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AT BAY

BY

MRS. ALEXANDER

CHICAGO
W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
IN UNIFORM STYLE

ADMIRAL'S WARD
AT BAY
BEATON'S BARGAIN
BY WOMAN'S WIT
CROOKED PATH, THE
FRERES, THE
FORGING THE FETTERS
HERITAGE OF LANGDALE
MAID, WIFE OR WIDOW
MAMMON
SECOND LIFE, A
WHICH SHALL IT BE?

CHICAGO
W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

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AT BAY.

CHAPTER I.
STRIKING THE TRAIL.

Paris on a bright April morning. Can any city make a brighter, braver show under a clear blue sky and a brilliant sun, the chestnuts in the Champs Elysées and Tuileries gardens bursting into bloom, the flower-market of the Madeleine a mass of color, exhaling delicious perfume, the fair purchasers in the first freshness of their spring attire, the tide of business and of pleasure at the fullest flood. It is a sight to fill any heart tolerably free from pressing anxiety with an irresistible sense of youth.

Though the month was still young, the weather was warm enough to make open windows an agreeable addition to the comfort of a pretty little *salon* in the *entre-sol* of Meurice's hotel, where an elderly lady was seated at a table on which a dainty *déjeuner*, and a couple of bottles, inscribed respectively "Moselle" and "Pomard," was laid out.

She was not handsome, never could have been handsome, her face was broad and strong, with small twinkling black eyes, and a heavy jaw. Her figure still showed traces of the symmetry for which she had been remarkable, and the hand she had stretched out to take another oyster, was fine both in shape and color. Her rich black silk dress, the lace of her cap, the jewels on her fingers, all her surroundings indicated wealth,—her expression, comfortable self-satisfaction.

She finished her oyster with an air of enjoyment, and then looking at her watch, murmured "he is late"—as she spoke, the door was opened, and a waiter announced "M. Glynn."

The visitor was a tall, broad-shouldered man, of perhaps thirty-five or more, with very dark hair, eyes, and complexion, well dressed and easy in his bearing and movements, yet not looking quite like a club or a drawing-room man.

"This is not your usual punctuality, Hugh," said the lady smiling benignly, as she stretched out a welcoming hand, "but you make your own punishment! Time, tide, and *vol au vents*, wait for no man."

"I have a thousand apologies to make! You may be sure the delay was unavoidable or I should not have kept you waiting."

"But I have *not* waited! Take some oysters—and then tell me what has kept you, if it is a discreet question."

"Perfectly. No oysters, thank you. Do not let me delay the routine of your *déjeuné*. Just as I was leaving the 'Bourse,' I ran against Deering of Denham, who insisted on walking almost to the door with me."

"Travers Deering? I did not know he was in Paris. Is Lady Frances with him?"

"She is, for he honored me with an invitation to dinner to-morrow, mentioning that Lady Frances would be very glad to see me. I was engaged, however; I don't find dining with Travers Deering a cheerful occupation. Though Lady Frances keeps a brave front there is a profound sadness in her eyes, or I fancy there is."

"Fancy! yes; I suspect your fancy is tolerably vivid still. Now eat your luncheon, and we will talk presently." She proceeded to press various dainties on her guest, who ate moderately.

"I don't think you care for good things as much as I do," said the hostess, leaning back in her

chair; "I am always vexed with people who don't care what they eat; it shows deficiency of brain power. Now tell me,—have you succeeded this morning?"

"Yes," he returned with a smile, as he poured out another half-glass of Pomard; "I have disposed of all your Honduras shares, not at par, but at a trifling decrease. Here," drawing out his pocket-book, "are bills and notes to the amount of fifteen hundred pounds. I am glad you are out of the concern, you might have lost double the amount; pray avoid these foreign bubble companies in future, none of them are to be trusted, Lady Gethin,—none that offer high interest are."

"My dear Hugh, I never will do anything without your advice again; I have had a perfect nightmare about these horrid things. I am no miser, but I hate to lose money; I am very glad you managed to get rid of these shares so soon, for I want to go back to London to-morrow; the rooms I have had altered in that old house of mine, are ready, I am dying to furnish them."

"Well, you had better post this money to your bankers, and register your letter, than carry it about with you."

"Yes, it would be the best plan. Shall you stay here much longer?"

"Some little time; I have a special mission to execute for the House, which may keep me a few weeks."

"Be sure you come and see me directly you return; and do go and see Lady Frances Deering, she would be a charming woman if she let herself go. I was always interested in her. Why can't she get on with Deering? he is good-looking, well bred, well thought of, and not very much older than herself."

"Perhaps she does get on with him," said Glynn.

"I used not to care for Deering," replied Lady Gethin. "He had a quarrel with a cousin whom I liked very much, and who was killed afterwards, poor fellow. I have forgotten what the quarrel was about—a woman, I think, and I have an idea Travers behaved badly; but he is quite an irreproachable personage *now*, and monstrously civil to me, especially since poor dear Sir Peter bequeathed me all his real and personal property. Then, you know, we are second cousins, two or three times removed."

"Oh indeed! Well, he is very civil to me too, and I am certainly no relation but——"

"Aha! *you* are dearer than kith or kin," interrupted Lady Gethin; "you can give him financial tips, and chances of turning, I won't say an honest penny, but simple hundreds into splendid thousands by the varied sources of information you command. Ah! were I a man, I should like to be a financier, which is 'high falutin' for stock-broker."

Glynn smiled. "I have had very few business transactions with Deering, or for him. He is wealthy enough without help from any one. By the way, he is more inflammable than I imagined; we were at the Auteuil races together the day before yesterday, and when sauntering about we were both struck by a girl who was in an open carriage with two other ladies; she was certainly pretty—more than pretty—and Deering seemed quite fascinated, he could not keep away. It was not like his usual cool, high-bred indifference to all mundane things, to go back again and again to stare at the young lady, for you know he is rather a decent fellow as men go."

"You don't say so!" cried Lady Gethin, with keen interest. "What would Lady Frances have said?"

"The last time we went to look at the bright particular star, she and her party had left their carriage," continued Glynn. "Deering then seemed to pull himself together, and to remember he was not alone; but I could see he was desperately vexed to have lost sight of her, though he tried to laugh at himself, and said she was wonderfully like some one he used to know. I was both surprised and amused by his manoeuvres. I left him before the last race, and I rather fancy he was going to renew his search for her."

"Ah!" said Lady Gethin; "no doubt, thereby hangs a tale."

"Perhaps so. The young lady, however, is very young—little more than seventeen or eighteen, and she certainly did not recognize him—nor even notice him."

"The wisest have their weak moments," observed Lady Gethin, with an air of wisdom. "I certainly have never heard any queer stories about Deering. Did you see any one else you knew at Auteuil?"

"A few second-rate racing men, and George Verner."

"Oh, he generally haunts the Deerings when he is not at sea." After a good deal more talk, partly business, partly wittily told scandal, Glynn rose to take leave. "I dine at the Café de Florence to-day, with Captain Methvin and Madame Gauthier; will you join us?"

"I am unfortunately already engaged; so must forego that pleasure," said Glynn.

"I shall see you then as soon as you return to London, and be sure you tell me anything fresh about the Deerings."

"I don't fancy there will be any exciting *esclandre* in that quarter. If the weather continues as fine as it has been for the last few days, you will have a pleasant journey. Good-morning, Lady Gethin."

When Glynn left the hotel he walked briskly for a few minutes towards the Louvre, then he gradually relaxed his pace, as his thoughts disengaged themselves from his surroundings, and presented him with a picture they had frequently mirrored during the last three days.

After making a few purchases at the bookstalls of the Palais Royal, he made his way down the Rue St. Honoré, finally coming to a halt at the crowded crossing opposite the Madeleine, where the contrary currents coming from the Boulevards, meet the tributary tide of the Rue Royale. He was in no hurry; it amused him to see the huge omnibuses disgorging their contents; to watch eager women with parcels, and refractory children tightly held by the hand, make ineffectual dashes at the opposite shore, and come scurrying back again, baffled, but still resolute. To observe the little flower-girls plying their trade, and hear the sharp bargaining between them and their customers.

Suddenly, however, his eyes brightened; the expression of a lazy looker-on vanished, and was replaced by one of keen, vivid interest, as his glance fell on the original of the picture which had haunted him since the day of the races at Auteuil. A slight girlish figure, in a pale gray dress; a mantlet or scarf, edged with black lace, drawn closely round her; she was crowned by a pretty little hat, also bordered with black lace, and adorned with a large bouquet of primroses and tufts of narrow black velvet ribbon. Under the hat beamed a pair of thoughtful, earnest, dark-blue eyes —large and lustrous; eyes that none could pass unnoticed; long lashes; distinct, but delicate eyebrows; a clear, pale complexion; a sweet though not very small mouth, and abundant light golden-brown hair, made up a whole that might have attracted the attention of even a more "potent, grave, and reverend Signor" than Travers Deering of Denham.

This was the face and figure that had dwelt in Hugh Glynn's imagination since he had first seen them. In any case he must have noticed so fair a girl; but there was something in the effect she produced on Deering, that impressed him with a curious sense of interest and uneasiness.

He had laughed at his own condition of mind, as a silly after-glow of boyish folly, unworthy his experience and maturity. Yet there was a wonderful charm in the soft grace of her quiet movements, and, accustomed as he had been to women who rarely stirred out unattended, he looked round to ascertain if this delicate, refined creature had no companion, no *bonne* or chaperon. No! she was quite alone. Three times, while he watched her, she attempted to cross the street, and three times she returned baffled. Glynn could not lose such a chance; advancing to her side, he raised his hat and said, with grave politeness:

"There is an unusual crowd; will you allow me to see you safely to the other side?"

She raised her wonderful eyes to his with a slightly startled, but frank expression.

"Yes," she said simply, in exactly the low clear tones that might be expected from her. "I shall be very glad."

"Keep close to me," returned Glynn, and seizing a lull in the traffic, he piloted her to the pavement in front of the Madeleine.

"The reason of the strongest is always the best," she said, quoting La Fontaine aptly in his own language. "I should never have had resolution to seize that opportunity."

"I think I speak to a countrywoman," remarked Glynn.

"Yes, I consider myself English. I am very much obliged. Good-morning." This decidedly, though politely.

Glynn felt himself obliged to relinquish an eagerly-formed intention of drawing her into conversation. He could not thrust himself upon a lady, and he felt strongly disposed to believe that his new acquaintance was thoroughly a lady, though a knowledge of life in most European capitals disposed him to suspend his judgment. He followed her at a little distance as she threaded her way through the booths which shelter the flower-sellers and their fragrant wares, till she reached one where she was apparently greeted as a regular customer by its wrinkled owner. Then with a certain degree of contempt for his own weakness he turned resolutely away, and walked down the new Boulevard Malesherbes.

He had not gone far, when his attention was attracted by a figure advancing with a somewhat slouching gait towards him, a man of scarcely middle height, but broadly and strongly built, well, though rather showily, dressed, his trousers tight below the knee, and loose above, his cut-away coat, bright-colored necktie, and low-crowned hat, had a horsey aspect; a broad, sun-burnt face, with well-trimmed, but coarse, red moustaches and hair, a blunt, resolute nose, sharp, light eyes, the lids puckered, as if from trying to look at strong sunlight, gave him an air of intense knowingness; all these seemed somewhat familiar to Glynn, as was also a certain expression of lazy good-nature, which softened the ruggedness of his aspect.

While Glynn was struggling to answer the question with which we have all puzzled ourselves at one time or another—"Where have I seen that face?"—its owner stopped suddenly before him, exclaiming, "Mr. Glynn! if I am not greatly mistaken; I hope I see you well, sir."

The voice and accent, which were peculiar, neither French, nor English, nor American, though a little of all, with an undertone of something that was none of the three, brought back to Glynn, as by magic, certain passages of his life ten years before—a big, crowded, gambling saloon in the Far West, dim with tobacco smoke, and hot with gas-lights, reeking with the fumes of strong drink, and echoing with the din of strange oaths, suddenly rose from out the caverns of memory, a confusion of struggling figures, a hand-to-hand conflict, the man before him gallantly backing him in a desperate fight to reach the door.

"Mr. Merrick, I had no idea you were at this side of the Atlantic!"

"I have been more than once at this side of the Atlantic since we met last. You know all good Yankees hope to go to Paris not only when they die, but a considerable few times before that

event. I'm right glad to meet you; and, before going further, I beg to observe that I have assumed" (he said "ashumed") "another name since I had the pleasure of seeing you: or rather, I have reverted to my original patronymic, which was a deuced deal too good for the raff amongst whom we were temporarily engulfed, to mouth. Allow me"—with an elegant air he drew forth a note-book, and presented a card engraved, "Captain Lambert, U.S.C., 27 Rue de L'Evêque." "Times have changed for the better with me, and I am now established here permanently."

"Glad to hear it, Captain Lambert," said Glynn, amused by the rencontre. Then glancing at the card, "You are no longer on active service?"

"No, in a sense, no. Life is always more or less a battle; but for the present the bugles sing truce, and I am enjoying well-earned rest in the society of my daughter and only child, to whom I shall be delighted to introduce an esteemed comrade, if you will allow me to say so."

"You are very good! I shall be happy to make the young lady's acquaintance."

"And yourself, sir? I fancy you have been looking up too, there's an air of success, of solid respectability, eh? worthy of a churchwarden, about you!"

"Yes, I may say I am now a sober citizen of famous London——"

"I believe you, and I am right glad to hear it. I shall yet salute you as Lord Mayor of London. 'Turn again Whittington,' hey? Where do you put up? I'll call and get you to fix a day to dine with us, but for the present I must bid you good-morning, for I promised to meet my daughter at the flower-market, and I never keep her waiting. Eh! by Jove, here she is."

Struck by the sudden joyous lighting up and softening of his interlocutor's eyes, Glynn turned to see the cause, and found himself face to face with the beauty of Auteuil.

Seldom had he been so surprised, and it must be confessed shocked, as when he saw this charming ideal creature smile back affectionately to the rowdy-looking nomad who claimed her as his child, whom he remembered as one of an adventurous gang, ready alike with dice-box or revolver, barely ten years ago.

"I thought you had forgotten me," she said, slipping her hand through his arm.

"Forgotten you? No, faith! you must blame my friend here, if I am a trifle late. This is an old acquaintance, my dear; we have faced death together more than once; and a better, pluckier comrade no man need wish for. Mr. Glynn—Miss Lambert."

Glynn raised his hat with profound respect.

"He has already befriended *me*," she returned, gazing at him with a pretty, surprised, bewildered look in her large eyes. "I should still have been waiting to cross there at Madeleine, had he not escorted me."

Lambert gave a quick, questioning glance at his daughter's open smiling face, and then exclaimed, "I am infinitely obliged to you, sir; infinitely, begad! I tell you what, Elsie, you mustn't be out so late in the day by yourself. Why don't you take the *bonne* with you, or wait till I come in."

"Oh, it is such waste of time waiting for a chaperon on a fine day; but we shall be too late to secure places if we delay."

"Yes, we had better be jogging. Can you dine with us to-day? And we'll have a talk over old times, and my girl will give us a song or two. Pot luck, my dear fellow, but you shan't starve."

"Many thanks, I am engaged unfortunately," returned Glynn, half-pleased, half-regretful that he had a real excuse ready.

"Well, to-morrow then, at six, sharp, and we will go and hear the new *operette* at the Comique after."

"You are very good. I shall be most happy," said Glynn, with an irresistible impulse as if some voice, not his own, answered for him.

"Well, good-bye for the present. By the way, where do you hang out? What's your hotel? Wagram? —very good." He swept off his hat in continental style, and his daughter bestowed a bow and smile upon Glynn which conveyed to him in some occult manner the impression that it pleased her to think he was a friend of her father.

How in the name of all that was contradictory did he come to have such a daughter? From the crown of her head to her dainty shoes she looked thoroughly a gentlewoman. More distinguished than fashionable in style, and so delightfully tranquil in pose and manner. "I hate chattering, animated women," thought Glynn, with that readiness to condemn everything different from the attraction of the moment, peculiar to the stronger and more logical sex.

It was too dreadful to think of so fair a creature, who looked the incarnation of high-toned purity, being surrounded by a swarm of sharpers—for that Lambert *alias* Merrick, and a dozen other names probably, could have ever settled down to sober, honest work, seemed impossible.

Glynn dived deep into the recesses of his memory, recalling all the circumstances of his former acquaintance with Merrick or Lambert, and necessarily reviewing his own life also.

He had lost his parents in boyhood, but was left well provided for, and had been carefully educated, taking a creditable degree at Oxford shortly before coming of age. Then came a spell of wandering, of high play, of rage for costly excitement, which, with a love of speculation, beggared him in a few years. This climax found him in New York, and for a considerable time he

was put to strange shifts to make out a living, for he would not beg, he was too true a gentleman to stoop to dishonesty; but he was by no means ashamed to dig, or to do any work worthy an honorable man. During his desperate struggle with fortune he joined an exploring expedition, and found himself among queer companions in one of those wonderful improvised far-western towns, which spring up, mushroom-like, almost in a night, having spent the little money he had scraped together in his attempt to reach it, after the failure and dispersion of the prospecting party he had been induced to join.

On the road he had fallen in with Merrick, whom he found friendly, helpful, and not without gleams of good and of decency. So for a week or two they kept together. Fortune befriended Glynn at the gambling-tables, till the row occurred with which Merrick was so inseparably associated, and which arose out of Glynn's extraordinary run of luck, at which the mixed company of miners, explorers, desperadoes and ruffians took offence. Finding the place rather too hot for safety, Glynn and his new friend parted company, the former making his way to San Francisco, whence he sailed for Australia, where after various adventures he was agreeably surprised, by seeing an advertisement in the *Times*, requesting him to communicate with a well-known firm of solicitors in London. The result proved that his uncle, the late Sir Peter Gethin, had left him a handsome legacy.

The late Baronet had been a partner in a great banking and money-lending house; Glynn elected to let his capital remain invested in the concern. His varied experience in speculative communities, his knowledge of modern languages, and his training generally, made him a valuable acquisition to the firm, first as an employé, and after a few years as a junior partner. He was frequently despatched to conduct complicated transactions with foreign houses, to inquire into the validity of distant schemes, to test the practicality of proposed undertakings. He had thoroughly sown his wild oats, and had developed ambition, self-respect, self-confidence; but, unknown to himself, the spring of imaginative passion which had been the cause of all his misfortunes, and most of his pleasure, was only covered in, not exhausted, and lay there, ready to bubble up and well over into a strong current at the touch of the divining-rod.

Perhaps it was some hidden sympathy arising from this latent warmth that made him so great a favorite with his uncle's widow,—a shrewd worldly voltairean woman, well-born and well-bred,—who escaped from poverty and dependence by accepting the position of wedded nurse to the aged, gouty, city knight, Sir Peter Gethin.

It was long since Glynn had been so roused and interested, and the acquaintances on whom he called that afternoon, found him unusually animated and agreeable. All through a somewhat solemn dinner at the house of a great French banker, he was buoyed up by the prospect of the different kind of festivity which awaited him next day. There was something curiously stimulating in this encounter with his old Californian acquaintance thus swept into such incongruous surroundings by the eddying current, life's stream. How did he come to have such a daughter? What matter! enough that there would be so charming an ingredient in the morrow's pleasure. As for his own prudence, self-control, worldly wisdom—it never crossed his mind to doubt them. He would pose as a calm spectator, study the puzzle offered to his observation, and if necessary let Merrick or Lambert know the exact position of Deering should he ever cross their path.

The weather was still calm, bright, warm, when, having drawn a light paletôt over his evening dress, Glynn left his hotel, preferring to walk as he was in good time for dinner. At the corner of the Rue Castiglione he met Deering, who was coming leisurely from the opposite direction; they stopped to exchange a few words, and then Deering exclaimed, looking at his watch, "I did not know it was so late, I am to do duty, and escort my wife and her sister to the Opera Comique to-night, *au revoir*," and they parted.

"The Opera Comique," muttered Glynn, with a strong feeling of annoyance. "He will see his Auteuil attraction, and recognize *me* in attendance. The presence of such a father, too, will dispose him to believe it's a case of fair game; but after all, I have no right to think ill of Deering. There is a curious sort of fate about the whole affair. I am a fool to worry myself. I will try to enjoy the passing hour, and let omens and auguries alone."

On reaching his destination Glynn mounted to the third *étage*, and was admitted by a neat, black-eyed *bonne*, to a dimly lighted little vestibule, containing some oak-chairs and a small orange-tree in blossom, the perfume of which was almost overpowering.

"Enter then, Monsieur," said the servant, throwing open one of several doors on either side, and Glynn found himself in a pretty, pleasant *salon* and the presence of Miss Lambert; who, somewhat to his surprise, was in outdoor dress.

"My father will be here directly," she said, giving him her hand. "He has gone to fetch our friends, Madame and Mademoiselle Davilliers, for we have changed our plans; not being able to secure places at the Comique for to-night, we propose to drive through the *bois* and dine at the Café de Madrid. I hope this will be agreeable to you?"

"Any arrangement you make will be most agreeable to me!" said Glynn, indescribably relieved to find himself and her delivered from the possibilities of an encounter with Deering, and charmed with the unpretending refinement of her surroundings. The room was well but simply furnished, and innocent of the flashy finery which might have been looked for in an apartment where Lambert was master. Some small but good water-colors enlivened the walls, which were of a neutral tint; an open piano loaded with music; the stove converted into a stand for flowers; the furniture of carved oak and green velvet; a small basket work-table, overflowing with bright-colored wools and silk, some fine old china on the mantel-shelf; a vase or two on corner-brackets,

formed a pleasant picture of comfort and occupation.

"You know the Café de Madrid, of course?" said Miss Lambert, when Glynn had taken a seat, as she put her music together and closed the piano.

"Yes, I know it well; it is a capital place to dine at."

"On such a fine evening it is delightful to be among the trees; they are quite green already, and there is a charming walk down to the river. We must try and persuade Madame Davilliers and the dear father to walk; do you mind walking after dinner?" She sat down suddenly while she spoke and looked straight at him gravely, as if it were a question of the last importance. "Does she think me an old fogy?" thought Glynn, and answered with a smile, "I have not yet reached that period of life when repose after eating is essential."

"No," still considering him gravely, "you are much younger than my father. When he spoke of you as a comrade I thought you must be about the same age. Is it long since you met?"

"Quite ten years."

