."

"I mean nothing more or less than this. You are to come with me to Tynebrook this morning, to learn how to angle; who knows what you may catch? I told Mr. Haveloc I should bring you, and he could not prevent me, though he seemed very much averse to your company." [Pg 268]

Margaret smiled quietly at this remark, and Harriet turned to attack Everard, who entered the room at this moment.

"So here you are, slugs, who gave you leave to come and breakfast here this morning?"

"It is so dull, alone," said Everard, drawing his chair to the table.

"Where is your book, Sir? Have you learned that scene through? I have a great mind to hear you say it before I give you any coffee."

"I can't, Harriet," said Everard, quietly beginning his breakfast.

"Can't—what? Good gracious, that I should live to hear anybody say they can't!"

"I can't learn it; nor could you, if—" (here he stopped and took breath,) "if you did not know the English of it."

"If that is not a sufficient reason," said Mr. Gage, laughing, "I never heard one." [Pg 269]

Everard went on peaceably eating his breakfast.

Harriet surveyed him in speechless indignation.

"He does not know the English of it!" she exclaimed at last; "he reads it like a parrot. Why even Captain Smithson—your prètendu, Margaret—knows French. It is something horrible. George, what shall we do?"

"Oh! Haveloc *must* take it now," said Mr. Gage, "he cannot have any real objection when he sees you in actual want of his assistance."

"Will you try to persuade him, Margaret?" said Harriet.

Margaret shook her head.

"It is a mere idle excuse," exclaimed Harriet after a pause, "I am sure, by the way he read that long scene with Camille, that he understood it."

"I know the meaning of part, but I cannot make it all out," said Everard.

"Then I will translate it for you. You give me an infinite deal of trouble, but I console myself by thinking how remarkably well you will look." [Pg 270]

Everard, soothed by this little compliment, offered no opposition to the plan; and Harriet, rising from the table, said that if Margaret had breakfasted, they would go down stairs and arrange their expedition.

A similar desire seemed to possess the whole party of ladies—to learn to angle. Never did a more brilliant morning follow a stormy night. Mrs. Fitzpatrick said something about damp grass, but she was the only middle-aged lady present, and her hint fell to the ground.

Lady James and Miss Campbell, standing together, by the open piano, were engaged in an interesting conversation; Miss Campbell sometimes running over the keys with one hand, and looking down at the music book; Lady James approaching her head nearer and nearer in the earnestness of her discourse.

Harriet reclined in the corner of a couch, fixed her eyes, brimming with mischief, upon the talkers; and, although Lady James had the precaution to speak low, she caught a few fragments. [Pg 271]

"He was absolutely rivetted by that song of Schubert's" said Lady James.

"It is one of my best," said Miss Campbell.

"The lilac bonnet to-day, my love, with the white china-asters."

"Yes, I intended—"

"You will be delighted with Tynebrook; it is the finest seat in this part of the country."

"Larger than Wardenscourt?" whispered Miss Campbell.

"Decidedly, and altogether a different style of place. A magnificent park; oaks that the Druids might have planted, and the house built in the quadrangular form like a Spanish convent."

"I like that sort of thing; but I fear he is rather difficult to—" [Pg 272]

("To make a fool of," Harriet was almost tempted to add.)

"Not at all, my dear," pursued Lady James, "it is all manner; did I never tell you how he was drawn in by our good friend, Mrs. Maxwell Dorset?"

"No; I should like to hear it, of all things!"

"I'll tell you another time. Recollect, music is his passion. Talk of Spohr and Beethoven."

"I do so dislike a 'fanatico per la musica,'" said Miss Campbell.

"Yes, but a man of his standing in society," argued Lady James, "by the bye, I must secure him to drive with us to Tynebrook, this morning. You and him together; I will sit in front with Lord James."

Harriet sprang from the sofa, seized upon Margaret, who was quietly reading, and whirled her into the verandah. Lord Raymond, Mr. Gage and Mr. Haveloc were standing on the lawn. Mr. Gage smoking.

"Come here, some of you!" cried Harriet. [Pg 273]

Mr. Haveloc instantly turned round, and rushed up the steps.

"At last!" he said, "I have been into the drawing-room half a dozen times, to see if you were not down."

"I have been there for ten minutes, I should think," said Harriet. "But I am afraid that pretty speech was not meant for me—perhaps, you took me for Mrs. Fitzpatrick?"