"That is a long time. But my father is always young—I sometimes think he is younger than I am—nothing depresses him, he is so full of resource; and enjoys as if he were but five-and-twenty."

"Yes; I was always struck with his remarkable readiness. Do you remember America?"

"America? I never was in America. I was born in Australia, but my father——Ah! here he is," looking out of the window as the carriage was heard to stop. She took up her gloves, which were lying beside her sunshade, and began to put them on. In another moment the door opened to admit Lambert, who came in with an expression of radiant satisfaction.

"Glynn, my fine fellow! I am delighted to see you. Has my daughter told you we have changed our plans, and substituted a little dinner at the Madrid instead of baking ourselves at the Comique? All right, come along, Madame Davilliers and 'Toinette are waiting for us below; they have brought the cousin, young Henri Le Clerc, Elsie, and who should I stumble on just at the corner of the Rue d'Aguesseau, but Vincent, going to dine all alone by himself; so I made him jump up on the box. We'll be a nice little party; you ladies will have a cavalier apiece, and one to spare, that's myself; I am only a super nowadays; don't forget a wrap for coming home." Elsie locked the drawer of an ornamental bureau, put the key in her pocket, and declared herself ready; and Lambert led the way down-stairs. Arrived at the entrance, Glynn was duly presented to Madame and Mademoiselle Davilliers, in whom he recognized the ladies who were with Miss Lambert at Auteuil; they smiled and bowed most graciously, expressing their delight at M. Lambert's change of plans in rather shrill-toned raptures. After a little confusion it was settled that Mr. Vincent, a very elaborately got-up continentalized American, with fair hair, moustaches, and complexion, and rather sleepy pale blue eyes, should escort Madame Davilliers and her daughter. While Miss Lambert, her father, Glynn, and young Le Clerc, a good-looking boy in the polytechnique uniform, should occupy another open carriage.

Glynn fancied he observed an expression of decided relief in Elsie's face as Vincent took the seat assigned him, and she gave her hand to her father, who assisted her with careful politeness to her place; it was absurd to feel pleased by so trifling an indication—yet Glynn did feel pleased.

The drive along the beautiful Champs Elysées, and the Avenue de l'Imperatrice, as the approach to the *bois* was then called, is exhilarating,—especially when seated opposite an exceedingly pretty woman, whose prettiness possesses a peculiar charm for your own individual taste, and with whom for some occult reason you feel in sympathy. Away past the marionette shows, and Punch and Judy's, the well-kept gardens and fountains, the mansions all sheltered from the heat by their closed *jalousies*, at the further end, round the wide sweep which encircles the Arc de Triomphe, and on past splendid equipages returning from the afternoon drive up and down Long Champs; their occupants brilliant in exquisite toilettes, on down the Empress' Avenue, soon to be rechristened under a new order of things. Glynn could not help a keen sense of amusement as he compared the present condition of the man opposite him to his former state; and the wonder grew and grew, as to how such a girl as Miss Lambert came to be his daughter. The embryo artillery officer (such was Le Clerc's destination) chattered gaily, and was well seconded by his host, whose French, though fluent and amusing, was not distinguished by grammatical correctness, or purity of accent. His daughter said little, but that little showed she could express herself pointedly. Moreover, she looked so frankly and confidingly at Glynn that he felt as if she accepted him, stranger though he was, as an hereditary friend. He had to exercise some self-control to keep his eyes from saying too plainly how charming he thought her.

The gardens of the Chateau de Madrid were gay and fragrant with lilac and laburnum, mignonette, and jonquils.

Lambert, who loved to do things in a princely fashion, had written to secure a private room and dinner. The party was therefore received with great politeness and attention.

The young ladies betook themselves to the garden, followed by the gentlemen except Lambert, who went indoors with madame to order the wines. They were soon summoned to table, but in the short interval, Glynn observed that Vincent made a decided attempt to separate Miss Lambert from her companions, an attempt which she frustrated with calm, resolute politeness, remarkable in so young a girl. The dinner was excellent, the company animated, pleased with themselves and each other, perhaps slightly noisy. Madame Davilliers talked well if she also talked a good deal. Lambert occasionally, often unconsciously, said good things, and told a story with point and humor. Vincent devoted himself to Madame. Young Le Clerc to his cousin and Miss Lambert. Glynn was for some time an observant listener, more and more amused and

puzzled at the incongruity of the whole affair, and gathering from the conversation that Mademoiselle Antoinette Davilliers had been Miss Lambert's dearest friend at the convent school, where they had spent nearly six years together, that the papa Davilliers held some government employment, and that Vincent was the agent for a New York commercial house. Lambert's own occupation seemed very indefinite. He talked of having been connected with the press, of having had business interviews with various artistes, of writing himself on sporting matters. The symposium was prolonged, and when it was over, Glynn, observing a piano in a corner of their dining-room, asked Miss Lambert if she remembered her father's promise, that she should sing?

"Yes," smiling. "But, it was *his* promise, not mine."

"Ah! my darlin'," cried Lambert, overhearing. "You'll not dishonor your father's draft on your musical bank!"

"No, I will sing with pleasure by and by, Antoinette will begin."

"And an uncommon sweet little pipe she has, of her own. Mademoiselle is always gracious—and ready to give pleasure! Open the instrument, Elsie, I hope it isn't an instrument of torture."

"It might be much worse," she returned, when she had played a few chords. "Come, Antoinette," she said, as she began an accompaniment, and Mademoiselle Davilliers, a neat little blonde with a saucy "tip-tilted" nose, and a pretty toilette of the latest fashion, went over to the piano, and in a sweet, slightly shrill soprano proceeded to request some ideal Jeannette to look into the well, that the reflection of her blue eyes might gladden the singer. She sang with much piquant expression, and was loudly applauded.

"I think I should prefer looking into the blue eyes themselves, to searching for a cold reflection," said Glynn, who had placed himself at the end of the piano, so as to see the faces of the singers.

"It would be far better," returned Miss Lambert; "realities are always best."

"Now, Elsie; we are waiting for you," cried her father. Her reply was to strike a few chords, and begin a sweet, wild, plaintive air with Italian words. Her voice was peculiarly rich and sympathetic; its lower notes were especially fine; she had been thoroughly well taught, and had besides a degree of natural expression that sent her tones right to the heart of her hearers.

"This is indeed music," said Glynn, in a low voice when she ceased. "Do you feel something of the delight you give?"

"Do I give you delight? You look as if you liked my singing,—I am glad."

"It is heaven to listen to you," he exclaimed, almost in spite of himself. "Your song is quite unknown to me."

"It is a Polish air arranged by my music-master for some Italian words. He is Italian."

"I feel as if I were unworthy to ask for another song," said Glynn, after a short pause.

"Why? I will sing as much as you like, I can always sing well for those who like my singing," and again her deft fingers strayed over the notes, till they seemed to fall of their own accord into an undulating accompaniment to which she sang a *barcarolle*—brilliant, playful, but with an undertone of sadness.

"She can sing a bit, can't she?" asked Lambert, approaching with exultant looks. "Why, sir, she'd create a *fureur*, a regular *fureur*; she'd pick up gold for the asking, ay, in hatfuls, if she'd go on the stage; fancy her in the 'Trovatore,' or, 'The Figlia' or 'Martha!'—give us 'The Last Rose of Summer,' my heart;—why, she'd bring down any house; and the obstinate little sinner refuses point-blank to appear on the boards, says it would kill her. Faith, it is a right royal way to keep life *in* one, and the devil out of one's pocket; by Jove, she would hold her own with the best, when she has a father that can crack a walnut at fifty paces, and wouldn't mind if it were a skull in a good cause!"

"Ah, no! the stage would be a miserable failure for me. You do not take temperament into account," said Miss Lambert, with a sigh, and then stopped the conversation by thrilling out the exquisite air for which Lambert had asked.

"Now," said the singer, when she had finished, rising from her seat, "you must do what I ask, dear father; I want to walk to the river."

"It's a good step," said Lambert; "and it isn't civil to leave your company."

"But they will come with me. Will you not, Madame Davilliers? and you, Antoinette,—*you* will, I am sure?" raising her eyes with a confiding glance to Glynn's.

"I shall enjoy a stroll immensely," he replied. Madame, however, preferred to remain where she was, and Vincent offered to stay and play a game of piquet with her to pass away the time.

Evening was fast closing in when they started on their ramble, and the falling dew drew out delicious odors from grass, and flowers, and shrubs, as they proceeded along the avenue which, skirting the *bois*, led to the river-side. It was longer than Miss Lambert thought, and the moon had risen before they reached the Seine. At first they had kept all together, but gradually Glynn contrived to separate himself and Miss Lambert from the rest. "And so you had not courage enough for the stage," he said, after a short pause in their conversation.

"No; I suppose it is want of courage that holds me back—a sort of constitutional dislike to such a calling. Though I greatly admire actresses and singers, I could not be one. I love quietness,

stillness,—being with a few people I like."

"Then you cannot like Paris?"

"Oh, yes! I am very happy here. I enjoy music and pictures, and my father gives me everything I can want or wish. I am a most fortunate girl, but——"

"There are 'buts' in every life," said Glynn, as she paused. He wanted her to speak on.

"There is scarcely a 'but' in mine. I was going to say that I seem to want a few months in the country every year to make life complete."

"Have you been accustomed to the country, then?"

"Yes. When we came first from Australia I was rather delicate, and I used to live with the kind woman who took care of me after my mother's death at her brother's farm in a beautiful country on the borders of Wales. It was a delightful place. Then when I was about twelve my father thought I ought to learn something, and he put me to school in the convent. I have never been in England since; still I always fancy I am English."

"And I feel as if you were; but Mr. Lambert is American?"

"Not by birth. Tell me, did you know my father very well long ago?"

"Yes; that is, we ran some risks together. Why do you ask?"

"Because you are so unlike all his other friends."

"Indeed! Am I too English?"

"No; I cannot exactly say what the difference is, but it is very great."

Somehow these few simple words elated Glynn as though they contained the highest compliment. He restrained the reply which sprang to his lips, and changed the subject by exclaiming, "There is the river; how fine it looks in the moonlight."

"Yes, there is real harmony there."

"You are right, Elsie," exclaimed her father. "It gives one the feeling of being in church when the organ is playing."

"And you and your delightful singing give me the feeling of silvery light upon a still, smooth lake," said Glynn, in a low tone to his companion. "You will be forever associated in my memory with moonlight and music."

Elsie smiled a thoughtful smile.

"I am not sure that such an association of ideas is a good omen. There is something mournful and mystic in the moon."

"I could never bring anything but good to you," whispered Glynn, who was strangely stirred by the charm of his companion, the beauty of the scene, the curious fatality which had brought him into contact with Lambert after having lost sight of him for so many years.

"*Dieu!*" cried Mademoiselle Davilliers, "I am expiring with fatigue, and I have all that long way to walk back!"

"Not at all, my dear young lady," said Lambert, with a superior air. "I made a few inquiries before we started, and told them to send on one of the carriages after us. There, I think I hear it coming."

The drive back was a fitting end to a delightful day. Glynn secured a seat next Elsie, and though neither of them spoke many words, *he* at least felt that the electric communication of unuttered sympathy was complete and sufficient.

"Thank you for a delightful day, Mr. Lambert."

"My dear boy"—it had been "my dear sir" the day before—"it is a real pleasure to meet you. Look in on us now and again. I am sure my daughter will be delighted. Elsie! Where is she?"

"Miss Lambert is rather tired; I think she has gone in. Good-night,—thanks, I have a cigar."

CHAPTER II.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

When Glynn woke next morning to broad day, the noise of the busy street, and the consciousness of an early business appointment, last night, with its music and moonlight, seemed to him dream-like and unreal. It was all very pleasant while it lasted, but in a few days he would quit Paris, and probably never see Lambert or that wonderfully charming daughter of his again. What would be the destiny of such a woman so placed? Not happiness, he feared, if she were all she seemed. Yet how devoted that queer fish Lambert was to her. So far as he could take care of her he would; but what perceptions could *he* have of what was right and suitable for a delicate, sensitive girl!

However, Glynn had other things to think of just then, and soon hastened away to hold high council on money matters with a sharp but soft-spoken German Jew, whose oiliness had not a soothing effect on the cool, clear-sighted Englishman.

Business hours are earlier in Paris than in London. Glynn found himself on the Boulevard des Italiens, and free, while it was still early enough to pay a visit. With a vague curiosity, arising from very mixed motives, he directed his steps to the hotel where Mr. and Lady Frances Deering lodged, and found that lady at tea with her son—a pale, delicate, deformed boy—and a gentleman of middle height, with a frank, sun-burnt face, and a certain easy looseness about his well-made clothes.

"You are just in time for tea, Mr. Glynn," said Lady Frances, in a soft but monotonous voice. "Do you know my cousin, Captain Verner?"

Yes, the gentlemen had met before, and they exchanged a few civil words.

"Is this your first visit to Paris?" asked Glynn, kindly, as he drew his chair beside the sofa on which the boy was lying.

"Yes, the very first."

"And how do you like it?"

"Oh, so much! It is so beautiful and bright. I should like to stay here always."

"Bertie is much better and stronger since we came here, which partly accounts for his wish to stay," said his mother, with a slight sigh.

"I wish I could take you to sea, my boy," cried Captain Verner; "a cruise with me would make you all right."

Lady Frances turned her pale eyes on the speaker, and Glynn noticed that they darkened with a look of intense pain only for an instant, while she said with her usual composure, "I have no doubt that Herbert will be quite fortified by Dr. Lemaire's treatment. Then the summer is before him, and he will have gathered strength before winter. Winter is very severe and dreary at Denham."

"You should winter at Palermo," observed Glynn. "It is a delightful spot—a sort of place to make you forget troubles."

"I wish you would," said Verner, earnestly.

"Say *could*," returned Lady Frances, and she rose to ring the bell.

She was very tall and slight, exceedingly dignified and deliberate in her movements, and would have been rather handsome but for her extreme stillness, coldness, and want of color. A pale blonde sounds like insipidity, but Lady Frances was not insipid; she was a great lady to the tips of her fingers, yet simple in dress and manner to a degree that bewildered those gorgeous dames, the wives of her husband's wealthier constituents, on the rare occasions when they were admitted within the sacred portals of Denham Castle.

"Why are you hurrying away to London?" asked Verner. "There is nothing to call Deering back, as he has lost his seat."

"He is not happy out of club-land, I suppose," said Lady Frances, sitting down beside her son. "I must say I am very sorry he lost the election. He deserved better at the hands of the Denham men, but it was the radical mining people that turned him out."

"Do you leave soon?" asked Glynn.

"On Thursday; I suppose you will not come back quite so soon? You are fond of Paris, I think?"

"My movements are rather uncertain; I may go on to Berlin."

"I wish you would come as far as Genoa with me," cried Verner, "I am just appointed to the 'Africa,' on the Mediterranean station. I hate traveling alone. Poor Dennison, who commanded her, died of a few days' fever off the coast of Calabria,—caught it shooting in some marshes, and ——"

The entrance of Deering interrupted him.

"How do, Glynn? You still here, Verner?" He took no notice of Lady Frances or his son.

"Yes, I want to see the review to-morrow, and will start by the Lyons train at night," said Verner, in an apologetic tone.

Deering threw himself into an easy-chair, exclaiming, "It is getting insufferably hot here. Could you manage to start on Tuesday night instead of Thursday morning?"—to his wife.

"I should think so."

"Then pray make your arrangements. I say, Glynn, things look very shaky in Spain. There will be a tremendous fall in Spanish bonds."

"They will recover, if one can hold on. In fact, if a fellow can afford to wait, it would not be a bad plan to buy now," returned Glynn.

Here Deering's valet brought his master some brandy-and-soda, with a due amount of ice, a refreshment which both Verner and Glynn declined.

Travers Deering was tall, but not so tall as Glynn, more conventionally distinguished-looking, with regular aristocratic features, steel-grey eyes, and nut-brown hair and moustaches. He was, on the whole, a popular man, and bestowed a good deal of carefully veiled cultivation on his popularity. He was considered rather the type of a proud, manly, English country gentleman of a fairly clean life, though no saint, and a little martyrized by being tied to so cold and impenetrable

a wife. Servants, and insignificant people of that description, whispered that the steel-grey eyes could flash with baleful fire, and that Lady Frances had grown colder and stiller since the deformity and delicacy of her only child had become perceptible and hopeless; while Mr. Deering never stayed at Denham alone with her.

Glynn was conscious of an unaccountable sense of relief when Deering expressed a desire to quit Paris, even sooner than he had at first intended.

It was absurd to imagine that any evil could arise out of a mere passing admiration; it could be nothing more, for a handsome stranger. Yet the expression of Deering's eyes, the uneasiness, wonder, fire, all commingled, which had so impressed him, flashed back vividly across his memory with undiminished disturbing force. But Deering was talking.

"I have been round Count de Latour's stables this morning. Have you seen them, Glynn? They are worth a visit. His stud-groom and head men are all English. I am very much inclined to back his chestnut, 'Bar-le-duc,' for the Derby. He's a splendid horse, only, of course, it isn't always blood or breeding that wins. There were a couple of Americans looking through the stables at the same time, who seemed deucedly wide awake, and inclined to back both 'Bar-le-duc' and a filly, 'Etoile d'Auvergne,' about which I am not so sure. I have met one of them, Vandervoort, in London, do you know him?"

Glynn said he thought he did. The talk became, for a few minutes, of the Turf—turfy. And while it went on the boy rose, and followed by his mother, who covered his retreat, noiselessly left the room. Glynn, looking at Deering at this moment, caught an expression of malignant dislike in his eyes towards his deformed son, or his wife, or both, which surprised and revolted him. It was instantaneous, and he continued to talk lightly and pleasantly, till Glynn rose to bid Lady Frances good-morning.

Verner left the room at the same time, and the two men walked towards the Place de la Concorde together.

"Pity that poor boy is a cripple," said Glynn, speaking out of his thoughts. "I fancy Deering is a good deal cut up about it."

"I don't know about Deering, nor do I care much," returned Captain Verner, bluntly; "but it has been a desperate grief to the mother. Why, when we were children together—ay, and after—Lady Frances was the life of us all. I never saw a girl with so much go in her; and now!"—he broke off expressively. "However, no one can help her," he added, after a moment; and then quickly turning the subject, began to talk of French politics, till they reached the corner of the Champs Elysées, where they paused to see the Empress drive by. There Verner turned back to keep an engagement, and Glynn strolled on slowly to his hotel, resolutely resisting a strong temptation to call and inquire for Miss Lambert. Indeed, with the help of a good deal of letter-writing and interviews with sundry personages of financial importance, Glynn contrived to keep his mind free from imaginative pictures and irresistible suggestions. *He* was not going to make a fool of himself, or of any one else, either; he was too old and experienced to be carried away by a romantic encounter, or the liquid loveliness of a pair of lustrous, dreamy, dark-blue eyes. "What eyes they are!" he thought, as he sat at his second *déjeuné*, on Sunday morning, three whole days since he had enjoyed the hospitality of his quondam comrade of the Californian episode. "Mere civility demands that I should call. I think I have been under fire often enough to stand this last fusillade without flinching; besides, the whole thing is deucedly curious." So, after looking in at Gaglinane's, and reading the English papers, Glynn found himself on his way to the Rue de L'Evêque.

The perfume of orange-blossoms which came forth from the opening door greeted him like the prelude of delight, so vividly did it remind him of the pleasant hours to which his first visit was an introduction.

"Yes, monsieur was at home, and mademoiselle also," and the servant, opening a different door from that through which she had ushered him on the former occasion, spoke to some one within, and immediately Lambert himself, in a gorgeous dressing-gown, a fez on his head, and a cigarette in his mouth, came forth to greet him.

"Glynn, come along into my den here. I thought you had left for some other diggings. I was going to look you up to-day. I've not had a moment I could call my own since we parted!" While he spoke he ushered his visitor into a small, very small room, containing a large knee-hole table loaded with letters, newspapers, small account-books, and all appliances for writing, and two very comfortable circular-chairs. These articles of furniture scarcely left room to move. A looking-glass, surmounted by a couple of revolvers, completed the decorations. A dim light was admitted by a long, narrow stained-glass window; and a second door, which stood open, led into a comfortably furnished dining-room.

"This is my *Cabinet de travaille*," said Lambert, wheeling round one of the chairs; "and I am just taking an hour or two from the Sabbath to clear up some little arrears of work. Where have you been all these days?"

"Very busy, or I should have paid my respects to you and Miss Lambert sooner."

"To be sure, to be sure, you are in business yourself. Anything in the book-making way? I think I remember you had a fair notion as to the value of a horse."

"No; mine is a more sober system of gambling."

"Aha! the share market! I could give you a hint or two about that new steamship company they

are getting up in Hamburg."

"Thank you, my hands are pretty full already."

After a little further conversation on financial and sporting topics while Lambert was putting his papers together with some degree of rough order, he proposed to join his daughter.

"She was out to mass with her friends the Davilliers, and had breakfast with them; I have scarcely seen her this morning." So saying, he rose and led Glynn through the dining-room to an arched doorway, across which a curtain of rich dark stuff was drawn, and lifting it cried, "Are you there, my jewel? I have brought Mr. Glynn to see you."

"Come in," said a voice; and as he entered Glynn saw Miss Lambert advancing from an open window to meet him.

The room into which he had been ushered was small, though larger than the minute apartment Lambert had appropriated. It was prettily and lightly decorated, the hangings and chair-covers being of chintz, bouquets of roses tied with blue ribbon on a cream ground, and had one large window opening on a balcony full of flowers, which overhung a garden belonging to a large hotel in a street behind. There were books and needle-work, a writing-table and a sewing-machine about, and it was evidently Miss Lambert's private sitting-room. A stout, elderly woman in black, with a lace cap and a large apron, who looked more than a servant and less than a lady, rose as they entered, and was about to leave the room, when Lambert exclaimed in his hearty manner and rather peculiar French, "How goes it, Madame Weber? I hope your cold is better; a summer cold is worse than any other, for it's out of season."

Madame thanked monsieur, reported herself nearly or quite well, and vanished.

"I thought you had left Paris, at least my father did," said Elsie Lambert, giving Glynn one hand, while the other held an open book—a shabby, well-thumbed book.

"I should not have left without calling to say good-bye, to thank you again for your delightful songs," returned Glynn.

She smiled. "Will you sit down, or shall we go into the *salon*, this is such a tiny place?"