It did look as if he meant the speech for Margaret, since he took her hand and kept it.

"How did you sleep?" he asked Margaret.

"Very well, thank you, after all my fright," returned Harriet, "but it was a terrible storm, was it not Mr. Haveloc?"

"Ay—there was a storm last night," he said, as if just recollecting it.

"Did not you hear something of it then —you ought, I am sure; for I found you all among the broken glass." [Pg 274]

"Will you give me a lift, Mrs. Gage, this morning," he asked.

"With all my heart," said Harriet, "I take Margaret and Mrs. Fitzpatrick; there is just room for you, if Margaret has no objection."

"Not any, Harriet," said Margaret quietly.

"George!" cried Harriet, "I am going to run off with Mr. Haveloc."

"Pray do," replied Mr. Gage.

"You will never see me again, after this morning!" she exclaimed.

Mr. Gage laughed and lit another cigar.

"There is a sort of stupid tranquillity about those Gages," said Harriet, "I had hoped that George was an irascible person; but he grows more and more like his father."

"That is a high compliment, Harriet;" said Margaret. "At——there was always a good deal of philandering between you and Uncle Gage," said Harriet; "you are an arrant little flirt in a quiet way." [Pg 275]

"It must be a very quiet way, then;" said Mr. Haveloc, smiling.

"Don't you take her part!" cried Harriet, "you are on my side. George, I wish you would give me a cigar."

"Not I, indeed," said Mr. Gage.

"Then I will get one from Lord James;" said Harriet, coolly.

Mr. Gage came up to the verandah, and offered her his cigar case. Harriet took one.

"What are you going to do with it, Harriet?" asked Margaret.

"Nothing child—I have never smoked since the day I made you ill—but I don't choose him to refuse me any-thing. There, you stingy wretch, you may have it back again. Mr. Haveloc, tell me in confidence, what is your favourite colour for a bonnet?"

Mr. Haveloc laughed, and said that he had not made up his mind, but that when he saw Mrs. Gage's, he should be able to decide the point. [Pg 276]

Lady James was not pleased when she saw Mr. Haveloc step into Mrs. Gage's carriage; but she contented herself by bringing up the old story of Mrs. Maxwell Dorset, and declaring that it was now the same thing over again, with Mrs. Gage; a very designing young woman with all her apparent frankness. Miss Campbell cordially agreed in this flattering verdict.

But if Harriet had heard this remark, she would only have laughed at it, with Margaret and Mr. Haveloc seated opposite to her, as her carriage swept through the park gates, and drove into the stately avenues of Tynebrook. They drove into the quadrangle through a grey archway, covered with ivy, and alighted at a stone entrance, divided by an oaken screen from the great hall.

"I say, little one, should not you like to have it?" asked Harriet, glancing round the splendid hall, "if you are very good, I'll see if I can help you." [Pg 277]

Harriet equipped herself like a true angler, with a basket over her shoulder. Mr. Haveloc was buckling on her accoutrements for her, when the rest of the party crowded into the hall.

Lady James, though disturbed, did not allow herself defeated.

"Go to him, my love, and ask him to teach you to throw a fly," said she.

Miss Campbell took her advice, and succeeded, at least, in securing Mr. Haveloc's services. Having ascertained that Margaret was not going to fish, he selected a rod and a basket for Miss Campbell, put a fly on her line, and wished her success.

But Miss Campbell said she was such a novice, that Mr. Haveloc must kindly give her a little advice; and, at least, select for her a very fortunate spot.

So they all set off to the stream that ran through the park; a rough, brawling rivulet, that tumbled and foamed among rocky stones and straggling roots of trees.

Mr. Haveloc carried Miss Campbell's rod and basket; and having found a spot where there were no hawthorns near to intercept her line, he recommended her to begin forthwith. [Pg 278]

She made a trial; but any one who has taken a fishing-rod in their hand for the first time, knows that it is by no means an easy task to guide it.

After several desperate manœuvres, in which she perilled herself and her neighbours, more than once, with the spike at the end, she gave up the attempt, and trusted to the sole attraction of her lilac bonnet.