"Oh, we are snug enough here. And how are you, my dear? you haven't said 'good-morning' to your old father yet."

"My *old* father!" leaning her head against him for an instant, with inexpressible loving grace; "why, he is younger than I am, Mr. Glynn. When I have been brooding over my book or work I always feel as if some bright, pleasant playfellow had come to rouse me when my father walks in."

"Thar!" said Lambert, looking over with infinite pride and a queer expressive nod and toss of the head to Glynn, as if to say, "What do you think of your old fighting, gaming, hand-to-mouth comrade now?" "It's not every old cuss that can find a nice young lady to say as much for him, hey?" he said aloud.

"I quite understand it," returned Glynn, smiling, his eyes full of tender admiration. What a curious puzzle the whole thing was. How had Lambert *alias* Merrick, or Merrick *alias* Lambert, found the funds to keep up this establishment, which, modest as it was, must cost six or seven hundred a year? Honestly, he hoped, though from certain dimly-remembered traits he feared the lively, boyish Lambert was not the most scrupulous of men. Still, regard for so sweet, so refined a daughter must, ought to keep him straight.

"What are you going to do with yourself, Elsie, this damp, drizzling afternoon? you can't go out."

"Oh yes I can; I was just asking Madame Weber if she felt well enough to come with me to the *salon*; one can find all weathers in the pictures."

"A good idea, faith. Will you come with us, Glynn? for I'll be your escort myself, Elsie. Just let me get into my coat and boots, and I'll be with you in a twinkling."

"Yes, do come, that will be delightful. And you too, Mr. Glynn?"

"With infinite pleasure."

"Then I'll make my toilette before you'd say Jack Robinson," cried Lambert, as he left the room.

"You are fond of reading, Miss Lambert?" asked Glynn.

"Yes, very fond; and this is such a delightful English book. I like it much better than French poetry."

"May I see?"

"Certainly," handing it to him.

"Ah, 'The Lady of the Lake,' that is a very old friend; I thought modern young ladies had left such childish productions far behind."

"Childish! what can you mean? Why, it is so clear and vivid; I almost feel the mountain air as I read; and that combat between Fitz-James and Roderick, only a man could have written *that*!"

"I must read it again," said Glynn, half to himself, as he turned over the pages; "I have not seen it since I was a boy."

"Then you read, too? that also is unlike my father's other friends."

"I am afraid your father's friends do not stand very high in your estimation; I earnestly hope I

may find more favor."

"I think I shall like you,"—softly—gravely, and without a tinge of coquetry, looking at him while she spoke.

He could not have answered her lightly, even had he been inclined; there was something imposing in her straightforward simplicity, and he replied, in the same tone: "I hope you will try to like me. You have not read many English books perhaps?"

"Very few books of any kind, and those chiefly since I left school. It is a great delight; but I read very slowly, indeed I am slow about everything, not that I enjoy the less."

"I am sure you learned music quickly."

"I can always pick up airs, and even long pieces by ear, but I do not think I learned by note quickly."

"Tell me," asked Glynn, moved by a sudden impulse, "did you enjoy the races last Sunday at Auteuil? I should not imagine racing an amusement suited to you."

"But I *was* amused; the crowd and the brightness made a pleasant picture." Then with a sudden recollection, "But how do you know I was at the races; they were long ago, before I knew you?"

A strange thrill of triumph shivered through Glynn's veins at this implied admission that her acquaintance with him was an event to date from.

"I saw you there, and I feared you might have seen me, for I was with a man who gazed at you almost rudely, because you reminded him of some one, and I did not wish you to associate me with him in your mind."

"Was he a tall, haughty-looking man, very English, and rather *distingué*?"

"Yes."

"Then I *did* see him, but not with you; it was just before we came away. He walked up to the carriage, and looked into my face. I felt frightened. Why did he do it? Of whom did I remind him? some one he did not like, I am sure."

"That I cannot tell," said Glynn thoughtfully, while he remembered that Deering had no doubt returned to gaze once more at the face which had so fascinated him.

"Do you know the gentleman well? Is he—good, I mean kind, or hard and cruel? He filled me with a strange fear; but I did not mention it to my father, because he is so fond, so anxious about me."

"Now then, go put on your bonnet, my darlin'; the sun is trying to come out. We'll take a *fiacre*, and have a good look at the pictures," cried Lambert, breaking in on their discourse.

Elsie was soon ready, and a few hours of simple, pure, but thorough enjoyment ensued. Lambert candidly avowing his indifference to art generally, secured a comfortable seat, and produced a couple of newspapers from his pocket. To these he devoted his attention, telling his daughter he would await her pleasure.

So Glynn was practically alone with Elsie. He found a new experience in her genuine, though uncultured appreciation of the paintings, in the complete unaffected reality of her manner, the honesty of her crude opinions. Then when she found he had seen many galleries, and knew something of art, the interest with which she listened to him was flattering and amusing; not that she was ready to accept his dictum unquestioned, she tried most assertions by the test of her own common sense.

The restful charm of her gentle composure, while it enchanted her companion, conveyed an impression of latent strength which unconsciously piqued him into an irresistible desire to exert an influence, a disturbing influence over her. He was growing conscious that at the first sign of discomposure, the first fluttering hesitation in her look or voice, his firmness, prudence, good resolutions would go by the board. For the present, however, all was safe; he might as well enjoy himself, in another week he would probably be far away, and might never see his queer Californian comrade or his lovely daughter again. Never? Well, he was not so sure about that. Meantime the severest chaperon could not find cause to cavil at any of his words or looks; he was calmly agreeable, and put forth his best powers of conversation, his memories of art, of other lands, of all that could lay hold of his companion's imagination, with intuitive skill.

"Have I kept you too long, dear father?" exclaimed Elsie, when at last she sought her much enduring parent and sank into a seat beside him.

"Well, you've been a trifle longer travelling around than greased lightning. I've finished my two journals, and had a doze, but you have enjoyed the pictures, eh?"

"Very, very much; Mr. Glynn knows a great deal about painting, and he has explained many things that puzzled me. I never enjoyed the *salon* so much before. Will you come with us again, Mr. Glynn?"

"I shall be very glad," he returned with laudable sobriety. "But I fear I shall have to leave Paris in about ten days," he added.

"Then pray let us come one day next week," said Elsie, quite unmoved by this announcement.

"All right, *ma belle*," returned her father; "but we must be going now, it's six o'clock, and I asked Vincent to dine, we have a little business to talk over."

Elsie was silent, but a distressed look crept over her speaking face. "If you want to talk of

business may I not go to dine with Antoinette?"

"Aha! you perverse little puss, you are real unkind to poor Vincent, who is a good fellow enough; why, every one likes him but you."

"And I do *not* like him, nor do I like to sing to him."

"See that now! and he an old friend of your father's before—no, not quite before you were born. Well, please yourself, dear, please—Why," interrupting himself, "there's old Monsieur Chauvot; I must speak to him."

He went forward, and was soon in deep conversation with a stout Frenchman, through whose arm he passed his own, and they walked on together, Elsie and Glynn following.

"So Vincent is one of your father's friends who do *not* find favor in your eyes. What has he done?" asked Glynn.

"Nothing; I cannot account for my dislike, but it is here," pressing her hand on her heart, "and will not go away."

"And I with as little reason share it," returned Glynn.

"Do you? I am glad, which is very wrong, but it comforts me to find some one else unreasonable. Madame Davilliers and Antoinette think him quite nice and agreeable."

At the door of Madame Davilliers' residence Elsie paused.

"I may as well go in now," she said to Lambert. "Will you not come in and say a little word to madame? and you, too, Mr. Glynn, she will be delighted to see you."

Glynn assented. After a quarter of an hour's lively talk amidst a circle of evidently solid and respectable visitors he was cordially requested to call again, and left the house with Lambert, feeling that another link had been added to the magic chain which was twining itself around him.

"She's an elegant woman, faith," said Lambert with the air of a connoisseur, as he left the house with Glynn, "and so is the demoiselle. I always count it real good luck that Elsie fell in with them, for between you and me and the post, none of my acquaintances were just suited to introduce a young lady into society. It's been uphill work *I* can tell you, but Madame D. has been no end of a help to me. Why, you'd never have the faintest notion of all the whim-whams she has put me up to! Wouldn't you think now a girl would be all right in her father's house with a respectable young woman like Celestine to wait on her? Not a bit of it. Madame says I must have a sort of a lady to be a companion to Elsie, and so she found Madame Weber for us. Now they are going to marry Antoinette to a very respectable wealthy young Vicomte that will be another backer for Elsie. I believe preliminaries are nearly arranged, and then he'll be presented as a *prétendant*."

"What a hideous system it is," ejaculated Glynn.

"I don't see that at all," returned Lambert; "a good girl will get fond of any man who makes her a kind husband, and God only knows the relief it is to a parent to make sure that all's right, and see, too, one's girl safe under the protection of a strong man." He spoke with feeling.

"There are some better aspects, I confess, to the *mariage de convenance*," said Glynn, "but the worse outweigh them."

"Well, I am inclined for the system, though our Amurican girls would never stand it."

"Are you American?" asked Glynn, encouraged by his companion's confidential, regretful tone to put the question.

"A naturalized American. I was obliged by the persecutions of a cruel government to quit my native land as a mere boy, and leave behind me the life of a gentleman, for I can tell you, sir, the Lamberts of Ballybough are as good a stock as any in Ireland; that's five-and-thirty years ago; between you and me I had a hard, sometimes a desperate fight of it since, but I keep all that to myself. Madame D. there thinks me a big man entirely; it's all the better for *her*, and all I care for is my jewel Elsie."

This brought them to Lambert's door. "Honor bright," said he, giving his hand to Glynn, "I know I may trust *you*."

Glynn shook hands cordially, and went towards his hotel, musing on the curious contradictions displayed by his former friend, and the incongruity of being made a confidant by the adoring father of the girl against whose subtle charm he had determined to steel himself.

A fortnight had gone by swiftly, too swiftly, and Glynn was still in Paris. True, the plans which would have compelled his presence in Berlin were changed, and he was consequently detained a little longer in the French capital, but he was now free, and had some weeks at his own disposal.

For various plausible reasons he was frequently at the Rue de L'Evêque, and also a welcome visitor at Madame Davilliers', who declared him worthy of being a Frenchman. He was always careful to bestow his whole attention on her when in her presence, and did not shock her sense of propriety by throwing away any small politenesses on the young ladies.

His happiest moments, however, were those in which he found Elsie sitting at her work or at the piano with Madame Weber and her knitting established beside her. Then they talked long and confidentially on many topics, sometimes in French to include the good Alsacian, but more often

in English; and Elsie would practice her songs while he sat in a deep low chair and dreamed, and was lapped into a state of feverish, uneasy delight. Every day the difficulty of tearing himself away grew greater, and still the quiet unconsciousness of Elsie, the easy, friendly tone which she preserved towards him convinced him that whatever of pain might result from their intercourse would be unshared by her.

Glynn was often Lambert's guest; and more than once entertained the father and daughter at some one of the pleasant restaurants, in the *bois*, or on the Champs Elysées.

Lambert, though speaking frankly enough of himself, never explained very distinctly what his employment was; nor did he make any allusion to the position or occupation of his former friend and comrade, as he was fond of calling Glynn.

"I have a wonderful piece of news for you, Mr. Glynn," said Elsie one fine warm afternoon, when he had been ushered through the orange-scented vestibule to the *salon* where she was sitting beside her work-table, with a book Glynn had lent her in her hands, and she motioned towards a chair opposite her.

"Indeed! what may it be? Good-morning, Madame Weber," bowing. "May I try to divine it, Miss Lambert? Has Mr. Lambert agreed to take you to the Pyrenees or to England?" looking into her eyes. "No! then he will go for a month or two to Switzerland? No? Then your old friend Mrs. ----, I forget the name, who used to take care of you, is coming to Paris? No? Then I am at the end of my conjectures. You see I always read '*no*' in your eyes."

"You could never guess! My father has gone away to Havre, quite early this morning, and will not return for three or four days. He has never left me since we came to live here till now, and I cannot tell you how strange and restless and half frightened I feel; but Madame Davilliers has kindly asked me to stay with her, and I go there to dinner to-day. I should have gone sooner, but I thought you might call, so I waited."

Her perfect easy candor was charming, yet mortifying to his *amour propre*.

"Thank you very much; I am glad to have an opportunity of hearing of your intended movements from yourself; it would have been an awful shock to have found every one gone; but," looking keenly at her, "what have you been doing or suffering? You are pale. There is a weary look in your eyes."

"And you are like my dear father, too ready to think I must be suffering or unhappy, or something dreadful, if I look a shade paler than usual. I am quite well." She smiled, stopped abruptly, let her eyes droop, while the color rose softly in her cheek, and her smile was replaced by a serious, almost sad expression in the curves of her mouth.

"You have something to tell me? something that disturbs you. Speak, you may trust me."

"I am sure I can. Well, I was foolishly frightened yesterday. We, Madame Weber and I, had gone to hear the band play in the Tuileries Gardens. It was very pleasant under the trees, and we sat a long time. Just as we rose to return home, two gentlemen came up from a side walk; one I recognized at a little distance to be Mr. Vincent; the other, when they came nearer, I saw was the same man whom I noticed at Auteuil; you know who I mean? He looked at me so strangely, I felt uneasy, frightened, and I hurried Madame Weber away. They must have taken some shorter path, for when we reached the gate opposite the Rue de la Paix they came upon us again. Mr. Vincent raised his hat, and so did the other, and stared at me with such an odd piercing look of dislike and doubt—Oh! I cannot forget it."

"Yes," said Madame Weber, gathering from Elsie's expression, and the words "Tuileries Gardens," that she was relating the events of yesterday, "that gentleman there was not at all polite; he glared at mademoiselle, *Mon Dieu!* like a savage beast; nevertheless he was distinguished, and no doubt noble."

"I think you must be mistaken," said Glynn; "the man whom you saw at the races left Paris nearly three weeks ago. I should most probably have seen him had he returned. You must have been mistaken."

Elsie shook her head. "I could never be mistaken in that man," she said.

Glynn was greatly struck by the reappearance of Deering, but he threw off the impression. It was probably an illusion on the part of Elsie. That Deering, the proudest of men, should be walking with so doubtful a personage as Vincent seemed almost incredible. He would make inquiries, however. Meantime he addressed himself to soothe Elsie's evident uneasiness.

"After all, granting you are right, what have you to fear? Your admirer can only look; he dare not annoy you, or any attempt at annoyance could soon be put a stop to. Indeed, I am sure Deering is too much a gentleman and a man of the world to outrage good manners in any way."

"What is his name?"

"Deering of Denham; rather a personage in Yorkshire. I know him and his wife."

"He is married?" as if a little surprised. "Yes, I dare say I am foolish to be afraid of anything, but I am sometimes such a coward. I suppose it is the effect of the terrible terror I suffered when almost a baby."

"Indeed!" said Glynn, his curiosity profoundly stirred, and feeling more than ever convinced there was some very unusual story attached to the sweet, graceful daughter of his former rowdy acquaintance. "I suppose I ought not to ask you how and where you encountered such a shock?"

"I do not mind speaking of it to you; it is a sort of relief, for I have seen you look surprised when I have started and shuddered at trifles. I do not wish you to think me silly."

"Silly!—do you know that you seem to me the impersonation of tranquil, womanly wisdom?"

A laugh so merry and spontaneous rippled over lip and cheek, and flashed from her eyes, that for an instant Glynn feared he had erred by appearing to exaggerate.

"That you should think so ignorant a girl as I am wise, is too funny," she exclaimed.

"Wisdom is a gift that may be improved, not created by learning," said Glynn; "but as you permit me to ask, what was the terror to which you allude?"

"It was so long ago that my memory of it is mere confusion. When I was three or four years old the blacks came and burnt our house, away in Australia; they killed some people too. Then I remember being on a horse and clinging to my father. I think I was quite out of my mind, for I remember being afraid of my own dear father, and thinking him changed and different from what he used to be. Oh, it is all so confused! Then there was a long voyage and great quiet; yet I used to scream if I were left alone for a moment. Sometimes it seems true that I had two long sea voyages, and that my only comfort was to crouch in my father's arms. Then came a long period—long and peaceful—in the sweet fresh country, where I grew strong and fearless, though I always had panics. I had one the first time I met that gentleman's eyes, and sometimes I feel afraid with Mr. Vincent. I was very happy with Mrs. Kellett; she is the good friend who took care of me till my father put me in the convent. He used to come and see me from time to time, and when I saw how much he loved me I grew to love him with my whole heart. That is all I know about my own life."

"And it is enough. You must banish all sense of fear—life promises to be fair and smooth for you."

"I hope so; but curious thrills of terror steal through me sometimes. I never like to ask my father about that dreadful night. I think my poor mother died then, and he cannot bear to speak of it. It was that fright I suppose that made me a little slow and dull; but thank God I can and do enjoy a great deal."

"It would be a frightful injustice if you could not; and you must throw your fears to the winds. You are formed to win friends; dream only of happiness and affection! May I wait, and escort you to Madame Davilliers'?"

This request was prompted by a strange inexpressible reluctance to leave her alone in her own apartment during her father's absence.

"I am turning driveller," he thought; "am I on the verge of making a fool of myself? Not with my eyes open,—yet I would risk a good deal to insure this fair delicate creature from shock or real danger,—for with such a father, such dubious surroundings, her future is, to say the least, unpromising."

"Oh, yes; I should be very glad if you will come with us, and then you will come and see Madame Davilliers while I am with her? My father will be home on Monday, in the evening. How delightful it will be to have him back again. Ah! he is so good to me. I am sometimes oppressed to think how dearly he loves me. I suppose it is because I was so weak, so nearly imbecile when a child. Shall we go to Madame Davilliers' now? I am quite ready."

"When you like; but first do me a great favor, sing me a song before you go away among a set of strangers, a song all to myself."

Elsie smiled, and turning to the piano at once, complied, choosing a Latin hymn expressive of faith in Divine protection, one of those she was accustomed to sing in her convent school days.

When Glynn had escorted her and Madame Weber to the Davilliers' residence, he walked to the hotel where Mr. and Lady Frances Deering were in the habit of staying, and inquired if Mr. Deering had returned. "No," the waiter said, "nor did they expect monsieur, who had left more than a fortnight ago."

"She must have been mistaken," mused Glynn, as he went on to his own quarters. "Deering could not endure the companionship of such a man as Vincent, and what object could he have in following a girl like Elsie Lambert? She is a sensitive, timid soul, more so than I imagined, yet there are possibilities of heroism in her. A most delightful companion, with fresh discoveries of sheltered nooks and mossy dells of character at every step in our acquaintance. I will not leave Paris until I see her safe under her father's wing again; then, if I have an ounce of common sense left, I will fly!"

Reaching his own room, he found among others a letter from Lady Gethin, asking the real reason of his prolonged stay in Paris. Having a spare half-hour he replied at once:

"I am trying to put the pieces of a puzzle together; I am not sure I shall succeed, but am going to give myself a few days longer, then I shall come and report proceedings. I wonder what solution you will suggest. Till we meet then, I can say no more on the subject. Have you seen the Deerings? Are they both in London? I assure you I long to bring my doubts and suspicions to the test of your experience and acumen.

"Ever your devoted Nephew,
"Hugh Glynn."

CHAPTER III.
OLD SCORES.

Madame Davilliers' was a very pleasant household. Of course it had not the ease and freedom that reigns in an English home, at least for young people. Antoinette and her friend were treated with the kind of affectionate indulgence suited to infants of tender years, but watched also and guarded with the care due to creatures of the same immature age.

To Lambert and his daughter madame extended a wide indulgence,—"Americans, you know," in an explanatory tone, was always her comment on any eccentricity of theirs. She was exceedingly anxious to settle Elsie judiciously, as she felt convinced she would have a goodly dower, and deeply regretted that she had not a son old enough to demand the charming mademoiselle in marriage. Lambert, however, showed himself reluctant to accept any of her suggestions, and she therefore concluded that he had other plans in view.

Elsie Lambert was very happy with Antoinette. They practiced duets together, and traced patterns, and Elsie read aloud to her friend when she was at work, or repeated to her the stories and poems she had lately read in English, on Glynn's recommendation. Elsie was the master spirit of the two, though Antoinette was by far the bravest and most self-possessed in society.

But amid her contentment Elsie was conscious of an extraordinary want—a void which nothing sufficed to fill; it was the want of those quiet conversations with Glynn, each of which awoke new ideas, new aspirations, new life. He called as he had promised, and was received most graciously by Madame Davilliers in her *salon*. Both girls were present. Glynn, however, knew well he must not speak more than a few civil words to them, and even his inquiries for Lambert he felt bound to utter in French. But Elsie's expressive eyes told him much. They said frankly and innocently, "I wish I could talk to you. I wish I dare speak as usual. This is all rather tiresome." And he longed unutterably to take her out for a long ramble in the *bois*, her arm through his own, her sweet candid face uplifted to his, that she might the better comprehend the meaning of his words; but he must not think of such things. He ought to be thankful, especially thankful, that her feelings towards him were so calm and friendly. If he were to read anything of tenderness, of passion, in those lovely blue eyes of hers, why, chaos would be come again! For to call Lambert father-in-law would be chaotic!

"How is M. Vincent?" asked Madame Davilliers, as Glynn rose to take leave one afternoon; "he has not presented himself lately. He is a most interesting man, and quite French in his knowledge of life and character! I shall beg him to give himself the trouble of dining with us on Wednesday next, and I hope that you too, monsieur, will do us the pleasure of joining our little party. Wednesday is the anniversary of our wedding-day, and M. Davilliers proposes to make a little fête in its honor. If fine we shall dine at the 'Grande Cascade' at six o'clock; we hope our good friend Monsieur Lambert will return in time for our *réunion*."

"It is also the anniversary of Lodi, and the Grande Cascade will be illuminated," cried Antoinette. "It will be superb."

"Yes, do come, it will be charming," said Elsie.

"I need no persuasion," replied Glynn. "I shall be but too happy to join your party, madame."

During the days which intervened Glynn kept a sharp look-out wherever he went, both for Deering and Vincent, but in vain; he saw no trace of either. The weather was variable, and Glynn offered up earnest prayers for sunshine and blue skies on the eagerly anticipated Wednesday. There were opportunities for a *tête-à-tête* in the freedom of a restaurant dinner which were not to be found within the narrow limits of a private dwelling.

The fates were propitious. Wednesday broke bright and warm, and most of the party were assembled when Glynn drove up to the restaurant of the Grande Cascade. Madame Davilliers was richly attired in crimson and black brocade, with white plumes in her bonnet; her daughter in diaphanous dove-color and pink; while Miss Lambert, who was unusually animated, looked lovely in soft, clear white Indian muslin over spring-like green, with abundance of delicate lace, and a poetic little bonnet decorated with violets, which showed the wavy richness of her golden-brown hair.

She was listening with an amused smile to some remarks of Monsieur Davilliers, a good-humored looking and rather ponderous man, with a morsel of red ribbon in his button-hole.

Glynn was warmly greeted by all, including Vincent, who, to his (Glynn's) annoyance, was amongst the guests, magnificently got up in the height of fashion, with a heavy emerald ring fastening his necktie, a brilliant diamond on one little finger, an onyx signet-ring on the other and a massive gold pencil-case and bunch of charms dangling from his guard-chain.

"Is it not unfortunate?" said Elsie in a low tone, when Glynn succeeded in getting near her; "my father cannot return till to-morrow."

"Yes, it is too bad that *he* cannot come, and that Vincent *can*."

"Do not look so angry," she returned with a smile. "I am sorry too, and yet I don't know why; he is always very polite and obliging, and seems to be great friends with my father."

"There are instincts—" began Glynn; but dinner was announced, and he was directed to escort a brilliant dame, who made a determined attack upon him, and would not share his attention with any one.

Vincent was placed next Miss Lambert, and appeared to succeed in entertaining her. Altogether Glynn felt provoked, and by no means amused, as he had anticipated.

When dinner was over Vincent proposed that they should take their coffee in the veranda, which was only raised a step above the gardens in front of the restaurant, and from whence they could see the spray of the waterfall glittering in the light of the setting sun. This was readily agreed to, and in the movement which ensued Glynn contrived to place himself near Elsie.

"What an interminable dinner!" he exclaimed.

"Yet you had a very agreeable neighbor?"

"If a forty horse-power of talk constitutes agreeability, I had. I hope your father will return to-morrow. It seems such an age since I heard you sing."

"But I sang to you on Sunday."

"To me? no, to a crowd of strangers, of whom I was one."

"*I* do not consider you a stranger."

"Thank you; you are infinitely good to say so," gazing into her eyes. "It is a great additional charm to hear you in your own room, with only your father and myself for audience. Do you think me selfish for saying so?"

"No; yet music is music, wherever you hear it."

"*Your* music is something different from all other," began Glynn, scarcely able to keep back the imprudent expressions which rushed to his lips, so delighted was he to have a few words aside with her.

"I hope you will not go away until my father returns," said Elsie, not seeming to heed his compliment; "he would be sorry to miss you."

"I shall certainly not leave until he returns," said Glynn, feeling himself in some odd way bound to watch over Elsie in Lambert's absence. "Don't you think he will come to-morrow?"

"Mr. Vincent seems to think it probable he may be delayed."

"Indeed! Vincent appeared to have a good deal to say for himself at dinner."

"Yes; he seems to be looking for some one," for Vincent had gone to the edge of the veranda, and was surveying the various groups standing or walking about the little lawn in front of the *café*. Presently he bowed and smiled, saying to Madame Davilliers:

"I see an English friend of mine, apparently alone; have I your permission to present him to you? He is a man of fashion and distinction—a Mr. Travers.

"But certainly," cried Madame Davilliers, "any friend of yours, dear sir——"

Vincent stepped forward, while Glynn felt a thrill of angry anticipation. In a few minutes he returned, accompanied by—Deering! Vincent at once presented him to Madame Davilliers, who put on her most elegant manner to receive so distinguished an addition to her party; and Elsie's eyes sought Glynn, saying as distinctly as eyes could say, "You see I was right."

Madame's elegancies were thrown away upon Deering. He understood but little French, and only bowed with a sort of haughty courtesy to his smiling hostess.

"Ah, Glynn, you here?" he exclaimed, turning from her to his compatriot. "I fancied you were at Berlin."

"And *I* imagined *you* preparing for the next general election, which is not far off, I suspect," returned Glynn. "I hope you left Lady Frances and your boy quite well."

"They are all right," returned Deering, shortly, and even as he spoke his eyes were rivetted on Miss Lambert with a strange, watchful gaze, at once admiring and hostile. The color slowly rose in her cheek, and she looked away in evident embarrassment, while Glynn felt an almost irresistible impulse to take him by the neck and throw him out of the circle into which he had intruded. But civilization compelled them to exchange polite sentences instead of following their natural tendency—to fly at each other's throats.

"Pray introduce me to your English friends," said Deering to Vincent, with a certain air of condescension.

"The only English-speaking member of our party besides Mr. Glynn is this young lady, and I claim her as American. Miss Lambert, allow me to present Mr. Travers Deering to you."

Glynn noticed that he used both names this time. Was the omission of one of them at first intentional?

"You must take pity on me, and allow me to sit beside you," said Deering, in a carefully softened tone; "for, unfortunately, I cannot speak French, and feel awkward when I am alongside one of our lively neighbors."

He drew a chair by her as he spoke, laying aside his hat and taking his place with the easy, well-bred decision of a man perfectly sure of himself, of his social standing, and his general acceptability. Elsie gazed at him as if fascinated, and Glynn could not help thinking how handsome and lordly and thoroughbred he looked, just the style of man to captivate a girl's imagination.

"Do you know, Miss Lambert, I have some very humble apologies to offer you for my involuntary

rudeness. I can only urge that when I saw you at the races, I was so struck by your remarkable likeness to a very charming woman I knew long ago, that I really could not keep my eyes in order."

"You did not offend me," said Elsie, with a quick little sigh, and making a slight unconscious movement, as if to draw nearer Glynn. "I am glad I reminded you of some one you liked."

"I did not say I *liked* her, though she *was* charming," returned Deering, with a searching glance and a somewhat cynical smile.

Elsie did not reply; she looked wonderingly at him out of her great serious blue eyes, as if at some curious, dangerous creature.

"So I am to consider myself pardoned?" resumed Deering.

"I have nothing to forgive." Then turning to Glynn, she asked, "Do you think the fireworks will soon begin?"

"Not until it is considerably darker. I suppose we ought to go out to see them; we shall only have a very narrow view here."

"Yes, we can't possibly stay in this corner," exclaimed Deering, looking round impatiently.

"Oh, I fancy madame will make a move," said Vincent, who was hovering about in his character of sponsor to his aristocratic friend.

"I did not know you had so distinguished a circle of French acquaintances," resumed Deering, addressing Glynn, and glancing with slightly elevated eyebrows towards Madame Davilliers and her friends. The glance caught that lady's attention, and induced her to turn the fire of her conversation upon him. To which Deering replied, with the assistance of Miss Lambert and Glynn. On her own account Elsie said very little, and seemed to have lost the brightness that animated her before and during dinner.

At length the first rocket rushed towards the sky, and burst into a cluster of many-colored stars, whereupon every one jumped up and made for the garden, the lawn, the roadway.

"Pray take my arm," said Glynn to Elsie the moment he saw the stampede beginning. "It may not be easy to keep together in the crowd."

"That is not fair, Glynn," said Deering with a smile. "You appropriate the only lady who can speak English, and condemn me to silence for the next hour."

"I am very sorry," said Glynn coolly; "but in Captain Lambert's absence I consider myself in some degree responsible for his daughter."

"Antoinette speaks a little English," said Elsie, "and will be charmed to talk to you—I mean Mademoiselle Davilliers," looking towards her.

"Pray do not trouble yourself," returned Deering hastily, "I can exist for half an hour in an unattached condition; besides, one can always pick up the crumbs which fall from rich men's tables." This with an insolent laugh, which grated on Glynn, as did Deering's whole tone; it conveyed the idea that he was amongst people whom he did not respect sufficiently to feel any restraint, and, moreover, that he was in a bad temper.

Elsie did not require a second invitation. Glynn was amused and touched by the readiness with which she took and almost clung to his arm as they sallied forth and mixed with the crowd. Deering, true to his avowed intention of "picking up the crumbs," kept persistently on her right—her unguarded side—and mastering his ill humor, talked lightly and easily, every now and then planting a query as to her past life, the drift of which Glynn thought he perceived.

"Is it North or South America which has the honor of claiming you, Miss Lambert?"

"Neither; I have never been in America, I was born in Australia."

"Australia! so much for preconceived ideas. I was disposed to swear that you were English born and bred."

"I have been more in England than anywhere else."

"Indeed! whereabouts, may I ask?"

"Look! what a splendid effect!" exclaimed Glynn, who was not too pleased at this acquaintance.

"Oh, how lovely!" exclaimed Elsie, her attention quite diverted. A large star of silvery light had suddenly appeared over the waterfall, through the spray of which it shone in varied prismatic colors, and Vincent coming up at the moment to speak to Deering, Glynn managed dexterously to lose himself and his companion in the crowd, and for a delicious half-hour had her all to himself.

"It is nearly over," he said at last. "Let us make our way to the *café*; we were all to assemble there; you are tired, I am sure, and I am afraid Deering has bored you."

"I never know what being bored means exactly. I did not like speaking to him at first, but he can make himself very pleasant, and he looks well. How did he come to know Mr. Vincent? really Mr. Vincent scarcely seems fit to be his servant."

"That is rather strong," said Glynn, laughing, yet with a sense of annoyance at her words; "but his acquaintance with Vincent does seem inexplicable. I wonder if he would ask him to Denham and introduce him to his wife, Lady Frances?"

"Is Mr. Deering's wife a great lady?"

"Yes, thoroughbred, and I suspect with a thoroughbred's power of endurance."

"Is she not happy, then?"

"Elsie, my child," cried Madame Davilliers, close beside them, "we are going to return home. You must go in the carriage with monsieur, Henri Le Clerc, and Madame Dubois; they await you in the veranda. Antoinette is speaking English quite well, but ex*cee*dingly well, to M. Dérin. He is really most distinguished. He ought to learn French."

"I am afraid he is a little too old, madame," said Glynn.

They were soon at the rendezvous: the carriages were ready, and Glynn having wrapped Elsie's cloak round her, was obliged to let Deering hand her into the carriage, as he had stationed himself at the door.

"Good-night, Miss Lambert; I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you soon again,"—with a little ring of triumph in his tone, and she was whirled away into the soft darkness of the summer night.

"Are you going straight back to your hotel?" said Vincent to Deering, when Madame Davilliers had driven off.

"Yes; I shall return with Mr. Glynn, if he will allow me," courteously to the latter, then abruptly to Vincent, "But I shall expect you to-morrow at 10.30 or eleven. I want to hear more about this wonderful colt."

"Very well; I will wish you good-evening.—Oh, by the way, Madame Davilliers' address is 14, Rue de C——, in case you think of honoring her Friday evenings."

"Thank you; good-evening." Then to Glynn, "Shall we stroll towards the lakes? It is such a fine night, and we shall find a *fiacre* nearer town."

The two men walked on in silence for a few minutes, and then Deering exclaimed, "One is prepared to pay for tips in racing matters, but not quite so high a price as associating with such men implies; that is an awful cad."

"He is; I was infinitely surprised when I saw you appear in the character of his *protégé* this evening. How did you come to know him?"

Deering laughed. "How did *you*?—but I forgot,—he is evidently a popular member of your society. I—I met him in Count Latour's stables, and found he was well up in sporting, or rather turf, matters. There is very little *sport* in them. He told me a thing or two, and may be of use."

"I did not know you were going in for racing," said Glynn.

"I take a certain interest in it, and I thought you did." He paused, lit a cigar, and then said abruptly, "Vincent tells me you know Miss Lambert's father; in fact, that you are frequently his favored guest. How does it happen that such a girl can be the outcome of a society of bourgeois and sharpers? You must present me to this father when he appears; I should prefer your sponsorship to Vincent's."

"Why do you want to know a set of people so completely out of your line?"

"I have a motive, not a very high one, I confess, but sufficiently powerful—curiosity. I want to find out something about Miss Lambert's people and history, for I am certain I knew a relative of hers, many years ago."

"Well, you had better fall back on your sporting acquaintance for an introduction, he is much more intimate with Captain Lambert than I am."

"Ha! you refuse to be responsible for me? that's deuced shabby! So he calls himself captain? He is rather a queer fish, isn't he?"

"That depends on our respective ideas touching queer fish. He is not a highly-polished, courtly gentleman, but he is not a bad fellow; and he is devoted to his daughter."

"Indeed! Well, Glynn, I believe you have seen a good deal of the world, and it is pleasant to find that so much faith in your fellow-creatures survives the experience."

"Faith is certainly a more agreeable sensation than doubt," returned Glynn, unmoved. "By the way, I quite forgot I had an engagement this evening. I am late already; there is a *fiacre*." He hailed it. "Will you drive with me, Deering?"

"No, thank you; I shall enjoy my weed and a stroll, so good-night. I'll look you up to-morrow or next day."

"Curiosity," murmured Glynn, as he rolled away towards Paris. "Is it only curiosity? I wonder who Elsie's mother was? It seems too bad that any unholy mystery should hang round so sweet and frank a creature"; and recalling the beautiful eyes which had looked up into his with clear unconsciousness and unhesitating trust Glynn closed his own, and gave himself up to some delightful though disquieting reflections.

"What infernal bad luck!" thought Deering, as he lit his cigar viciously. "I did not dream of meeting that fellow. I never reckoned on such an obstacle. However, cost what it may, I'll get to the bottom of her parentage and history. If my suspicions are right, I must get rid of her or bind her to me indissolubly; and the last would be the pleasanter process. There is a wonderful charm about her, and yet at times I can catch traces of *him* too! I wonder who this father of hers is? I must get at him. I wish I hadn't been obliged to send that cad Vincent to the right-about so shortly, just to keep up appearances. It is double distilled bad luck to have that fellow Glynn here.

But if he thinks he is going to make all the running with Miss Lambert, he is considerably mistaken. She is lovely, so lovely that I almost forgive her for existing."

Glynn waited impatiently for the moment when he could present himself at Madame Davilliers' weekly reception. The reasons why he must remain in Paris multiplied. He could not leave Elsie until her father returned, and then he must stay until he got some clue to Deering's schemes. That there was mischief brewing he felt convinced. Indeed, he was inclined to believe that Deering did not intend giving his real name when Vincent introduced him to Madame Davilliers and her friends, but perceiving Glynn he had probably changed his intentions, and telegraphed accordingly to his associate. Still, considering that Deering bore a fair character, it was highly improbable he would be guilty of any overt baseness.

On reaching Madame Davilliers', Glynn found about half a dozen intimates already assembled. Monsieur's *partie* at whist had been made up in a small side-room, and in the *salon* Mademoiselle Antoinette and Elsie, assisted by the singing-master, were performing a trio. Glynn waited till this was over to make his bow to the lady of the house, enjoying from the corner where he had stationed himself an uninterrupted view of Elsie's face, which had the rapt, far-away look it always wore when she was singing. How sweet and noble her expression was. No, he would not leave her, unless he felt sure she was safe and her father forewarned. The trio ended, young Le Clerc pressed forward with animated thanks. Then Elsie looked round, as if seeking some one; when her eyes met Glynn's a bright, happy smile sparkled over her countenance, and she made a movement as if to go to him. He was soon at her side.

"You have some pleasant news, I am sure?" he said, as he took her hand.

"I have indeed. My father has returned; he will be here presently, and he looks so well. He is so refreshed by the sight of the sea that he says he will take me to Brittany, when it grows too hot in Paris."

"You will enjoy Brittany," said Glynn's voice mechanically, while the real man was thinking what a heaven it would be were he alone with her in Brittany, or Buenos Ayres, or Botany Bay, or any other spot on earth, provided they were together, away from every one else. The next instant he was reproaching himself for his weakness, his folly.

"I believe the scenery is very fine," Elsie was beginning, when she was interrupted by the words, "Good-evening, Miss Lambert." Glynn had been so absorbed in her that he had not observed the approach of Deering, until he spoke. Elsie turned to him, still composed and smiling, without any trace of the nervous dread which she had evinced at their first meeting.

"I am in a strange land here," said Deering, when they had exchanged greetings, "so I claim your protection; you must be my guide, philosopher, and friend." He drew a chair forward as he spoke, and Elsie sat down. "Are you a frequent attendant of these *soirées*, Glynn?" he asked, after having bestowed a nod on his countryman. "You are certainly fonder of innocent amusements here than in London!"

"It appears that Paris produces the same effect upon us both," returned Glynn coolly.

"Monsieur Glynn," said Madame Davilliers, sailing up, "will you come and speak to my old friend M. Le Colonel Dubois? He is a most interesting person! He fought at Waterloo in the first year of his service, and is all the fonder of your nation because they were gallant foes."

So Glynn was carried off, to his great annoyance, just as Deering took a seat beside Elsie, and seemed to settle himself for a long talk.

M. Le Colonel Dubois did not find the most attentive listener in Glynn, and was not sorry when the host came to pay his compliments to the octogenarian, and permitted his English guest to escape. Glynn strolled into the next room, and found Miss Lambert still conversing with Deering, with an air of interest too that surprised him. He did not attempt to interrupt them, but stood watching an opportunity of begging Madame Davilliers to ask Miss Lambert for another song. From his position near the *portières* between the two rooms he could see the door leading to the vestibule. While he looked it opened, and Lambert came in—Lambert in a gorgeous-colored waistcoat and a bright necktie, for evening dress was not indispensable at Madame Davilliers' receptions. There was a joyous twinkle in his eye, an irrepressible air of success in his bearing. He saluted madame with much warmth, and then looked round the room as if seeking his "Jewel." Suddenly an extraordinary change passed over his face. The laughing, joyous, humorous look vanished, and was replaced by a fierce, startled, angry glare, like a wild creature suddenly roused to apprehension and defiance, as if through the thin, smooth coating of lately acquired domesticity, the savage nature of the untamed desperado had broken forth all the more vehemently for its temporary slumber. Glynn saw that his eyes were fixed on Deering, who was smiling and bending forward as he spoke to Elsie. She did not heed him, for she had caught sight of her father, and Deering, struck by her expression, turned to see what had attracted her. Then his face changed too, his jaw closed with a look of rigid determination, his steel-blue eyes lit up with a flash of angry recognition. By an involuntary impulse Glynn started forward to greet Lambert with a vague intention to assist him in recovering his self-control—to aid Elsie's father in any way he could.

"Glynn," said Lambert, gripping his hand hard, "who—who is that man—sitting there—by my—daughter?"

"He is Deering of Denham. Do you object to him?"

"No, why should I? Only I knew a Deering once—not a clean potato by any means! This may not be the same—Ah, Elsie, my child! Come here, keep by me."

"What is the matter, dear? You are not like yourself," she exclaimed, as she came up and passed her arm through his.

"Not like myself! you are wrong there." Then with a sort of effort he went straight up to Deering and said audibly in English, "We have met before, sir, have we not?"

Deering, who was considerably the taller, looked down on him from the ineffable heights of his social superiority, and replied deliberately,

"I have certainly had the pleasure of your acquaintance some years ago."

Then they stood silent, eye to eye—silent, yet exchanging deadly defiance. Deering, the most self-possessed of the two, was the first to speak.

"I fancy we have seen some changes since we met. Paris is not a bad place to anchor in after a wandering life, especially when one has so charming a companion as—Miss Lambert," adding the name after a slight pause.

"How do you know my daughter?" abruptly.

"Your friend, Mr. Vincent, was good enough to present me," said Deering calmly, with some emphasis on the name.

"My father seems to have found another acquaintance," said Elsie to Glynn. "It is curious."

Glynn scarce knew what to say. It was probable that Deering had known Lambert by some other name, known him under more doubtful circumstances than even he (Glynn) had. The idea stung him with a sense of angry pain. Deering was the last man to be trusted with such knowledge.

"Mr. Deering has been telling me about the lady of whom I remind him," resumed Miss Lambert. "She must have been very sweet and very charming, but most unhappy; her husband was murdered. I was quite interested, but I hope the likeness is not an evil omen."

"Impossible," cried Glynn. "Do not think of omens. Here comes Madame Davilliers to ask you to sing; pray do not refuse."

While he spoke with Miss Lambert, Glynn noticed that her father and Deering exchanged a few sentences in a low tone, and that Lambert, although he had completely mastered his temporary disturbance, had by no means recovered his spirits. A look of care and thought clouded his brow, though he spoke with some animation to one or two acquaintances. Deering on the contrary looked supremely calm, with something of exultation in his cold, light eyes.

"Miss Lambert sings well," he said. "I am no great judge of music, nor do I care for it, yet I should imagine that such a voice, such a style, ought to be worth a good deal of money."

"I don't intend her to sell her songs," said Lambert, roughly. "And now, Madame Davilliers, I'll wish you good-night. I'm a bit tired after my journey. Elsie, get on your hat. I'll take her home with me to-night, madame, with a thousand thanks for your good care."

Elsie rose from the piano, and cast an anxious look on her father. Then she gave her hand to Glynn, bowed to Deering, presented her brow to madame's kiss, and slipping her arm through Antoinette's, left the room.

"Let me see you soon," said Lambert to Glynn. "You do not return to London just yet?"

"Not this week, at least."

"Suppose you breakfast with me to-morrow, Captain Lambert," said Deering. "We'll smoke the pipe of peace, and talk over our adventures by flood and field."

"Thank you," shortly, "I never breakfast away from home."

"Oh, indeed! Then I shall call on *you*, and pay my respects to Miss Lambert at the same time," returned Deering in a tone of imperturbable good breeding.

Lambert, who was making his adieux to Madame Davilliers, did not seem to hear, but before he reached the door he turned quickly back, and said in a constrained tone to Deering:

"I cannot breakfast with you, but I will call at your hotel to-morrow morning at 10.30."

"That is wiser," said Deering, with quiet superiority.

Glynn was greatly struck by the significance of these words. What hold had Deering over the wandering adventurer, who seemed as far removed from the haughty English gentleman as the east is from the west?

He walked home revolving this question and others. Every day increased the fascination which Lambert's daughter unconsciously exercised over him; every day showed more and more clearly the unsuitability, nay, from a common-sense point of view, the impossibility of allying himself with so doubtful a character as poor Lambert.

On reaching his hotel, the *concierge* handed him several letters, and when safe within his own room he opened them. One proved to be from his firm on business which compelled his immediate return to London.