Harriet was far up the stream with Mr. Gage; and Everard, who was wandering about with his play-book in his hand, finding Miss Campbell disengaged, insisted on her hearing him; and she had the delightful task of listening to his blunders, while she was calculating whether, if Mr. Haveloc proved obstinate, it would be possible for her to accept a younger son.

Mr. Haveloc had managed to detach Margaret from the rest of the party, and they sat watching the stream, as it glided through the tangled roots of the hawthorns. [Pg 279]

They had time to say, not all they wished; but all there was any occasion for before they were interrupted; for Mr. Haveloc well knew the precise angle of the rocky bank at which they would be invisible to the party below.

Harriet, coming down with her basket on her shoulder, and her rod unjointed, was the first to discover them. She suspended her song; stood before them a minute, enjoying Margaret's rosy blushes, and Mr. Haveloc's look of extreme unconcern; and then shrugging her shoulders, and throwing down her basket on the grass, exclaimed:—

"Well! never say I did not have a hand in it."

The ladies had settled to go home after a late luncheon. The gentlemen adhered to their original plan.

Everybody thought Mr. Haveloc was rather particular in his attentions to Margaret; fortunately, for her comfort, they did not know how particular. They did not know that he had obtained her permission to write to Mr. Warde and to Mr. Casement, by that day's post. They did not know that when he went up to dress, the letters were written; and that Margaret's last words as he put her in the carriage, were to beg "that he would be very polite to poor Mr. Casement." [Pg 280]

Harriet happened to be alone with Margaret, as Mrs. Fitzpatrick went back with Lady Raymond; and she caressed and teazed her alternately all the way home, but Margaret could now bear teazing very bravely.

This was destined to be a day of events, for when they returned to Wardenscourt, they found Captain Gage and Elizabeth already arrived. Lucy and Harriet, both warmly attached to Lady d'Eyncourt, flew to welcome her.

"And Margaret," said Elizabeth enquiringly, when she had embraced her cousins.

Margaret was in her arms at once, sobbing with joy and emotion. Elizabeth stroked down her hair, and spoke soothingly to her: she had grown older so fast, that Margaret was really a child to her now. [Pg 281]

Captain Gage was in excellent spirits. He was come back to England, which delighted him, for he had no great taste for foreign parts. And now that the grief of Sir Philip's death was, with him, over, he felt that he had his daughter back again, all to himself, and that was a great source of consolation. He was sorry it happened that his sons were out fishing, but it was a capital day for sport, and he should see them in the morning, which after all, was almost the same thing. So he kissed Harriet again, and asked her whether she could give George a good character.

Elizabeth was beautiful in her weeds; she looked graver, older, and more serene. There was something in her slow and dignified movements, that reminded Margaret of Sir Philip. And though she suffered, as Schiller tells us as all great minds suffer, in silence and alone, yet those [Pg 282] who knew her best, felt a certainty, (in her case fully confirmed by time), that she would never marry again. She seemed to feel, as the poets tell us, women felt in their days, that her destiny was accomplished, her part in the drama of life played out, that she had given her heart to her husband; and that to all eternity her soul was wedded to the soul that had preceded hers to Heaven.

With these peculiar views, a second marriage would have been to her a crime replete with horror and disgrace.

That many people regretted these views, and that some sought to change them, will not be wondered at, considering that, independent of her beauty and good private fortune, Sir Philip left her mistress and sole heiress of Sherleigh, expressing only a wish that if she should not marry again, it might go to some one of Captain Gage's descendants.

Every one, whom it nearly concerned, was pleased with Margaret's approaching marriage. Mrs. [Pg 283] Fitzpatrick declared it was all that she could wish. Lady d'Eyncourt congratulated her warmly, her guardians gave a willing assent, Mr. Casement saying, that if Miss Peggy liked to venture upon the young man, it was her affair; that there was no mistake about his property, but that he thought him a violent fellow.

Elizabeth desired that Margaret should be married from Chirke Weston. Hubert was safe on the coast of South America, and there was no drawback to the plan. Captain Gage insisted upon giving her away. He said he had half a right to do so, since he had a narrow escape of being her father in earnest. For he still regarded Hubert's attachment to her as a childish piece of business, that would serve very well for a jest when one was wanting. So after the performance of the Vaudeville, which went off to admiration, the party at Wardenscourt broke up. The Gages and Raymonds, with Margaret and Mrs. Fitzpatrick started for Chirke Weston; and Mr. Haveloc was [Pg 284] kindly invited to take up his abode with Mr. Warde, who was to perform the ceremony.

Margaret found many changes since she left that neighbourhood, though none so strange to her as the change in her own prospects. At the Vicarage, Mrs. Somerton still resided, but her eldest daughter was now with her; a sharp, fractious spinster, who seemed but a bad exchange for her wilful, pretty sister, now fortunately Mrs. Compton.

Mrs. Compton had a little girl, and was grown, her mother said, more steady; and Mr. Compton had just been in all the newspapers for playing at skittles before a church door, during divine service, at some place where he was quartered with a detachment. This last piece of information came from the acid sister; but Mrs. Somerton added that it was done for a bet, which in her opinion, at once explained and excused the action.

The Trevors had for some time been in possession of Ashdale. They were very nice people, and [Pg 285] already extremely popular with the neighbours. They were particularly civil to Margaret, took care to call upon her and to invite her, and to express a great deal of pleasure in her intended marriage. They little knew that they owed to Margaret's forbearance the estate they were now enjoying; for a word from her would have caused Mr. Grey to alter again, before his death, the distribution of his property; and they rather grudged her the ten thousand pounds which her uncle did bequeath to her—for very nice people are sometimes niggardly in their ideas; they thought her own ten thousand pounds ample for a single woman, and now that she was about to make a grand marriage, it was still less needful to her; but as no means occurred to them of getting this money back again, they contented themselves with *feeling* the injury, and with fixing on little Richard, as the one of their children who would be sure to have had it, if Margaret had [Pg 286] not robbed him of it.

But there were little private family feelings, which these nice people took care to keep to themselves. They were invited to the breakfast, very reluctantly, on the part of Harriet; who superintended everything, and who hated them because they happened to have five very plain children.

"Don't tell me, Uncle Gage, that it is not their fault!" she exclaimed, when Captain Gage ventured to remonstrate with her for her dislike. "Good people, always have handsome children. Your children were all handsome!"

Captain Gage was silenced by this logical inference, "his children were good looking, he must confess."

"Little sinners!" cried Harriet, "I'll have them all five to the breakfast, that I may make them ill for a fortnight. I know they are greedy by the look of them. I know they will eat as long as I choose to stuff them." [Pg 287]

And little Mrs. Trevor, when she yielded to Harriet's earnest entreaties, that the five darlings should see the wedding and appear at the breakfast, little thought of the fate in store for them.

Harriet was now in the very midst of business, to the great contentment of her unquiet spirit. She assumed the direction of every thing; as Elizabeth was not in spirits to take an active share in such matters. But Harriet was in her element, inviting the company and arranging the breakfast, and holding secret committees, with Captain Gage.

And then the trousseau. She was a Queen among milliners and ladies' maids; and samples of gowns and bonnets. Her taste was admirable and most imperative; she would not allow an opinion but her own on the subject. Not a silk could be decided upon, unless she approved the colour; not a bonnet, unless she pronounced the shape to be faultless. Margaret submitted passively to all her directions, and bade Mrs. Mason to be equally submissive. This was difficult, because then Mrs. Thompson began to triumph over Mrs. Mason, and to intrude her advice upon matters with which, as Mrs. Mason said, she had nothing to do. [Pg 288]

Then Harriet selected the bridesmaids, which was a matter of some nicety. She meant to have had six; but as she insisted upon their all being handsome, she soon found herself obliged to limit the number to four.

Whenever Mr. Gage was within hearing, she took care to regret over and over again that the untoward circumstance of her own marriage prevented her from offering herself in that capacity.

"You see," said Mr. Gage to Margaret, on occasion of one of these attacks, "what you are to expect; when you have been married six months, you will wish yourself single, that you may be bridesmaid to some of your friends."

"No, she will not!" cried Harriet, "you don't see the difference. Do you think, if I had married dear Mr. Haveloc, I should now wish I was single?" [Pg 289]

Mr. Gage laughed, and said "that altered the case, he had no doubt; but people with a very little imagination might conjecture the degree of peace that would have been enjoyed by both parties, if Harriet had married 'dear Mr. Haveloc.'"