He had seldom been so annoyed and irritated as by this unavoidable necessity to quit the scene

of the mysterious drama which interested him so intensely. He might be prudent enough, mean enough, to shrink from linking himself for life with a creature who was probably too good for him, but he would not desert Lambert in a difficulty. He would return as soon as possible and see him clear of Deering. Seizing his pen he wrote a hasty line to the effect that he was obliged to run over to London for a week, but would return without fail, adding his private address. When this had been sealed, stamped, and directed to Lambert, he rang and ordered his bill and a very early cup of coffee next morning.

"The first train for Calais leaves at seven in the morning," said the waiter. "There is an earlier one about five, I think, by the Dieppe route, but you gain no time, for the *trajet* is longer."

"Of course I will go by Calais," returned Glynn. "Do not fail to call me in good time."

CHAPTER IV.
A LAST CARD.

The first few days after Glynn's return to London were so crowded by important engagements and serious consultations with the elder members of his firm as to the advisability of a new and important undertaking, to which Glynn was entirely opposed, that he had no time for deliberate thought respecting Lambert and his mysterious acquaintance with Deering. Yet the subject was never quite out of his mind. A vague unreasonable anxiety about Elsie haunted him, and he was strangely eager to return to Paris.

The earliest spare moment he could find was devoted to Lady Gethin.

She was out when he called, but next morning's post brought him a pressing invitation to dinner, of which he gladly availed himself. He would have liked to take counsel with the shrewd old woman, and yet he did not think it loyal to Lambert, who evidently trusted him, to be too confidential.

Her hospitable ladyship, however, was not alone. A small, pleasant party, some writers of light literature, a traveller, a smart grass-widow from India, a clever barrister, and his pretty, accomplished daughter, to whom Glynn was already known, were assembled when he arrived, and dinner was a feast of good things in more senses than one. Afterwards there was music. The grass-widow played brilliantly, the pretty young lady sang very nicely, had a sweet voice, and had been well trained. But Glynn could only think of the contrast between her singing and Miss Lambert's; of the mellow, tender richness of the latter's notes, which seemed to come from the heart to the heart, compared with the lighter though pleasant *timbre* of the other,—the sweet, simple earnestness of the one, and the easy smiling surface, good breeding of the cultivated London girl.

"Don't leave till the others have gone," whispered Lady Gethin, as she passed him when following her lady guests from the dining-room.

It was the height of the season, every one had more engagements than they could well manage; the party therefore broke up early, its members dispersing to balls, concerts, or receptions.

"Now then, have a little iced seltzer and cognac, it is quite warm this evening," said Lady Gethin; "and let us have a long talk—that letter of yours whetted my curiosity. What in the world has kept you away so long? every one has been asking for you!"

"Partly business, and partly curiosity."

"What about?"

"I will tell you presently. Have you seen Lady Frances Deering lately?"

"I saw her about ten days ago; she has gone down to Denham, and Deering is off to Vichy—liver or something wrong, but he didn't look as if he had much the matter with him."

"Vichy? He is not at Vichy! I saw him in Paris the night before I left."

"Well, I suppose he must pass through Paris, but you mean something more; where, and how did you see him?"

"I saw him saying good-night to the young lady with whom he was struck at Auteuil, and whom I think I mentioned to you."

"You don't say so! That's the liver complaint, is it? and the drama into the bargain. Come now, Hugh, do be candid, and do not worry me with any attempt to heighten effect. What do you know? What have you seen? What do you suspect?"

"These are tremendously leading questions!"

"Well, I want to get at your drama as soon as possible."

"Then, I shall answer categorically. I know nothing. I have seen very little. I suspect everything."

"What a sphinx-like reply. Just go on your own way, and tell me everything you *will* tell, for I have an idea you will make reservations."

Whereupon Glynn described his meeting with Elsie and her father, not omitting Vincent, the curious contrast between Lambert and his daughter, the reappearance of Deering on the scene,

his incongruous acquaintance with Vincent and Lambert, and the evident astonishment of each on recognizing the other. He only suppressed or softened the circumstances under which he had known Lambert, and the fact that he had changed his name. When he ceased, Lady Gethin, who had listened with profound attention, exclaimed:

"A very pretty mystery, upon my word. That Deering is a fiend! He knows something against Lambert, and is going to use his knowledge to help him with the daughter. I never liked Deering. He is a smooth-tongued, sneering hypocrite, and has many queer corners in his life, or I am much mistaken."

"I never heard anything against him, indeed he is rather liked among men. Even now I scarcely think he can be capable of any evil designs against a girl like Miss Lambert. What struck me at first, was the sort of fierce uneasy curiosity he displayed concerning her. He certainly admires her very much."

"So does some one else," returned Lady Gethin, with a knowing nod. "I trust and hope that the beautiful eyes, and lovely voice, and attractive mystery, will not draw *you* into making a fool of yourself."

"But, Lady Gethin!" cried Glynn, amazed at her penetration and quite unconscious how much he had betrayed, "you do not imagine that at my age I should be so weak as to be drawn into an entanglement,—a marriage, of which my judgment disapproves."

"I wouldn't give five minutes' purchase for your judgment, Hugh. You are just at the age when, if men are slower in igniting, they burn with a more intense and lasting fire. The frothiness of your enthusiasm may have evaporated, but the warm, strong spirit remains. Take care of yourself, Hugh; connection with such a man as you describe Lambert (and I fancy you have made the best of him) would be a frightful calamity,—no eyes, voice, or angelic nature could make up for it. You'd soon find that out. There is a certain degree of disenchantment in marriage, even under the most favorable circumstances. Take my advice, don't go back to Paris, let them manage their mystery themselves. You will be let in for something unpleasant and risky—don't go back."

"Oh, I must go back! I promised Lambert I would; besides, I want to see the play out; and you alarm yourself unnecessarily. I admire Miss Lambert, I think her as good as she is charming; but I am as averse to a marriage with her as you can be. Moreover, I have a safeguard in her indifference, for she treats me with frank confidence as her father's old friend, nothing more."

"This is worse and worse," said Lady Gethin, gravely. "How do you know what profound tenderness her indifferent airs may mask?"

"Do you think I have never looked into any eyes, nor learned their language, before I saw Miss Lambert's, that I should be so mistaken?" asked Glynn, laughing.

"Oh, I dare say you are learned enough in such matters. Pray be guided by me, put the Parisian episode out of your head, and make up your mind to marry that nice piquant little daughter of Pearson's. I asked them on purpose to meet you. He will give her ten thousand pounds, and he is a rising man; he will be on the bench in a year or two; they are people of good family."

"My dear Lady Gethin! I don't want to marry any one, and so I will bid you good-night. A thousand thanks for your good advice."

"Which of course you will *not* follow! Well, keep me informed of what goes on. I wish *I* could see all your people, I think I should find a key to the riddle. I never liked Deering."

"I have no doubt you could read between the lines. As to Deering, now that I am away from him, I am half ashamed of my suspicions. It is rather absurd to imagine that a man of his standing would risk his reputation for a passing whim."

"But he doesn't risk it," said Lady Gethin. "He is not infringing any social law in England; unknown, doubtful Americans, neither rich nor highly-placed, are beyond the pale. If that Lambert had any sense, he would give his daughter a little money and marry her to some solid *bourgeois*. He could easily arrange it, I fancy."

"Well, good-night," said Glynn, with an odd feeling of irritation. "I shall call and see you before I leave, and do not hesitate to give me any commission—my taste in gloves and even in ribbons is not to be despised."

"Take care," was her valediction.

The next day brought Glynn a few lines from Lambert, which struck him as expressing more uneasiness than was intended.

"I have no right to ask you to return if it does not suit you," he wrote, "but I hope you will. I feel in need of your counsel. I have had wonderful luck for years, and now I'm afraid it's turning. Then I am not as young or as strong as I used to be; and one way or another it would cheer me up a bit to have a talk with you."

Had Glynn had any hesitation as to revisiting Paris this letter would have decided him. He sent a few lines in reply, and then applied himself steadily to clear up all business engagements as far as possible, to secure a long holiday.

He called on Deering at his club, and was told that gentleman was travelling abroad, and that letters addressed to his town house would be forwarded. Lady Gethin was not at home to receive his adieux, but wrote him a quaint characteristic line of warning.

Having performed all his duties, Glynn found himself in the mail train for Calais one evening

about a fortnight after he had left Paris, with an irrepressible sense of exultation, of keen delight at the idea of returning to what he knew in his heart was a scene of danger, determined to enjoy to the uttermost the pleasure of Elsie's companionship, so long as he saw no sign of consciousness on her part. Life had so few moments of bliss that he could not and would not deny himself the draught that chance had offered.

It was a damp, drizzling morning when he reached his journey's end. Perhaps no town changes so much with change of weather as Paris; muddy streets, wet umbrellas, heavy grey clouds disguise it completely, and give it the aspect of a beautiful coquette, in deshabille and a bad temper. As early as etiquette would permit Glynn took his way to the Rue de L'Evêque, hoping to find Lambert, as he could not expect to gather any information from Elsie. Hailing a *fiacre*, he told the driver where to go, and smiled to himself at the notion of Lady Gethin's alarm, thinking that if she knew how fast his heart was beating she would resign all hope of saving him. As he approached the house Glynn saw that his driver had either forgotten or mistaken the number, and was driving past it. He had just started forward to stop him when he saw two men come out of the entrance, and turning their backs on his conveyance, walk smartly down the street in close conversation. They were Deering and Vincent. A quick thrill of pain, of anticipated evil, shot through him as he recognized them. He feared he knew not what. But above and beyond all reasoning, he felt that their companionship, their presence, were omens of trouble and of wrong.

"Stop where you are, I will descend here," he called to the driver, and was soon springing up the familiar stairs. How vividly the perfume of the orange blossoms reminded him of the surprised admiration which Elsie and her home had excited on his first visit.

"Oh! it is you, monsieur!" cried Celestine, directly she opened the door; "I will tell Madame Weber, and I am sure mademoiselle will receive *you*." She went into the *salon*, and returned almost immediately. "Enter, monsieur, but enter; mademoiselle will be pleased to see you."

Miss Lambert was alone when Glynn found himself in her presence, and sitting at a writing-table; she rose quickly, and came forward, with outstretched hands, "I am so glad you have come." Glynn did not speak immediately—he was surprised at the intensity of his own delight on finding himself once more beside her, listening to her voice, holding her hand, gazing into her eyes. He did not know he was so far gone. She looked paler, thinner, graver, than when he last saw her. She wore a black dress, and had a small scarf of delicate lace tied loosely round her throat. Her bright brown hair looked golden even in the dull light of a grey day, and there was something sad in her pose and expression that Glynn found infinitely touching.

"You knew I should return—at least your father did," he said at length.

"My father did expect you; but I—I thought it likely that when you were amongst your own friends, your own people, you would not care to leave them."

"I am afraid that you are not so well as when I left," said Glynn, drawing a chair near her writing-table, at which she had reseated herself. "It is perhaps impertinent to say that you are not looking as well, as brilliant as you were."

"Brilliant," she repeated, with a brief sweet laugh. "That I never could be; but you are right, I am ill,—ill at ease, I mean. My father. Ah!—he is so changed! And he is angry if I notice it; but he is very unhappy, I know he is. That is why I am so glad you have come; he can speak to you, he *may* speak to you. You may be able to help him; but *I* am only a helpless, ignorant girl. Yet I could do much if I were directed."

"I should be most happy to be of any use to Captain Lambert," said Glynn. "No doubt your affectionate anxiety inclines you to exaggerate, but——"

"When you see him you will understand," interrupted Elsie, "you will see that I do not exaggerate. He will not tell *me* what has happened. He says he has not lost his fortune. I should not care if he had, for I could earn money by singing, though not on the stage. However, my knowing would not help him, because I have always been shut up and am so ignorant. You do not mind me telling you all this, do you? Though I have not known you long, my father has, and—and—you seem like a real friend to him."

She looked full in his face, her great soft eyes all suffused with tears—like violets laden with dew.

"I am gratified that you confide in me, so far," said Glynn quietly, with laudable self-control. "I shall observe your father by the light of your remarks; and if he is really in any difficulty, or cares to consult me, I shall be most happy to assist him so far as I can. Probably his depression arises from some temporary losses. Believe me," and his dark face lit up with a pleasant smile, "money is a most important factor in existence; I am able to assert from experience that there is no vacuum so distressing as an empty pocket."

"If it is the loss of money," she returned gravely, "we ought not to stay here; life is very costly, I know; I have paid everything for the last eight months. My dear father is too generous; we ought to manage as we used when he was trying to save; he might move about as his business required, and I could go back to good Mrs. Kellett."

"Who is Mrs. Kellett?"

"My foster-mother; the only mother I have ever known: she lost her baby and her husband, and took me to love instead, at the time our place was destroyed in Australia. But, Mr. Glynn, it is more than money that disturbs my father."

"Let us hope he will speak openly to me; but I have no right to ask his confidence. Now you must not worry yourself unnecessarily. I wish it were a finer day, and I should try to persuade you and

Madame Weber to come for a drive in the *bois*."

"Thank you, very much; I should have liked it, for I have gone out very little of late; but Madame Weber is not in the house, she went to the Halle this morning early to buy fruit, and has not returned yet."

"Then you have been dull as well as troubled. How is Madame Davilliers, and Mademoiselle Antoinette?" asked Glynn, making a circuitous approach to the topic uppermost in his mind.

"They are very well, and very busy. Antoinette is going to be married in August to M. Le Vicomte de Pontigny; it has been all arranged since you left. I should have less to regret, therefore, in leaving Paris, for Antoinette is going to travel for some time, and when she returns it will not be the same."

"This seems to have been a rapid act?"

"I dare say Monsieur Davilliers and the Vicomte had begun the treaty long ago," said Elsie, laughing; "but *we* only heard of the intended marriage three or four days ago."

"And Deering, he is still here?" looking keenly at her.

"Yes"; all her gravity returning. "He called this morning just before you came; I did not see him, for, it is very extraordinary, my father has turned against Mr. Vincent, who is always with Mr. Deering; that I do not mind; but though he says less about it, I think he is quite as distrustful of Mr. Deering. Now *I* have got over my first foolish fear of him; he is so gentle and polite, and seems to want to be friends with my father. I do not understand it all; but I never dispute what my dear father says. He knows more of life than I can possibly do. Yet I want very much to hear all about the lady Mr. Deering thinks me so like. He promised to tell me when he knew me better. Everything seems so changed since our pleasant dinner at the Café de Madrid, not two months ago."

"Such days and dinners do not come often," said Glynn, with a quick sigh. "I hope all this worry does not prevent you singing as much as you used?"

"Oh, no! it is the only pleasure I have."

"Is it too presumptuous of me to ask for a song now?"

Elsie did not answer for a moment; she put her elbows on the table, clasped her hands together, and resting her cheek on her interlaced fingers, said very slowly, "No; I could not sing to-day, I should break down—the tears would come—I had better not try."

"Then I will not ask you;—but tell me, when shall I see your father?"

"He will certainly call upon you. I am not sure if he will return to dinner, or I would beg you to dine with us."

"Thank you; we will reserve that pleasure for future arrangement. I am staying as usual at the hotel Wagram, and have letters to write which will keep me in till past eleven to-morrow, should Captain Lambert feel disposed to call."

"I will tell him," said Elsie.

Then Glynn knew he ought to go; but he could not tear himself away immediately. It was so charming, this quiet confidential talk; so intoxicating to see that her pale, anxious face had brightened considerably; certainly her composure, in the midst of her depression and uneasiness, left no room for any flattering conviction that he had impressed himself upon her heart or imagination. So far all was right; she treated him as a friend, an honorable gentleman, in whom she might trust, and nothing more.

A little further talk of the books Glynn had left with her, of her wish to leave Paris, and revisit the farmhouse, where most of her childish days had been spent, and Glynn felt he must not stay longer.

"Shall you make any stay?" she asked, as she gave him her hand at parting.

"A week or two, perhaps a month; I am not sure."

"Then good-morning—*au revoir*."

The rest of the day was strange and dream-like. He wandered through well-known places, seeking acquaintance to draw him from the puzzle of his own thoughts, and finding none, till towards six o'clock, passing Tortoni's, he found himself face to face with Deering, who was seated at one of the little round tables eating an ice.

"Hullo, Glynn! I thought you were in London?"

"Well, you see I am in Paris."

"When did you arrive?"

"This morning."

A little ordinary talk ensued, the tone of which showed a strong desire on the part of Deering to be civil and friendly. Glynn at once determined to accept his advances; he might thus detect some indications of the secret which underlay his acquaintance with Lambert, and the curious influence he seemed to have exercised over him. He could not, however, bring himself to accept his invitation to dinner, though he agreed to dine with him at one of the luxurious *cafés* which abound in the great capital of pleasure.

Deering talked well, of many things, chiefly political; he also mentioned his wife and home, pressing Glynn to come down to Denham for the twelfth of August, promising him good sport.

It was not till they had risen from table, and were lighting their cigars previous to separating, that Deering made any mention of the subject probably uppermost in both their minds.

"Of course you have not seen anything of Lambert?"

"No, not yet."

"He is a queer fish—a very shady member. I knew him under another name, and rather doubtful circumstances; I am afraid he is not in a very sound financial position; he is a thorough adventurer. It is a bad business for the daughter; she is a very nice creature. I wonder where he picked her up, for one can't believe she really *is* his daughter?"

"There is not much family likeness between them; certainly; but I see no reason for doubting his representations. He is evidently devoted to her, and his surroundings are perfectly respectable."

"Perfectly. Where did you meet him?"

"In America, many years ago."

"Indeed! Oh, are you going? Well, good-night."

Hugh Glynn was careful to stay in his room all the next morning, thinking that if Lambert wished to make any private communication, they were more secure from interruption there than elsewhere.

It was barely eleven when Lambert was announced. Glynn was positively startled by the change in his aspect. His weather-beaten face was colorless and haggard, his eyes had a hunted look, as though seeking a way of escape, his clothes were carelessly put on, his moustaches no longer waxed and fiercely twisted, his whole air bespoke neglect.

"Delighted to see you, Glynn," he said, a faint gleam of pleasure lighting up his restless eyes. "I was afraid you wouldn't get back again this season; business must be attended to. You're in business, aren't you?"

"Yes, but I can attend to it sometimes at a distance."

"That's fortunate; and you have been all right?"

"Yes; quite right, thank you."

There was an awkward pause. Lambert seemed unable to approach the matter, whatever it might be, which filled his mind; he took up a paper-knife, which he turned restlessly to and fro, he changed his position, and then, with a sigh, exclaimed, "You saw Elsie yesterday. She was glad you called, but she is not very bright. You didn't think her looking well, hey?"

"Not as well as usual, certainly."

"No; she is fretting—fretting about her old dad. It's wonderful how that creature loves me. *Me!*—sometimes when she is hanging about me, and singing the songs I like, and making a servant of herself for me, I just look back and think of the scenes I've gone through, and the queer scramble my life has been, and wonder how the dickens it happens that an angel like her can be so fond of an old scapegrace; that she doesn't shrink from me; but she doesn't," with infinite exultation, "she loves me, sir, as well as ever child loved father!"

"Of that I can have no doubt," cried Glynn. "And your affection for her deserves it."

"She has made another man of me," continued Lambert. "But though I have not been a regular saint all my days, I am as white as driven snow compared to some blackguards that hold up their heads in high places. I am rambling on like an idiot. I called to ask if you'll come and dine with us to-night. It cheers me up to see an honest face."

Glynn accepted the invitation readily, and after a pause, during which he drummed on the table, Lambert recommenced.

"I have not had a good time of it since you were away, Glynn. I have been on the brink of ruin through the treachery of a man I thought a friend. But I hope to get over it. I think I'll get over it, and whatever happens, Elsie's little fortune is out of harm's way. I made sure of that. She need never starve."

"Very prudent and proper," returned Glynn. "But I earnestly hope you will escape the loss you mention. Been bitten by a bubble company?"

"No! It's a long story; I'll tell it to you some day, and you'll judge for yourself; but not now, not now. Ah! you are a bright chap, Glynn, strong and steady. If you had a little capital, now, you'd get along first rate." He rose as he spoke and took a turn up and down.

Glynn did not answer his conjectures as to his—Glynn's—financial position; he felt terribly disappointed that Lambert had made no confession of tangible difficulties, and yet he was brimful of some trouble which he could not bring himself to confess. Lambert resumed his seat, and began talking in a rambling fashion of ordinary topics; but his thoughts were evidently elsewhere, and at length he went away, leaving a most painful impression on Glynn's mind, of profound despondency, of mental disquietude which he could not or would not express.

At dinner, some hours later, he either was more cheerful, or assumed a livelier aspect for his daughter's benefit. She seemed to accept the improvement as real, and the evening went quickly. With the help of music and conversation, Lambert, towards the end, seemed to forget his troubles and was more like himself. At parting Elsie gave Glynn an eloquent glance expressive of thanks, of mutual understanding, which sent him away charmed, restless,—longing for their next interview, yet full of dread for the future.

The next day as he was leaving his hotel he ran against Deering, who was coming in. "I am off to Vichy to-day," he said. "I thought I should just let you know. I ought to have gone a week ago, but I met some people that amused me; Lady Harriett Beauchamp and Wedderburn—you know them, I suppose? Shall I find you here when I return?"

"That depends on the length of your visit."

"Oh, about a fortnight."

"I shall hardly stay so long."

"Good-bye, then. Don't forget Denham in August. Lady Frances will be delighted to see you."

The very atmosphere seemed lighter and brighter to Glynn when Deering was safe away. Lambert was visibly relieved, and his daughter reflected her father's mood. Things went on much as before. Madame Davilliers' Fridays were more crowded and varied. They made little excursions to Sèvre, and to the beautiful woods of Mendan; sometimes with the Davilliers, sometimes only a quartet—Lambert, Elsie, Madame Weber, and Glynn.

These were delightful days. The quiet harmony of the present made Glynn regardless of the future. It was wonderfully interesting to draw Elsie from the observant silence which was habitual to her into sympathetic talk. There was always something to discover in her, something to win, of confidence, of self-revelation, and she was so teachable, with all her honest clinging to the conclusions of her own clear sense.

There were moments when his hesitation disappeared, and Glynn was almost resolved to make her his wife if she would have him; but that vague cloud of mystery was a bad accompaniment for married life.

The only discordant ingredient in this happy interlude was the occasional intrusion of Vincent, to whom Lambert showed a curious ceremonious politeness, dashed at times with epigrammatic bitterness, of which the dandified American took no notice. Elsie, on the contrary, was more friendly to him than formerly.

It was about ten days after Glynn's return, and he was debating in his own mind the prudence and advisability of a retreat while he had still some command of his own will. Dinner was over in Lambert's pretty *salle à manger*. Elsie had left her father and his friend to talk and smoke for the lazy, comfortable half-hour which succeeds the evening meal.

"Miss Lambert is looking quite herself again," said Glynn, his imagination too full of her to resist speech.

"She is," returned her father. "That is because I am brighter; but I am not out of the wood yet—not yet." He was silent for a moment or two, puffing vigorously while he thought. "Ay!—many an anxious thought she costs me. I'd give a good deal—all I possess, life itself, to know she was safe and in better hands than mine. Glynn, I am going to prove the confidence I have in you. We are men of the world, and can talk to each other without fear of misunderstanding."

"It's coming at last," thought Glynn. "You may be sure that anything you like to tell is safe with me," he said aloud.

"I know it." He rose, lifted the curtain which hung across the doorway leading to Elsie's little study, assured himself it was unoccupied and the outer door shut. Then he resumed his seat, and placing his arms on the table leant towards Glynn, and began in a low voice, which, as he plunged deeper into his subject, grew clearer and louder. "Look here, now, I don't see why, when I am in Rome, I shouldn't do as Rome does. I know you'll meet me in my own spirit. If you like what I am going to propose, well and good; if not, there's no harm done. First of all I suppose I am right in concluding you are not married—that you are free and independent?"

"I am," said Glynn, greatly surprised.

"Then what do you say to settling yourself? You are old enough. You are six or seven-and-thirty, I guess. Now, if you are so disposed, I'd die happy if I saw you married to my Elsie!"

Glynn started at this bold proposition; yet gazing at the eager eyes, the earnest face, the slight nervous twitch in the lips which had just uttered it, he felt strangely moved.

"Don't answer all at once," continued Lambert; "I calculate there's a goodish bit more to be said on the subject. I know this sort of thing isn't our fashion, but I am too uneasy about—ah! about the future, to wait for the chance of my jewel meeting the right man, and life is uncertain—mine especially. I wouldn't give her to you empty-handed, either."

"Why, Lambert, you take my breath away! In the first place I don't fancy Miss Lambert ever wasted a thought on me, except as to how far I might be of use to you."

"I know that; I am sure of it. If I thought she was in love with you I don't think I could speak out

like this. No, love hasn't come into her heart yet, and you are too much a high-minded gentleman to try and rouse it; but she could love well; and look here, I have saved up and invested nearly five thousand pounds—I'll make it five full—that would be a nice lift to whatever business you are in. You see how I trust you. I don't care if you have a struggle; Elsie is no foolish, extravagant doll."

"Pray hear me," interrupted Glynn with difficulty; "so charming a creature as your daughter, wants no makeweight to recommend her; she would be a treasure in herself to any man of taste and feeling. But I do not wish or intend to marry for a considerable time to come," he continued, with increasing firmness, quite determined not to yield to the suggestion of another what he denied to the passionate craving of his own heart. "As you say, we are men of the world, and can discuss such a question coolly and fairly without, on my part, the smallest infringement of the warm respect and regard I feel for Miss Lambert. There are circumstances—reasons on which it is unnecessary to dilate—which forbid my entertaining your flattering and attractive proposition."

"Suppose I guess what they are," said Lambert, eagerly rolling up a cigarette, and scattering the shreds of tobacco as he did so. "You're a bit of a swell, I calculate; you are among a desperate respectable set of city bosses. Hear me now; I'm not thin-skinned. I know I'm not the sort that would go down with them, and you know I was a queer lot once. Well, if you take my Elsie, I'll go right away; I'll never ask to trouble you or her. What matter what becomes of *me* if she is safe?—oh, God! safe with an honorable, kind man, who would give her a peaceful home. Ay, Elsie, I love you well enough never to ask to see your sweet face if I could earn peace and security for you!"

"And do you think she would love a husband who could part her from such a father as you are?" asked Glynn, deeply touched.

"But she should never know,"—eagerly: "I'd just go away on business, and stay away, and she'd forget; she would always have a kind thought for me, but the new love would fill her heart; and if you tried to win her she'd love you. I am sure she would! Now, can't it be, Glynn?—can't it?"

"No. It is with deepest reluctance I say it. If I can in any way serve you or her, command me; but unfortunately for myself this cannot be."

There was a short expressive silence; then Lambert said in an altered voice, "Anyhow, there is no harm done; I am sure you've some good reason, and we'll not be the worse friends because we can be nothing nearer."

"Certainly not; and for my part I have a higher esteem for you than I ever had before. I trust, however, that you have no serious cause for uneasiness about your daughter. If her little fortune is secured, these are too prosaic times for daring and villainous lovers, murderous conspirators, or other dramatic dangers."

"Ay, civilization is just deep enough to hide the devils that work underneath it. I had one or two things to tell a son-in-law that, maybe, I had better keep to myself now."

"I sincerely hope you will not look on me as the less warm a friend because I cannot unfortunately fall in with your views; you do not wish me to absent myself?"

"Far from it," interrupted Lambert; "be true to me—be true to her; maybe by and by you'll have a good wife that might befriend my girl; she has no one in the world belonging to her but myself, and I begin to fear I am a broken reed."

"My marriage is a remote contingency," said Glynn. "Were you in London, I could introduce Miss Lambert to a somewhat peculiar but kind-hearted woman, a connection of mine, who would most probably be interested in her,—I was going to say charmed with her, only it is hard to answer for the impression one woman may make upon another."

"Everything is hard," remarked Lambert moodily, and as if to himself. "Well, let us forget this fruitless palaver, and be as we were. I am quite sure you are ready to do me a good turn if you can—if—Ah! I hear Elsie singing. Come along, let us forget our troubles for a bit over a game of baccarat."

But Glynn did not attend to his cards, his head was in a whirl. He was infinitely touched by the unconsciousness of the songstress, who received them with the soft composure peculiar to her, which had in it so much womanly dignity. How little she dreamed that the man who thrilled at her touch, who drank in the tones of her voice greedily, had refused to share his life with her—had rejected the chance of winning her, for Glynn acknowledged there was a "con" as well as a "pro" in the case. He had survived the age at which men think they have but to ask and they must receive.

"Oh! Mr. Glynn," said Elsie, suddenly turning to him, "Madame Davilliers begs you to take a ticket for a ball which is to be given at the Louvre Hotel, for the benefit of an orphanage under the direction of sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. Madame is one of the committee."

"I shall be very happy. Are you going?"

"Yes; that is, if my father can spare me." She rose as she spoke and turned towards Lambert, who was sitting in an attitude of deep dejection, his cards lying on the table beside him.

"Dearest," said Elsie, stealing to his side, and laying her cool white hand on his brow, "does your head ache?"

"No, no, not much"; then with a sudden impulse, "You love your dad then, though he *is* a rugged old cuss?"

Elsie smiled, an exquisitely tender smile. "So well, that nothing and no one could make up for the want of him."

Glynn was struck with her words. Could she by any possibility have overheard her father's proposal, and his refusal? Such an idea was appalling. But no, it was quite impossible.

CHAPTER V.
VANISHED.

Glynn was far from being satisfied with his own decision. Of course the mere fact of having any woman offered to him is enough to make an Englishman reject her, were she an amalgamation of the Blessed Virgin, Florence Nightingale, Venus, and Psyche in one. That he should decline Lambert's suggestion was right enough, though the evident singleness of purpose, the intense fatherly feeling which prompted him, took from his strange proceeding all trace of coarse worldliness; but having congratulated himself on his own wisdom and firmness, another train of thought put itself in motion, haunting him with maddening pertinacity in all his comings and goings throughout the day which succeeded the memorable conversation. Elsie's face, her eyes, the quiet grace of her figure and movements, were perpetually before him. Her tender gravity, which did not prevent her from enjoying in brief light flashes of perception the droll side of things, the generous sympathy, ever ready to well up when needed,—all this was vividly present to his imagination. Had he done well to turn from so rich a store of goodly gifts because it was set in uncouth surroundings? Was it the part of a true man to count the cost, to shrink from any possible risk, rather than to brave all things for true love? When and where should he find a companion so sweet, so intelligent, so satisfying to heart and sense? Then again came the doubt,—would it be well to plant in the midst of one's home and its sanctities this branch of a wild vine, lovely though it was? Might not sorrow and disgraceful associations be the bitter fruit thereof? How would imperfect human nature—imperfect human love, stand such a test? If Elsie loved him, then he would dare all things; but she did not. It would be better for her, as well as for him, to leave her in the tranquillity of indifference than awaken an interest that could only lead to trouble. Yes, he would continue to preserve the tone of quiet friendliness he had adopted. Still he must not leave Paris immediately. He would not desert poor Lambert, who was evidently in a mess of some kind. Later on he would probably make a clean breast of it. So as it was Friday, Glynn determined to go to Madame Davilliers' in the evening, for the result of his wise cogitations was a burning desire to meet Miss Lambert to assure himself of her indifference.

The gathering at Madame Davilliers' was less crowded than usual; still a considerable number of visitors were present, among them one or two professional singers and Mr. Vincent, who was talking to Elsie when Glynn made his appearance. He was soon called away, however, by the hostess, and Glynn eagerly took his place.

Elsie greeted him with a bright amused smile, as though his presence suggested some droll idea.

"I don't see your father here to-night," said Glynn.

"He has been called rather suddenly to Dunkerque," she replied, "but will return on Monday. He seemed in better spirits, and I think the change will do him good."

"I hope so, especially as you reflect his moods. You are looking more like yourself than when I first returned."

"Ah, I was very miserable then. But one reason why I feel so much brighter is that my father has promised I shall go for a few months to Mrs. Kellett, to my old home, Woodburn, and then we shall give up our *étage* here."

"And how will you bear the seclusion—the change from Parisian gaieties?" looking earnestly into her eyes, and wondering what motive underlay this sudden scheme.

"I shall like it very much; I should like anything that would secure peace."

"Pray, monsieur," said Madame Davilliers, who came up at that moment, "have you received your card for the ball on the 20th? Our young *débutantes*, Mademoiselle Lambert and my Antoinette, count on you for one of their partners."

"I am infinitely honored; but I fear my dancing is not of the best. However, in such a cause, one would attempt the impossible."

"It is much to be regretted that the amiable Monsieur Dérin is not in town; and *ce cher* M. Vincent does not know when he will return. Still our party will be large and *distingué*."

Of that Glynn had no doubt. He had received his ticket, and if still in Paris would certainly present himself, etc., etc.

Then he felt obliged to offer his congratulations to Mademoiselle Antoinette, after which M. Le Vicomte was introduced, and it seemed to him that half the evening was over before he managed to return to Elsie. She was by no means solitary or neglected, however. Antoinette chattered perseveringly at her side, and various well-dressed *employés* in sundry imperial bureaux bestowed fragments of their time upon her. Vincent came back more than once to her side, and was tranquilly, if not favorably, received. At last Glynn contrived to obtain a seat beside her.

"Are you not going to sing to-night?"

"No; these gentlemen and Madame d'Italia will give us far better music than I can."

"Not in my opinion; your singing goes straight to my heart."

Elsie smiled and looked at her fan. Glynn felt almost irresistibly impelled to tell her how charming she was, but he *did* resist.

"I suppose I must not call while your father is absent," he resumed; "and I have found some delightful volumes in Tauchnitz, which I should like to give you."

"Can you not send them?" she asked, looking at him with laughing eyes. "I want books very much; no one gives me books but you."

"Then I must bring them myself."

"Why not? I shall be very glad to see you, so will Madame Weber."

"Thank you! May I come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow? No; to-morrow I go with Antoinette to visit the good ladies of the Annonciades, the convent where we were at school. But come on Sunday if you like. On Monday my dear father will be with me again; then he will be able to tell me when we can go to England."

"But you will return to Paris?"

"I do not know; nothing is certain."

"I hope you will promise certainly to dance with me at this ball."

"Shall you be here when it takes place?"

"Yes, certainly; nothing shall prevent me from being present."

A faint color flickered over Elsie's cheek, as if this resolution implied a personal compliment, and an amused smile parted her lips.

"Then you like dancing?"

"That depends. At any rate I want to dance the first dance with you at your first ball."

Elsie laughed. "Very well. But though I have never been at a great ball, I have been at several *soirées dansantes* with Madame Davilliers. Whenever Antoinette went they kindly took me."

"And I suppose *you* are fond of dancing?"

"I love it," earnestly.

"Does your friend Vincent dance well?"

"I believe he does; most Americans do; but he is not my friend, and I cannot bear to dance with him."

"You receive him very well considering you do not like him."

Elsie paused an instant, and looking up with an expression of trust, said in a low tone, "I am afraid of him."

"Why?" drawing unconsciously nearer to her.

"I cannot tell—no, that is not quite true; I begin, I think, to understand why."

"And will you not tell me?"

"I should rather like to tell you, but not here."

"On Sunday, then, when I bring you your books?"

"No; I do not want to mention his name before Madame Weber."

"Is she a friend of his?"

"I am not sure, but it is well to be cautious."

"It gives me a kind of shock to think you are obliged to be on guard in your own home."

"That will be all over when I am at Woodburn."

"I wish your father would come and settle in London; it would be pleasant and useful for you to have some English friends."

"It is more likely my father would settle in America."

"Then I should never see you!"

The words had passed his lips before he could restrain them, and he watched their effect keenly.

"I suppose not," very quietly. "I should be sorry, and my father would be very sorry."

Glynn felt unreasonably irritated. Was this young, slight, inexperienced girl stronger than himself, that the tone in which he was conscious his words were uttered should in no way move her? He was dimly aware of a change in her manner, so delicate as to be indefinable; it was not less friendly, but more collected, as if she thought before she spoke.

But Antoinette, approaching with an elderly cousin of her *fiancé*, who had requested an introduction to the *belle Américaine*, put an end to their conversation, and not long after Elsie went away.

The days which intervened between Lambert's sudden journey to Dunkerque and the ball went

rapidly—too rapidly. Glynn dined twice in the Rue de L'Evêque. Lambert was grave, but less dejected than previously. He had the air of a man who had escaped from a period of indecision, and had thoroughly made up his mind. Glynn, on the contrary, sank deeper and deeper into the quicksands of irresolution, and felt each day more vividly how strong an effort it would cost him to tear himself away; how impossible it seemed to leave Elsie to the chances of undefined danger, none the less formidable because it was impalpable.

It was with an unaccountable impression that something important, something decisive would occur before the evening was over. Glynn dressed and dined, taking care to be in the ball-room and near the door in good time, in order to claim Elsie's promise of the first dance on her arrival. Madame Davilliers and her party were rather late, and, to Glynn's annoyance, she entered the room leaning on Vincent's arm. Mademoiselle followed, conducted by the Vicomte, and finally Elsie, leaning on M. Davilliers—Elsie in her first ball-dress, a delicious combination of white silk and *tulle* and lace, with sprays of wild roses, long grass, and foliage, a delicate wreath of the same flowers in her hair, and a simple necklace of shimmering Venetian shells round her throat. She looked a little shy, a little self-conscious, less composed than usual, and when she distinguished Glynn's tall figure, and met his dark, eager, admiring eyes, she colored suddenly, looking away with a smile so sweet, so glad, that Glynn's heart gave a quick bound, and throbbed with a triumphant sense of victory, after which reason gave up the struggle and resigned herself to defeat.

"This is our dance, Miss Lambert," said Glynn, after a brief greeting to the rest of the party as he took her hand. "But it is a set of lancers; would you not like to walk round and look at the decorations until the next dance, which is a waltz?"

"Thank you, I should." So Glynn took her programme and wrote his own name for several waltzes, prefacing each inscription with a persuasive "May I?" Elsie laughingly restricted the number, saying she had promised some dances to M. Davilliers, Henri Le Clerc, and M. de Pontigny. "But," she added, with slight graceful hesitation, "if it does not interfere with your other dances, might I say I am engaged to you if Mr. Vincent asks me for a waltz? I *must* dance with him, but *not* a waltz,—I cannot."

"Yes, I will grant your very serious request," said Glynn, smiling down upon her. "I shall keep all waltzes at your disposal, and take care to be within hail! Is it permitted to a brutal Englishman to say your toilette is perfect?"

"I am very glad you think so; it is chiefly Madame Davilliers' choice. It pleased my father, who never counts the cost of anything for me," she sighed.

"Why is Lambert not here to see your triumph?"

"He did think of coming, but felt too tired; he has been very busy, so it was decided that I should come with the Davilliers; and if we stay very late I am to go home with them, for my father always wakes when I come in."

The decorations were duly admired, and then the waltz for which Glynn had been longing struck up.

Given good music, a first-rate floor, a partner whose step suits yours, and waltzing is certainly a pleasant exercise; but when in addition your partner is just the very creature that you have felt tempted over and over again to clasp in your arms, and pour out expressions of tenderness and admiration while your heart throbs against hers, the pleasure becomes almost painful.

Glynn, as the hours went rapidly by, felt his power over himself melting away; there was a soft reserve, a frequent avoidance of being alone with him on the part of Miss Lambert, that fanned the long-smouldering fire of passion into a strong, an irresistible glow. Why should he let himself be cheated by cold caution out of the delicious, perhaps invigorating draught which fortune offered him? He was no mere conventional man of the world to turn his back on a woman worthy of all love because her father was not exactly eligible to be comptroller of Her Majesty's household! He would be true to his better instincts, his higher self.

Meantime it was infinitely irritating to be obliged to give up his fascinating partner from time to time as other cavaliers came to claim her.

Suddenly, as he was leading her across the room to Madame Davilliers, he felt her start and press his arm, a movement which he attributed to Vincent's approach.

"You have not granted me a waltz yet, Miss Lambert; may I have the next?" said the American.

"I am engaged for the next."

"Indeed! to Mr. Glynn? He has been so highly favored that I think he might permit a change of partners, as I am obliged to leave almost immediately, and shall not see you again for some time. I start by the early mail for Bordeaux to-morrow, or rather this morning."

"I have less benevolence than you credit me with," Glynn haughtily. "I am not disposed to forego an iota of my temporary right."

"What would your father say to your desertion of your old friend for a new acquaintance?" asked Vincent with an unpleasant laugh.

To Glynn's surprise Elsie made a slight movement as if to withdraw her arm. Glynn held it tightly against his side.

"I have not deserted you, Mr. Vincent," she said quietly, as if recovering her first impulse to leave

Glynn, "for I was not engaged to you."

"Perhaps not; we will discuss that point when we meet next," returned Vincent with insolent assurance. "Meantime *au revoir*, Miss Lambert. Good-bye, Mr. Glynn; I don't suppose I shall see you again." He made a sort of defiant bow and turned away.

"Come and sit down in the ante-room," said Glynn, "it is cool and quiet; that brute has disturbed you." Miss Lambert silently accepted the suggestion, and as a new dance proceeded they were soon alone.

"For heaven's sake tell me what it is that enables that fellow to annoy you?" said Glynn earnestly; "you said you would tell me."

"I never liked him, but latterly I perceive that he has some curious influence over my father, who has even asked me to be civil to him. Perhaps I ought not to tell you this, but my father trusts you, and I—I believe you are loyal. I am still uneasy about my father. He is so restless, and I imagine he is always more restless when he has been with Mr. Vincent. I sometimes think that my father has had a hard, sad life, though he tries to forget his troubles, and I want to make up to him for the past. He loves me so much that I must do everything for him, and be with him always."

"The young cannot always promise for their future, and he would be happiest, knowing you were happy."

"But *I* should not; he deserves all I can do, and it would hurt me, oh! cruelly, to think he ever wanted anything when I was not there to give it to him." The sweet, soft lips quivered with feeling as she spoke.

"This is a heart worth winning," thought Glynn, as he gazed on her pensive, downcast face.

"I wish he would tell you something about Mr. Vincent before you go," continued Elsie. "I feel oppressed with a sense of indefinable mischief."

"Before I go!" repeated Glynn. "How do you know I am going?"

"I heard my father say you were going, and of course you will not stay in Paris."

"I cannot tear myself from it," said Glynn with passionate emphasis.

"Why?" asked Elsie, looking up surprised, then meeting his gaze, a vivid blush passed over her cheek, fading away quickly.

"Why?" he exclaimed. "May I come and tell you why? to-morrow will you hear my explanation, with kindness, with patience?"

"Ah!" she returned, shrinking slightly, "it is late—Madame Davilliers will be looking for me."

"But, Elsie, may I come,—will you hear me?"

"Yes," she said, very gravely and softly, "you may come." Other couples now invaded their solitude, and Glynn was obliged to take her to her chaperon.

Madame Davilliers was ready to leave the ball, and observed that the dear child, meaning Elsie, looked quite tired.

Glynn accompanied them to the door, wrapping Elsie's cloak round her carefully.

"To-morrow," he whispered, pressing her arm to his side. She looked up—a serious, searching look.

"You puzzle me!" she said.

"How? but you will tell me how and why! When may I come to-morrow?"

"In the afternoon."

"You will stay with us to-night, *chère* Elsie?" cried Madame Davilliers from the carriage.

"A thousand thanks, but I should rather go home; I have caught cold, I think." Her voice was unsteady, and Glynn noticed that she was trembling. He longed to speak some soothing words to her, but there was no possibility of doing so. The next moment the door was shut, the coachman ordered to drive to the Rue de L'Evêque, and Glynn left gazing after the retreating vehicle.

Bidding good-night to young Le Clerc, who was returning to the ball-room, Glynn lit his cigar, and walked slowly down the Rue de Rivoli. It was a heavy, intensely dark night; but he was too much excited to feel atmospheric influences. In his own mind he had passed the rubicon; and his request to Elsie for an interview on the morrow had, he considered, pledged him to offer his future life for her acceptance. Would she accept it? He was too deeply and truly in love to make sure of the impression he had created himself, too much in earnest not to be humble. Elsie had been startled, touched; but it did not follow that she loved him. However she decided, he was glad he had spoken as he did. She must know what his intended explanation meant; would she have promised to hear it if she were not disposed to hear it favorably? If!—what rapture of anticipation shivered through him at the possibilities thus suggested. Then he almost laughed aloud at the idea of Lady Gethin's anger and despair at such a marriage as he contemplated. He even pictured a future home, so peaceful, so lovingly home-like, that not even the tolerably frequent visits of Lambert in his gorgeous array and most anecdotal mood should disturb its delicious harmony! The first faint streaks of daylight were stealing across the eastern sky when Glynn at length entered his hotel.