However, though she was not married to him; she enjoyed the great satisfaction of teazing him to her heart's content. She would come in with a solemn face, and assure him that his lawyer had died suddenly, and the settlements must be transferred into other hands; that his coach-maker had absconded, and he must send elsewhere for his carriage; or that Margaret was up-stairs ill with the influenza, and the doctor was sure it would prove a very tedious attack.

This was the last time she succeeded in mystifying him, for before she had finished speaking, he rushed past her, and up the stairs in search of Margaret, whom he met quietly coming down, in perfect health. Harriet declared that a very affecting meeting took place on the staircase, and made Captain Gage laugh very much with her account of it; but she could not get Mr. Haveloc to believe any more of her provoking tales. [Pg 290]

But she could not let him entirely alone. She affirmed that with regard to ladies' dress, he had one single idea, an *idèe fixe*, which she was anxious to reason him out of.

This idea was a perfect mania for shawls. He presented Margaret with one costly shawl after another, till Harriet said, it was plain he thought ladies' dress consisted of nothing else; and she vowed, that Margaret should go to church on *the* day, clothed in every single shawl he had ever given her. And then she would draw such a lively picture of Margaret's appearance in this singular costume, as would set every one present laughing.

Then she was always alluding to Mr. Humphries, though this was partly to plague Margaret. She would mention the songs Mr. Humphries liked, and she would sing them of an evening with a great deal of pathos, directing the expression particularly to Margaret. If she happened to wear any thing particularly pretty, she would ask if it was not something of that sort that Mr. Humphries used to admire so much? [Pg 291]

Mr. Haveloc was not of a more curious disposition than men in general, but it was natural he should wish to know why Harriet laid so much stress on this Mr. Humphries, and why Margaret should always colour when she did so.

Mr. Gage, who was present one evening when Harriet made one of these allusions, told him that Humphries was a country squire, who lived near Mr. Singleton; a good sort of man, whom he believed Miss Capel had refused when she was at Singleton Manor; that the poor fellow had a large property, but really was such a boor, that you could not be surprised at any woman refusing him. [Pg 292]

Fortunately Harriet did not overhear this explanation, or she would have little thanked Mr. Gage for interfering with her concerns.

Mr. Casement was a good deal at Chirke Weston. He came sometimes on business, with Mr. Haveloc, but much more often because he had no where else to bestow himself.

He took an amazing fancy to Mrs. Gage, and, to Margaret's surprise, she seemed equally pleased with his society. He made Margaret very angry by saying the first morning he called, "I say, little woman, what a famous match Bessy Gaze will be for me now. I little thought she would have such an estate as Sherleigh, when I first engaged her for my second."

But when he repeated this jest to Elizabeth, she did not seem at all ruffled; she merely hoped that she should never have any more serious pretenders to her estate than Mr. Casement. [Pg 293]

But the old man certainly admired Harriet the most. If she was not in the way when he called, he always asked where that handsome woman, Mrs. Gage was? And if she was in the garden, he would stand at the window watching her movements, and pointing out to Margaret how well she walked.

For Harriet, who darted about like lightening when she was in a hurry, walked with all the slow and undulating grace of a Spanish woman. Harriet used to question Mr. Casement very minutely respecting Margaret's early acquaintance with Mr. Haveloc.

"I advised the match, in the first instance," said Mr. Casement, "I told old Grey, (you did not know Grey, a worthy old soul, he left me a thousand pounds) I told Grey, that if he made up a match between his ward and Miss Peggy, he would be rid of the trouble of her." [Pg 294]

"Then he made the match?" inquired Harriet.

"Not he! Grey was a child in such affairs. Miss Peggy was shy; Master Claude was sulky, and nothing came of it for a long time."

"And how did they understand each other?" asked Harriet.

"Why that, to tell you the truth, I don't know. I believe he hung so long about the house, that Master Grey asked him his intentions. And then, you know, the young man was obliged to speak out."

"But, then, Mr. Casement, what put it off so long?"

"Ah! that I can't tell exactly; but I suppose it was Master Claude's temper. He is a dreadful temper. Besides, he went off with a married woman in Italy."

"But that was before this affair," said Harriet.

"Was it? I don't know. I am rather sorry for Miss Peggy; she is a well-behaved little girl, upon the whole; but as people brew, so they must bake. Some people say that old Grey turned him out of [Pg 295] the house, and would not hear of the match. I know this, that I caught him one evening making love; and the next day he was off. But old Grey was very close, in some things: he had his secrets. He rather wished her to marry Hubert Gage."

There was one thing in which Mr. Casement and Harriet cordially sympathised. He hated the Trevors.

"Nice people, ah! very nice, indeed," he exclaimed. "Everybody speaks well of them; 'so much the worse,' as the man says, in the 'School for Scandal.' A mean family, depend on it. A very attached couple; attached, because they have one interest in common; to scrape and save every farthing they can lay their hands upon. And the children; straggling all over Ashdale, and spoiling the furniture. Poor old Grey never liked children. 'I like 'em when they grow old enough to talk to,' he used to say. I will tell you when I like 'em—never! I should like to see Trevor begging about the [Pg 296] streets, like a Manchester weaver, with his five children behind him."

When Harriet confided to Mr. Casement how she meant to serve the five children at the breakfast, his delight knew no bounds.

"Have 'em! cram 'em! the avaricious little villains!" he exclaimed. "Have them all, down to the stuffed pillow case on two legs, that they call baby! See, if I don't do 'em a good turn. I'll drown 'em in sack! I'll make 'em all drunk, or my name is not Roger Casement!"

And Mr. Casement, when the time came was as good as his word.

Lady d'Eyncourt, Margaret and Harriet, were walking on the lawn beneath the broad light of the harvest moon. It was the evening before the marriage.

"Do feel nervous, little one, please," said Harriet; "I can't bear heroines. Do be frightened! I assure you, I tremble for you. He is a fire eater—your Mr. Haveloc." [Pg 297]

"You will make her nervous, Harriet," said Elizabeth, gently.

"I tell you what, Margaret," said Harriet, "I hope you and Mr. Haveloc, will not turn too religious, that is all. I expect, when I come to Tynebrook, to find you grown into two old hermits, with beards down to your waists."

"Pray exempt me from the beard, Harriet," said Margaret smiling.

"I say, the next time you go to Tynebrook church, you will think of your first visit," said Harriet.

"Do not remind me of it, Harriet."

"What a number of little lies you did tell," exclaimed Harriet; "but I suppose it is natural, is it not, Bessy?"

"Do you remember whether I told many during my noviciate?"

"Oh! a great many, Harriet."

"I will call you out, child! Why, what in the world can Mr. Haveloc want with us? To go and sign the settlements? I am quite agreeable. I assure you, Margaret, I signed my own death-warrant in a fine flowing hand, that will prove to future ages how valiant I was." [Pg 298]

Margaret signed hers too steadily, Harriet thought. She crept near her at the last signature, and gave her arm such a push, as sent her pen across the parchment. Just to keep up appearances,

Harriet told Mr. Haveloc, and to make people believe she felt some little regret at the very unguarded step she was about to take.

Elizabeth, being still in weeds, did not go to church with Margaret. Every one was delighted with the delicate, and faultless beauty of the bride when she appeared, looking radiant in her white lace and orange blossoms. Even Harriet was contented with the numerous cortége that she had contrived to assemble in honour of the occasion.

Lady d'Eyncourt was the first to welcome Margaret and wish her joy, when Mr. Haveloc led her back into the drawing-room, calm—silent—with just a few tears upon her blushing cheek.

"But I dare not ask, that your lot may be as happy as mine," she whispered, "lest it should be as brief." [Pg 299]

"Ah, I could die now!" said Margaret, as she rested her head on Elizabeth's shoulder—feeling as Othello did; and as all those who feel deeply, must sometimes feel, in this unstable world.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Lady d'Eyncourt, stood together at the window watching the carriage which bore away Mr. and Mrs. Haveloc.

"I have not a fear for her," said Elizabeth, turning to her companion, "hers was a love match, and I have no faith in any other."

"Nor I," returned Mrs. Fitzpatrick with a smile.

"For Love is Lord of Truth and Loyalty,
Lifting himself out of the lowly dust,
In golden plumes up to the purest sky."

THE END.

LONDON: [Pg 300]

Printed by Schulze & Co., 13, Poland Street.

Transcriber's Note: A few printer's errors have been amended. Disagreeble is now disagreeable, independant is now independent, embarrasment is now embarrassment, interupting is now interrupting, chesnut is now chestnut, recal is now recall, Shubert is now Schubert and acceeded is now acceded.

Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a

format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this

work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.