The porter handed him his key, and with it a card, on which was printed, "Travers Deering, Denham Castle," and written in pencil, "Want particularly to see you. Will call to-morrow about two."

"What an infernal nuisance!" was Glynn's rather profane reflection; "he shall not keep me here after 2.30 if it were to save his life!"

Deering was not punctual. It was already two o'clock when he presented himself, and he at once asked Glynn to let their interview take place in the latter's private room, as he wished to speak of personal matters. They therefore adjourned from the general *salon*, and Deering quickly plunged into his subject, which was to ask Glynn's advice as to the organizing of a scheme for making a branch from the main line of railway, which ran within eight or nine miles of Denham, to some villages on his estate, and past a certain quarry he had lately begun to work. This had been suggested by a shrewd land-agent, and Deering was anxious to consult Glynn before he left Paris for his summer wanderings. The conversation which ensued was animated and interesting; but Glynn did not forget to look at his watch from time to time.

"I see I am keeping you," said Deering, observing his movement; "I shall not trespass any longer. I shall follow your advice, and see the heads of your firm as to funds on my way through London. How is our queer acquaintance Lambert and his incomparable daughter? I have found traces of a curious story connected with him, which if true——," as he spoke the door was burst open, and Lambert rushed in—Lambert in a state of intense agonized excitement. His eyes wild with angry terror, his face pallid through all the deep sunburn of its acquired tint, a slight froth at the corners of his mouth, his necktie disarranged, his hands gloveless; both Deering and Glynn started to their feet at this unexpected apparition.

"My child!" cried Lambert hoarsely, "where is my child? Deering, you limb of the devil! have you helped that scoundrel Vincent to take her away? For God's sake tell me! have mercy! I'll do anything! Glynn, *you* will help me? you are an honest, honorable man. She's gone, and I am going mad!"

"Gone!" cried his hearers together, "what do you mean?"

"Listen," said Lambert, gasping as if for breath, and throwing himself into a chair. "She was at the ball last night. Why did I ever let her from under my own eyes! It was agreed that if she was late she should stay at the Davilliers'. When I asked for her this morning the *bonne* said she had not returned, so I thought no more about it, and went to work as usual. I had some business appointments, and then I turned into Davilliers', thinking I'd walk home with Elsie—my jewel! if she was still there. But she wasn't,—oh! great heavens! they had left her at her own door, seen her go in, and heard it close; and now she is gone!"

"But this is not possible! Mademoiselle Antoinette is playing some stupid trick. Have you——"

"I tell you they are nearly as distracted as I am," interrupted Lambert, starting up and grasping the back of his chair. "I rushed to your hotel, Deering, for I cannot help thinking Vincent has some hand in it. He is a double-dyed scoundrel. Deering, I charge you not to screen him!"

"How dare you accuse me of such villainy!" cried Deering in great agitation. "I am as ignorant of the affair as you are—more so; don't pretend that you are without suspicion. She has not been taken away without her own consent; you must have some idea who it is she has gone off with."

Glynn, in the midst of his own stunning horror, was struck with the consternation which Deering's face expressed, and was inclined to acquit him of any guilt in the matter.

"Have you been to the police? No; for God's sake let us lose no time." Glynn seized his hat. "I will go with you."

"I returned to question the *concierge* in order to get some clue before going to the *Prefécture de Police*; then I felt obliged to question him," nodding to Deering, "to tell you—to—Oh! stand by me, Glynn, my head is going."

"You must keep calm for her sake," said Glynn; "come on, if she is above ground we'll find her!"

"And I'll second you so far as I can," cried Deering, "though you have attacked me so shamefully."

Lambert with a dazed, half-stupefied air, stared at him, till Glynn, who felt his own head reeling under the shock, passed his arm through his, and led him to the *fiacre* which was waiting.

Little was said, except to urge the driver to greater speed, until they reached the Rue de Jérusalem, where, after a short parley with one or two lower officials, they were admitted to the presence of the chief of the detectives, a quiet, simple-looking, iron-grey man, with watchful eyes, and a clear, penetrating voice. He listened with profound attention to Lambert's statement, scarcely putting a question, only occasionally restraining the details. Lambert had evidently made a supreme effort to master his terrible emotion, the vital necessity for clearness giving him a force beyond himself.

While Glynn listened with agonized keenness to the recital, he also heard the whispered terrors of his own heart. What horror had befallen the tender, delicate darling whom he had hoped to call his promised wife that day? To what hideous plot had she fallen a victim? He scarcely knew how to restrain the wild impulse to rush forth in hopeless blind pursuit.

Having heard all particulars, M. Claude (the *chef*) took a sheet of paper, and demanded a

description of the young lady. This was furnished by both Lambert and Glynn, the latter eagerly adding some characteristic details of which even the father did not think. Claude then touched a bell, and ordered the subordinate who answered it to telegraph the description at once to every seaport and frontier-town in France, warning the *police de sûreté* in each place to arrest any person answering to it, no matter who accompanied.

"Time has been lost already," said the immovable *chef*. "Still, things are always discovered. Have the goodness to answer my questions."

"Will you say," broke in Deering with his supreme air, addressing himself to Glynn, "that I shall be happy to guarantee expenses."

"Damn your money!" cried Lambert, turning on him fiercely; "not a penny of it shall pay for the recovery of my child."

"He doesn't know what he is saying, poor beggar," said Deering in an undertone, with contemptuous pity, and an evil look on his face. "As I don't understand what is going on, I'll leave you. I have an idea she'll make for England, if she hasn't gone off with some Yankee. So I shall write to my lawyers to stir up our detectives. I will call at your hotel for further news this evening, Glynn." He left the *bureau*, and Glynn gave his undivided attention to the interrogatories, noting with despair, which increased every moment, the hopelessness of the search in the face of nearly twenty-four hours' start.

That the extraordinary *finesse* of the police should finally succeed was possible, but in the interim what crime might not be committed?

The distinct queries of the astute detective established—That Lambert had risen at his usual hour; that on receiving his coffee from the *bonne*, he asked if mademoiselle had returned; and finding she had not, remarked that doubtless she had danced well and late, so it was better for her to stay at Madame Davilliers' for the night. He also inquired if Celestine, the *bonne*, had taken her young lady's morning-dress to Madame Davilliers', to which she replied in the affirmative.

The *concierge* had heard the bell about two or half-past, had pulled the *cordon*, heard the door shut—it was a heavy door—and recognized Mademoiselle Lambert's voice; after that there was no trace.

"Have you any suspicion? Had your daughter any admirer to whom you were averse?"

"No; certainly not."

"Certain you cannot be where a young lady is in question," said M. Claude with quiet cynicism. "But is there no one towards whom your suspicion points? you spoke angrily to the gentleman who has just gone out."

"There is one man respecting whom I have some doubts, and that gentleman is his associate." Lambert proceeded to describe Vincent with considerable accuracy, adding that he had more than once demanded the hand of his daughter; but that the young lady herself was strongly opposed to him.

Here Glynn, who had been listening with painful, feverish interest to the dialogue, volunteered an account of his appearance at the ball on the previous night; of his endeavor to persuade Mademoiselle Lambert to dance with him, and his avowed intention of leaving early that morning for Bordeaux. These details were all carefully noted down.

Then M. Claude, rising, said, "Now to view the house." He struck a bell which stood beside his desk, and while he gave some instructions to the officer who answered his summons, he put on his gloves, locked his desk, and directed that a certain *commissaire* should accompany him to M. Lambert's residence. "I suppose you will wish to assist in the examination of the premises?" said M. Claude; "you may help to throw light on the case."

"Of course I will go with you."

"And you will allow me to assist so far as I can," urged Glynn.

"But can nothing more be done? no more rapid action taken?" cried the fevered, agitated father, letting his closed hand fall heavily on the table. The *chef* took out his watch, glanced at it, and remarked dramatically, "It is forty minutes since I noted down your description of your daughter, and all egress from France is closed to her."

Lambert uttered a low moan.

"We must let them work their own way. They know what they are about; but the suspense is almost intolerable," said Glynn, whose heart was bursting with despair and remorse. Why had he not accepted Lambert's proposition? Had he been Elsie's betrothed, this might not have happened!

The drive to the Rue de L'Evêque seemed endless; Lambert sat immovable and speechless. Arrived, the *chef de la sûreté* and his subaltern immediately proceeded to examine the house carefully, and to question the *concierge* as to the tenants. In the *rez-de-chaussée* was the *magasin* of a Patent Polish Stove Company; on the first *étage* an old lady with her son and daughter-in-law resided. "Persons of high consideration," said the tearful *concierge*. The second *étage* was vacant; M. Lambert occupied the third. Then came a Professor of Music, Mons. le Capitain Galliard, Maitre d'Armes, and others.

Both Lambert and Glynn watched with quivering interest the deliberate minuteness of the

examination, first of the *concierge*, then of the house itself. The Professor of Music and the Maitre d'Armes were out, so M. Claude contented himself for the present by asking some leading questions about them.

Then he and his attendant *commissaire* ascended to Lambert's apartment, and questioned Madame Weber and the *bonne* as to the smallest details concerning the missing girl; her character, her habits of life, her friends, her pursuits, and finally asked for her last photograph. It sent a sharp dart of angry pain through Glynn's heart to see the *chef de la sûreté* and his aide-de-camp coolly examining the portrait which to him had a certain sanctity, to observe the unmoved composure of the practiced detectives in face of the father's despairing anxiety, the professional instinct which subordinated human interest to the keen perception of possible crime, the sleuth-hound scent for a legitimate prey.

From Lambert's abode they proceeded to the vacant *étage*, which the *concierge*, in all the tearful yet delightful excitement of such an extraordinary occurrence, threw open with eager zeal.

It was almost the same as the dwelling above, and after looking carefully through the empty rooms they reached the kitchen. The door was fastened.

"*Tiens!*" cried the *concierge*, looking rapidly through the keys she carried, "this is strange. I do not remember locking the door, and I have not been in here more than twice since the day you looked at the apartment, Monsieur Lambert, for some friends who thought of coming to Paris."

While she spoke the *commissaire* had thrust the blade of his penknife into the key-hole. "The key is inside," he said.

"It is impossible," cried the *concierge*.

"Go round by *l'escalier de service* (back stair) with madame," said M. Claude to his subordinate. "There is a door leading thence to the kitchen, is there not?"

"But yes, certainly that will also be locked; I have a pass-key, however, for these outer doors." A few minutes of silent waiting and voices were heard within, then the door was opened by the *concierge*, whose usually rosy face looked a yellowish white. "*Bon dieu!*" she whispered, "the outside door was unlocked, and here is the key which opens both, in this lock. I swear that the day before yesterday I locked the outside door carefully; nor have I ascended this stair since."

"Let us examine this room carefully," said the *chef*, with a shade of additional gravity.

The search was most thorough, every little cupboard, every nook, the stove, the oven, an old box, every inch of the dingy empty kitchen was minutely scrutinized,—all present assisting. Suddenly a speck of white in a dark corner attracted Glynn's eye. He picked it up. It was a morsel of fine lace entangled with a knot of the narrowest black velvet ribbon, from which dangled a broken end. With a sickening sensation of horror and dread Glynn picked up this infinitesimal yet eloquent suggestion of a struggle, and silently handed it to M. Claude.

"Ha!" exclaimed that functionary, gazing at it with some eagerness; then he added, "Mademoiselle changed her toilet too hastily."

"Good God!" cried Lambert, "she wore just such a velvet string as this through the lace of her dress; I noticed it!"—and so had Glynn. With what bitterness he recalled his admiration of the creamy whiteness of her neck contrasted with the black line surrounding it. "Do you—do you think she is murdered?" continued Lambert in an agonized whisper, staring wildly at the lace.

"No, I do not," said M. Claude, apparently somewhat moved by the father's intense misery. "I do not suppose her life would be attempted by any one, unless indeed there are some circumstances in her or your history with which I am unacquainted. But I believe what may be as bitter as her death to you,—that she has gone with her own free consent."

"And that I never can believe," cried Lambert. "She—the sweetest, most loving, obedient child man ever had!"

"Even so," said the detective with a tinge of sadness.

"The affair might have occurred under chloroform," said the *commissaire* in a low submissive tone. "A resolute practiced villain meets her ascending the stairs; a handkerchief saturated with chloroform suddenly wrapped round her face renders her helpless. She is carried through this empty apartment, her dress changed while she is still insensible." An irrepressible groan from Glynn made the *chef de la sûreté* look at him. "They carry her down-stairs," continued the *commissaire*.

"And then," interrupted the *concierge* shrilly, "they are caught! how can any one get out without calling me? My faith! do you think I neglect my duties, or that a great warrior like my husband, now *en retraite*, and employed at the Gare St. Lazare, would permit half a dozen such brigands to pass?"

"Silence!" said M. Claude, impressively. "Feel along the floor, in that corner beyond the window."

His subordinate obeyed, and discovered a small square of chocolate, a few crumbs of bread, and two pins. These last were most carefully examined.

"They are English," said the detective. "But that is easily accounted for; the person or persons engaged in the abduction evidently partook of refreshment; nor is there any sign leading to the supposition of violence. The difficulty is to discover how they managed to leave the house. At what hour did you lock the door and put out your light last night?" to the *concierge*.

In reply to his questions she stated that the entrance door was always locked at ten o'clock, but

that she herself often sat up till eleven. Last night, feeling weary, she went to bed at half-past ten. Before she slept the bell rang, and she pulled the *cordon*. M. Lambert's voice said who was there, and bid her good-night. Twice after, entrance was demanded by different inmates; then, after what seemed to her a long time, some one rang, and waking completely, she distinctly heard Miss Lambert's voice. She did not sleep again for what seemed to her more than an hour, during which all was profoundly quiet. She always rose before six, and after lighting her fire to prepare the coffee of monsieur her husband, she unlocked the great door and went to fill her pail with water at a pump, which was in a court on which the entrance opened at the far side from the street, in order to wash the passage.

"Can you see the chief entrance from this court?"

"But yes, certainly."

"And the pump, how is it situated?"

"About the centre."

"I shall inspect it," said M. Claude. Having carefully wrapped up the morsel of lace and ribbon, the square of chocolate and the two pins, and placed them in an inner pocket, M. Claude led the way down-stairs to the court mentioned by the *concierge*, followed by her, Lambert, and Glynn, who were too penetrated by the sense of their own helplessness in such an affair to offer any interference or suggestion.

The court, which was like a well, being surrounded by lofty houses, was exactly opposite the entrance; and the pump, as stated, was in the centre, but with its back towards the doorway, so that any one using the handle to raise the water would naturally turn his or her face from it, especially as it was necessary to watch the filling of whatever vessel was placed below the spout. After looking carefully at the relative positions of the door and the pump, M. Claude requested the *concierge* to fill a pail of water as she was in the habit of doing. She obeyed; he stood behind her during the operation, and at the end observed, "The fugitives walked through the open door while you were pumping; no force or chloroform could have been used." The *concierge* burst into tears. "Gentlemen," continued the *chef de la sûreté*, "I shall now proceed to Madame Davilliers, and the remainder of my inquiries I wish to prosecute alone. M. Lambert, do me the favor to call at my office to-morrow morning about ten, and come *unaccompanied*."

"And can you do no more to-day?" asked poor Lambert, his mouth twitching from the nervous strain of suppressing his cruel anxiety.

"I consider that we have secured a clue. I feel sure of finding your daughter; if not immediately, at no distant date."

"At no distant date," repeated the father, as the *chef de la sûreté* left the house followed by the *commissaire*. "But in the meantime!—Oh God, Glynn, how can I live on such a rack, and I don't know where to turn!"

"It is almost unbearable. Can you remember nothing that might serve as a clue to her extraordinary disappearance?"

"Nothing. If I don't find her, I have done with life."

"I feel for you, Lambert, from the bottom of my soul. I'd give all I possess to know that Elsie is safe! you'll have an awful night of it. Shall I stay with you?"

"I am best alone," returned Lambert, looking sharply at him. "I didn't think you cared so much. Thank ye—I am best alone."

CHAPTER VI.
PURSUIT.

Glynn had known some rough times in his life, but a stupendous calamity such as had now overtaken him can only happen once in an existence. Little more than twelve hours before he had thrilled at Elsie's touch, and dreamed of winning her love! Why had he not accompanied her to her house, and seen her safely within her father's door? What was the dim haze of mystery which had hung about her, and had now suddenly deepened into darkness so profound that it defied conjecture? And suppose she were discovered, might not the discovery be nearly as terrible as the loss? In spite of M. Claude's profound conviction that Miss Lambert had gone willingly, Glynn could not, would not believe that there was a shadow of duplicity in the soul that looked so candidly, so earnestly out of those glorious deep-blue eyes. No; but she might have been decoyed away by some plausible story; if so, she was not wanting in courage and resolution; she would probably manage to communicate with Lambert. But in the meantime what agonies of terror, what unspeakable distress she must endure.

After a hideous night, during which he did not attempt to undress, Glynn was early next morning at the Rue de L'Evêque.

Lambert looked less terribly agitated than he was the day before, but he had an exhausted, stupefied air, as if nature could not hold out much longer. He was dressed and ready to go out, however, and as he was too soon for the appointment with M. Claude, Glynn accompanied him to see Madame Davilliers, who with her husband had visited and condoled with the bereaved father

more than once during the previous evening.

They found her still much agitated. She received Lambert with affectionate sympathy, but talked in a strain that maddened Glynn. The *chef de la sûreté* had evidently communicated to her his own belief that Elsie had fled willingly.

"Antoinette," she said, "was weeping in her own room; the poor child could not of course understand the despair of her elders. To her it was like some fairy tale of a cruel ogre; the less she heard of so awful a catastrophe the better. It is not for me to judge the habits of other nations," continued madame, "but the results of such freedom as is permitted to young American girls cannot fail to be fatal! That dear Elsie was an angel of goodness and purity, brought up by those holy ladies of the convent, and all the more likely to be led away, because of her extreme innocence. She" (Madame Davilliers) "was the last woman to be taken up with egotism; but the disgrace of such an occurrence would reflect on *all* who had come in contact with the unhappy one."

"Do you mean to say that you think my child, my jewel, my pride, is to blame? that any one living could lead her astray?" almost screamed Lambert, stung from his despairing apathy into angry excitement.

"Dear monsieur, I only blame your system, not its victim!"

"You are premature in your conclusions," said Glynn with cold displeasure. "Within twenty-four hours she will no doubt be discovered, and all that seems inexplicable explained."

"I trust it may be so, monsieur; meanwhile I agree with the excellent M. Claude that the affair should be kept as secret as possible; rumor will make everything worse than it really is, and for the sake of——"

"Adieu, madame; mine is too terrible an affliction to leave room for thought about appearances!" cried poor Lambert, turning away.

"Poor unhappy father! all things may be pardoned to him," said madame compassionately to Glynn, who bowed silently and followed his distracted friend.

Arrived at the *Bureau de la sûreté*, Glynn remained outside, slowly pacing the street; and while he waited, somewhat to his surprise he saw Deering come out from a different door to that by which Lambert had entered. He was accompanied by a man in uniform, and walked briskly away, in the same direction in which Glynn was sauntering; but as they were considerably ahead of him, it was useless to attempt pursuit. Nor did Glynn particularly wish to speak with Deering. He felt that for some occult reason he was Lambert's enemy, and he entirely acquitted him of any share in Elsie's disappearance. That he should make independent inquiries was natural, as Lambert's treatment of him the previous day almost forbid their holding further intercourse; probably the man with him was an official interpreter. Glynn's thoughts were sufficiently painful as he strolled to and fro. He wished Lambert would voluntarily confide to him the secret of his enmity to Deering. He felt an unreasoning conviction that the extraordinary disappearance of Elsie was in some way connected with it.

Time went slowly, painfully; but at length a *sergent de ville* approaching, saluted him, saying, "Will monsieur give himself the trouble to enter? M. Le Chef wishes to speak to him."

Glynn followed readily, and found Claude alone.

"Monsieur Lambert awaits you in an ante-chamber," said the grave *chef*; "you shall soon be at liberty to join him. Meantime you will have no objection to answer a few questions." He proceeded to put a few leading queries as to Glynn's position and occupation, the origin of his acquaintance with Lambert, its renewal, his knowledge of Deering and Vincent, and their connection with father and daughter. The astute *chef* was courteous though searching, and having meditated for a moment or two, said, "I should recommend your advising your friend to confide *every* circumstance connected with his daughter to me. He is keeping something back, and that something nullifies all our efforts."

"I think he must have told you everything, especially connected with his daughter."

"There is small chance of success if he does not."

"I suppose you have no intelligence as yet?" said Glynn.

"This is all we have discovered," said M. Claude, throwing open the doors of a large *armoire*, or clothes-press, and there hung, in ghastly mockery, the pretty white ball-dress which had so delightfully become the wearer, its bouquets of wild flowers crushed and flattened, and a long revolting stain of half-dried mud along one side of the creamy silk.

"Good God!" exclaimed Glynn, starting back horror-struck. "Where—where did you find this?"

"One of our men found it near the Pont de L'Alma early this morning. See! here is where the lace and knot of ribbon were torn away. There is no other mark of violence. The intention evidently was to throw the parcel (it was tightly rolled up) into the Seine; but it fell short, and the river was low. You recognize the dress?"

"Yes; and now?"

"This proves nothing," said the imperturbable M. Claude. "The dress was deliberately thrown away, either to direct attention on a wrong scent, or simply to get rid of an encumbrance."

"Then you have not advanced since yesterday?"

"Not much. I have found that M. Vincent *is* at Bordeaux, but alone."

"And you have seen M. Deering?" said Glynn, quickly.

"Yes," returned M. Claude, looking at him for an instant. "He came to seek tidings of the missing young lady, in whom he seems deeply interested."

There was a pause. Glynn sought in his soul for some suggestion to keep the inscrutable detective in conversation. He could not help a conviction that he was in possession of more information than he cared to impart; but nothing came to him.

"You do not, then, believe that any great crime has been committed?" he faltered.

"All things are possible; but I hope that before many days are over you will hear from the young lady herself. I believe it is an unusually clever case of elopement. I have communicated with the English police; but"—an eloquent shrug—"they have fewer facilities than we. My telegram yesterday was too late to catch the Dover mail-boat—not that I think it was of much consequence, for——"

His reason was never uttered; a tap at the door interrupted him. He rose, took a dispatch from the hands of a messenger. Closing the door, he read it, and then with a grim smile said:

"My suspicions are not far wrong. The young lady is safe and well at Bordeaux—and *not* alone."

"What does your *employé* say?" cried Glynn, not much comforted by the announcement.

"Read for yourself," said M. Claude, handing the telegram to him.

Glynn eagerly scanned the lines.

"Young English or American lady answering to description arrived here last evening; is staying at 'The Lion d'Or,' on the quay. Has been visited by the captain of an American steamer and another man. Father must come at once and identify her, or she may escape."

"This is some mistake," said Glynn, the words dancing before his eyes. "This cannot be Miss Lambert."

"It is most unlikely that my colleague at Bordeaux should be in error. He is one of the shrewdest *employés* of the *sûreté*. At all events we must inform the father."

He rang, and desired that M. Lambert should be recalled. Glynn was infinitely touched by the dulled, helpless look of the once bright, alert Lambert. He watched him read the telegram, and observed with surprise that his face brightened, and an expression of pleasure gleamed in his eyes.

"This is a chance, anyhow," he exclaimed. "Of course I'll go. When is the next train?"

The detective watched him curiously.

"But, Lambert," exclaimed Glynn in English, "you surely do not believe this can be your daughter? You do not think that delicate, tender creature would fly from *you* to meet men of whom you know nothing?"

"Maybe I do," said Lambert, "and maybe I don't. Drowning men catch at straws. I'll go, anyway."

He swayed slightly as he spoke, and caught Glynn's arm.

"It is more than he can bear," said M. Claude, with a rare gleam of feeling. "I will telegraph to my colleague to meet you at the Gare. The mail train leaves at six. You will be in Bordeaux about noon to-morrow. You will, I trust, need no further assistance from my department. I wish you good-morning, gentlemen."

He opened the door politely, and they went forth.

"Lambert," said Glynn, as he supported his friend's unsteady steps, "you are not fit to travel alone. I will go with you."

"I'm better," returned Lambert, withdrawing his arm, "and I thank you from the bottom of my heart; but I'd rather go alone. If—if—oh! great heavens!—She mightn't like to see you, Glynn. No, no," with increasing decision, "I would rather go alone, and I will send you word *what* I find. You have been wonderfully good to me, and you know what she was—*is*. Why do I despair? If—oh if," with sudden fury, "I ever get my grip on the infernal villain that drove her to this, he'll have seen the last of light, and go down to darkness forever. There, I don't know what I am talking about. My head seems all wrong."

"You had better let me go with you, Lambert. Believe me, you are not fit to go alone, and you must keep well, at any rate, till you recover or rescue your daughter."

"Recover her! Ay, that I will," standing still suddenly. "Do you think I'm not proof against everything till I find her? and then—and then, when she is safe, I have done my work, and I'll rest—ay, rest well and long. But I'll make this journey alone."

There was nothing for it but to give up all thoughts of persuading him. Then he seemed to revive, to master his terrible despondency. He accepted Glynn's invitation to luncheon, and forced himself to take food and wine. Then he returned to his desolate home, to make preparations for his departure; finally Glynn saw him safely into the train.

The hours which succeeded, how slowly, yet swiftly, they dragged their torturing length! slowly, for the moments as they dropped into the abyss of the past seemed deliberately distilled from the bitterest ingredients life could supply; swiftly, for every hour of delay added to the difficulty of

the search, on the success of which all Glynn's hopes hung. He exhausted himself wandering to and fro the Rue de L'Evêque, the Rue de Jérusalem, even the Morgue, where he would rather have found the corpse of her he loved than know her alive under such circumstances as the detective's telegram suggested. But this he did not for a moment believe, though through his long mental agony strange doubts would obtrude themselves—more of Lambert than his daughter. He was evidently concealing something. Those vague threats against some unnamed villain, what did they indicate? Knowledge of some possible and real abduction, or merely imaginative fury?

Still, fast or slow, the hours went by. Glynn was finally overcome with fatigue and sleep, so enjoyed a few hours of blessed oblivion.

He woke with a startled sense of wrong-doing in having forgotten even for a moment the awful uncertainty that had laid its curse upon him, and collecting his thoughts, remembered his surprise at not having received a telegraphic message from Lambert. True, he might not have succeeded at once in seeing his supposed daughter.

The expected communication came, however, before he sallied forth to renew the restless round of yesterday——

"Officer mistaken. A fresh track. Am off to Marseilles Will write."

In a sense this was a relief; but Marseilles? that seemed the most unlikely place to find the object of their search. However, all places were unlikely. Lambert had better keep at hand in Paris. He would write and beg him to return.

Glynn had taken his hat and was at the door, when some one knocked, and Deering entered, well-dressed, cool, distinguished-looking, as ever, but with a somewhat haggard aspect, and a set, sinister expression about his mouth.

"I suppose you have heard nothing fresh? no discovery of any clue to the whereabouts of Lambert's daughter?" he asked.

"Nothing. Her father went down to Bordeaux yesterday at the suggestion of M. Claude to identify a girl described as resembling Miss Lambert. I have just had this telegram from him."

"Ha!" said Deering, on reading it, "I doubt if Lambert will afford M. Claude much assistance. I fancy some of his raffish associates have carried off the young lady, and he is too much in their power to be very earnest about discovering or punishing them."

"Have you suggested this idea to the *chef de la sûreté*?" asked Glynn coldly.

"Why should you think so?"

"Because he talked to me of Lambert's concealments as militating against the success of the search, just after you left him."

Deering's brows met in a fierce, quick frown, and then resumed their ordinary haughty composure. "Yes; I thought it well to warn him. I am even now endeavoring to sift a curious story about Lambert; it may not be true, but I am a good deal concerned at this disappearance of his daughter, and, I think, so are you. She is a fascinating morsel of female flesh, and it is maddening to see the prize you had marked for your own carried off under your very eyes. Really there is no line deep enough to fathom a woman."

"I never marked Miss Lambert as my own," said Glynn angrily. "I object to your mode of mentioning her. As to Lambert, no one can doubt the unfortunate man's despair and distress. I do not believe that Miss Lambert left her home willingly, unless decoyed by false pretences."

"Be that as it may, I would give a good deal to know where she is. I believe she is in England; she was brought up there, I believe. Well, I cross to-night, and will set the police at work so soon as I get to London. Shall you be much longer here?"

"My movements are uncertain," returned Glynn stiffly.

"You'll wait and assist the bereaved father, I presume," said Deering, with an unpleasant smile. "By the way, Vincent has returned, and is awfully cut up about the affair. Vincent was, I fancy, a suitor; might have been a decent match for Miss Lambert; he is a shrewd fellow. But you are in a hurry, I will not detain you."

He bid Glynn "good-morning" with courteous friendliness, and left him half-maddened with torturing waves of doubt, which seemed rising on all sides.

Another long miserable day, its only solace a visit to poor Madame Weber and Celestine, who talked of the "dear lost child" with unbounded panegyric and floods of tears.

No letter from Lambert, and failure in an attempt to see the *chef de la sûreté*, completed the day's trials.

The fourth morning brought Lambert's promised letter. The girl supposed to resemble Elsie was a rouged *modeste*, with dyed hair, and rather good blue eyes, the only real point of resemblance. "The reasons for his expedition to Marseilles were too numerous for a letter," Lambert wrote. "He had some faint hopes of success, and would tell all when he returned, if Glynn was still in Paris." *If!* how could he tear himself away till this cruel mystery was cleared up?

In the porter's lodge, as he passed out, Glynn found a police agent with a message—Could he come soon to the *Bureau de la sûreté*? M. le Chef wished to speak with him.

Glynn's reply was to hail a *fiacre*, and making the agent come with him, drove at once to the *bureau*.

"So the *commissaire* at Bordeaux was mistaken," said M. Claude. "That is the difficulty of descriptions, even photographs sometimes deceive. I am having several copies made of mademoiselle's, and shall send them to the principal towns." He paused, and looking at Glynn, said, "I do not approve this *démarche* to Marseilles; M. Lambert should have confided his reasons to us. He cannot work independently; but he will make nothing by his journey. Were he here—there is a fresh and more hopeful report from Bruges this morning."

"And it is?" exclaimed Glynn, leaning forward in his chair, quivering with anticipation.

"Two ladies, one young, fair, blue-eyed and English; the other elderly, German or Russian, well-dressed and well-bred, arrived the day before yesterday at the Hôtel des Trois Couronnes. They keep most retired, and only go out in a covered carriage, to the convent of the Béguines. The younger lady weeps a good deal, and often mentions the word 'father' with emotion. They have told their landlord that they await the coming of the young lady's father."

"This sounds more promising," cried Glynn, all eager attention.

"Were M. Lambert here he might take the journey to Bruges, and identify them. Probably *he* is the father they expect."

"I wish he were here, but, in his absence, *I* will undertake the journey; I can identify Miss Lambert."

"Do you think her father will thank you?"

"I do. Can you doubt his agonized impatience until he can get tidings of his daughter?"

"No; but there is something in the affair I cannot quite fathom."

There was a pause. "I suppose," resumed Glynn, "there is no objection to my visiting the ladies your agent describes?"

"None; in the absence of the father."

"Then I shall start at once. Give me a line of introduction to your representative. I shall telegraph to you the result of my journey. No doubt you will see M. Lambert back to-morrow."

M. Claude wrote the desired letter, and armed with it, Glynn left the *bureau*.

A rapid journey followed, a journey such as men make in bad dreams, with a curious sense of acting under some hideous malignant influence, a depressing anticipation of coming failure. Often in after-life the memory of that journey came back as the most painful experience of all he had ever known for years—it haunted him with thrills of horror. Little he heeded the quaint aspects of the old mediæval town, though the picture of the streets through which he was conducted to the Hôtel des Trois Couronnes remained forever stamped upon his memory.

His anticipations were fulfilled. The ladies were both total strangers to him; he had therefore nothing for it but to apologize and retire.

Back to Paris, where Lambert had not yet returned, and M. Claude received him with cold displeasure. M. Claude was growing impatient at the unwonted failure of his emissaries. It was now six days since the disappearance of Miss Lambert, and not the faintest clue had been found by which to trace her.

The keen-eyed *chef de la sûreté* threw himself into the pursuit with all the energy of his nature, all the professional pride that a high reputation could inspire. There was not a town of any importance in Europe where his researches did not penetrate, and yet the days rolled on, and not a trace was to be found of the missing girl. For some reasons unknown very little was said of the occurrence in the newspapers. The police, always powerful in France, were especially potent in the later days of the Empire. One or two journals mentioned the mysterious disappearance of a young lady, and the matter was dropped.

To Glynn the terrible darkness, which seemed closing in deeper and deeper with each succeeding day over the fate of the fair girl he had learned to love so passionately, was appalling. He chafed against his own hopelessness, he exhausted himself in conjectures and restless going to and fro.

When Lambert came back from his fruitless journey to Marseilles, he seemed sunk in a strange, sullen apathy, nor did he accept Glynn's well-meant efforts to comfort and sustain him with cordiality. He declared his intention of remaining in Paris as the place where the earliest tidings of his missing daughter were most likely to reach him. He had already given notice of his intention to leave his apartments, and now dismissed Madame Weber and the *bonne*.

"I do not know where I may have to go, or what I may have to do," he said to Glynn. "I'll hang on here till my time is up, and then I'll take a room somewhere and just wait. You are very good, Glynn; you could have done no more if you had been my poor darling's affianced lover. I little knew you were a rich man, and partner in a great firm, when I offered you her poor little portion."

"Do not speak of it," said Glynn, with inexpressible emotion; "but treat me as a trusted friend. Tell me what conjectures you have formed as to her fate."

"I believe she is dead," said Lambert in a broken voice, and covering his face. "Had she been in life she would have managed to communicate with me. Now I have nothing left to live for but revenge."

"Have you any idea where to direct your vengeance?"

"I cannot answer yes or no yet, though if I'd answer any one it would be you, Glynn."

"That means 'Yes,'" returned Glynn.

Lambert did not reply. He seemed sunk in gloomy, hard resignation to a detested destiny. "You shouldn't wait on here, Glynn," he resumed, after a minute's silence. "You can do no good,—as they didn't find her within the first week it will just be a waiting race. We'll hit on the truth just by accident, that will be the way of it."

But Glynn could not tear himself from Paris. How often he recalled the circumstances under which he had uttered these words to Elsie; they were almost the last he had spoken to her. He could almost hear the soft, tremulous tones in which she promised to listen to his reasons for not being able to tear himself away. No, it was impossible that she could have had the smallest anticipation of the dreadful catastrophe which awaited her. Yet her very last words—her last look haunted him. The questioning, wondering glance, the half-whisper—"you puzzle me!"

Twice during this miserable period of indecision Glynn encountered Vincent,—once on the stair leading to Lambert's abode, and once in the Boulevards.

In the first instance he greeted Glynn with the frankest expression of sorrow and sympathy for the great misfortune which had befallen Lambert, mentioning his own deep grief, and his compassionate forgiveness of Lambert's injurious accusations against himself.

Glynn found Lambert in a state of furious excitement after this visit, and uttering violent half-unintelligible threats against Vincent.

On their second meeting Glynn tried to pass him, but in vain, and was obliged to listen to a string of suggestions and conjectures respecting the supposed fugitive which nearly drove him to throttle his interlocutor and fling him into the street under the hoofs of the passing horses, especially as he felt that Vincent's small, penetrating, watchful eyes were intently, searchingly fixed on his face while he spoke.

At length letters from his partners obliged him to quit the scene of so much suffering and disaster.

It was with the deepest reluctance that Glynn bid Lambert good-bye. The unhappy father still wore the same aspect of helplessness, of sullen submission to the irresistible. He scarcely heeded Glynn's announcement of his immediate departure, and merely answered his ardent request for the earliest information respecting any crumbs of intelligence in the affirmative. He put Glynn's card in his pocket-book mechanically. Yet he wrung his hand hard at parting, and bid God bless him, brokenly—yet heartily.

Glynn, not satisfied with Lambert's promise, obtained an interview with M. Claude, who was even more curt and immovable than ever. He, however, condescended to promise that he would not fail to let him know should any traces of the missing girl be found.

Glynn was not perhaps fully aware of the withering change which the torture of the last three weeks had wrought in him until he attempted to resume the routine of his former life. The color and flavor seemed to have been extracted from existence, nothing was left worth hoping for, working for, living for, and the heads of his firm exclaimed at his haggard, worn aspect.

The second day after he had resumed his attendance at the office he found himself too faint and dizzy to continue the writing on which he was engaged. His head ached intensely, his pulses throbbed. He rang, and began to explain to the clerk who answered his summons that he felt so ill he must return home; but before he could finish his sentence he fell heavily at the feet of his startled hearer. He was conveyed carefully to his own residence, which he did not leave for many weeks,—not till he had been brought to the verge of the grave by a fierce brain-fever.

CHAPTER VII.
WILL-O'-THE-WISP.

A new year was opening on the just and the unjust—the fortunate and the unfortunate. Lady Gethin had arrived in town after a prolonged Christmas visit to some attentive relatives in one of the midland counties.

She was always pleased to be at home; she liked to exercise a friendly hospitality, and she was by no means afraid of a lonely evening, of which she never had too many.

It was the day after her return. Night had closed in; her dainty dinner was over, and she was established in her favorite chair beside a bright wood and coal fire in the smaller and cosier of her two drawing-rooms, which was lighted only by the ruddy glow of the fire and a shaded reading-lamp, by which she was perusing a new novel. She had laid down the book and was thinking, with an unusually softened expression on her strong face, of her favorite, Hugh Glynn. She had been intensely anxious about him during his severe illness. She had constantly visited his sick-room, and satisfied herself that nurses and servants were doing their duty. When his life was despaired of, she was grimly still, silent, and enduring, but *she* knew that all the woman in her somewhat masculine nature had gone out, in maternal affection, to her husband's nephew.

When he was slowly struggling back to life and strength she accompanied him to a south coast bathing-place, and gave him the great benefit of her companionship, for she knew how to be sympathetically silent, as well as congenially talkative. In this prolonged *tête-à-tête* Glynn grew

sincerely and gratefully attached to the outspoken free-thinking old woman, whose frank kindness was never oppressive, and whose uncompromising sincerity might convince the hardest sceptic of its reality.

Attachment brought confidence, and before they parted Hugh Glynn had told her the strange history of his sudden love for Elsie Lambert, of the hold it had taken of him in spite of reason, prudence, worldly wisdom—every motive that ought to guide a man of his maturity and experience. He even confessed to the weakness of regretting he had rejected Lambert's proposal of marriage with his daughter.

In the story of Elsie's disappearance, Lady Gethin was profoundly interested, though, to Glynn's disappointment and indignation, she did not hesitate to declare her belief that the young lady eloped voluntarily, and had probably since informed her father of her whereabouts—a fact which he might think it wiser not to divulge. She further declared that although she did not think the worse of Glynn for his infatuation, she thought he had had a great escape, and believed he would come to think so himself when he had recovered his health and resumed the ordinary routine of his life.

Reviewing these conversations Lady Gethin sat forgetful of her book, when the object of her thoughts was announced.

"Why didn't you come to dinner?" she exclaimed, holding out her hand.

"Because I have been dining earlier than usual at the house of a cousin of mine in the suburbs, where I have been officiating as god-father to his first-born son."

"A very patriarchal proceeding. Who is this cousin—do I not know him?"

"I think not; he is a cousin on my mother's side, and has a cure of souls at Clapham."

"Well, Hugh, and how are you? You look better and stronger."

"I am! I have turned the corner, and am beginning to pull mechanically against the collar once more."

Lady Gethin looked earnestly at him. He seemed taller than ever—gaunt and bony. His dark face was very colorless, his eyes sunken; yet his attitude and air had less of lassitude than when they had parted last.

"You have been across the Channel?"

"Yes, I ran over to Paris for a little change, just before Christmas. Paris draws me like a magnet."

"A magnetism you ought to resist. How is the beautiful city?"

"Beautiful as ever; but there is mischief in the air. However, I am no prophet. I wandered about the old scenes like a troubled ghost, and I saw Lambert."

"Indeed! I wish, Hugh, you would break away from all the painful associations with that man, you can do him no good."

"True; but I have the most profound pity for him, all the more that he seems by no means glad to see me. I fancy his terrible misfortune has affected his brain. He is sullen, and averse to speak of anything that leads up to the subject of his lost daughter, and yet he looks in surprisingly good health."

"*He* has not had a brain fever!" said Lady Gethin, significantly. "I suppose no trace whatever has been discovered?"

"Not the faintest. I succeeded in obtaining an interview with M. Claude, who reluctantly admitted that the French police have rarely been so baffled."

"It is a most extraordinary case," said Lady Gethin, and then hastened to change the subject. "I have had rather a pleasant time of it at the Kingsfords'. I went down the day before Christmas and only returned yesterday. The Deerings put up there for two nights on their way to Lord Arthur Saville's. Lady Frances was looking a little more alive; and really Deering can be very agreeable."

"He is, I suspect, a tremendously white-washed sepulchre."

"I cannot understand your suspicions of Deering," returned Lady Gethin; "as to his being mixed up with the Lambert affair, it is mere nonsense. What on earth could he have to do with such a man as you describe Lambert? He might have met him in a train, or on a steamboat, or a race-course, but it is impossible he could have *known* much of him."

"He did, however, I am certain," said Glynn, slowly and thoughtfully; "and you would agree with me had you seen them together. There was deadly enmity as well as acquaintanceship between them."

"Well, perhaps so," she returned. "Will you have a cup of coffee, Hugh? It will rouse you, you look sleepy and *distrait*."

"Thank you; a cup of *your* coffee will do me good."

Lady Gethin rang and ordered some to be brought, talking cheerfully on a variety of topics. But Glynn's attention wandered while he sipped the refreshing beverage, and as he put down his cup Lady Gethin exclaimed, "I don't think you have heard a word I have been saying!"

"Yes," he exclaimed, starting from his thoughts, "I have heard, but, I confess, not taken in the

sense of what you have been saying. I am, perhaps foolishly, excited by an incident which occurred to-day, and as you are tolerably acquainted with all my weakness you may as well hear this instance too. I was, as I told you, at Clapham to-day; after the christening of my little godson we returned to luncheon at Heathcote's—at my cousin's house, and when the other guests had left he asked me to smoke a cigar with him in the garden. As we talked and walked up and down beside a railing and hedge of holly, which separates Heathcote's garden from the next, I heard some one speaking at the other side, and as I listened I could have sworn that the voice was Elsie Lambert's. It was soft and low, yet wonderfully distinct; then a highly-pitched woman's voice declared in French that she feared some task would be difficult. Again the voice that made my heart stand still said, 'Difficult, but not insurmountable; kindness and steadiness will overcome so much; I would trust them too——' Then I ceased to catch the words, though the well-known tones came to me again, as the speakers evidently turned away. Great heavens! I hear it still, it was Elsie's voice! I lost my head for a moment; I rushed to the railing, and thrusting my arms between them, tried to tear away some of the branches to look through. My cousin thought I had lost my senses, and begged for an explanation. I told him I felt certain that a lady I had been seeking in every direction was at the other side of the hedge. He said the adjoining grounds belonged to a ladies' school, and I asked him to accompany me to the house, and back me up in my inquiries, as he was known to the owner and the teachers. At last he consented. The parleying occupied some time, then we had to walk round by a road which ran the length of the two gardens, to turn again on reaching the common, and go a little way back to the gates of Montpellier House; altogether twenty minutes must have elapsed from the time I first heard the voice before I rang the bell at Mrs. Storrer's. As we approached a cab was driving away. On asking for the head of the establishment, we were informed that no one was at home but the head governess and the French teacher. Heathcote sent up his card, and begged to be allowed to speak to one or both of the ladies."

"Well," ejaculated Lady Gethin, "what did you find?"

"After a little delay we were ushered up stairs and were received by a lady, who recognized Heathcote. He left me to explain myself, which I did as well as I could, though it was not easy."

"'You heard a voice you recognized speaking in our grounds,' repeated the lady; 'it must have been either Mademoiselle Laroche, or Mademoiselle Moppert. They were in the grounds just now.'

"'May I see these ladies?'

"'Mademoiselle Moppert,—yes; but Mademoiselle Laroche has just driven away. Mademoiselle Moppert has come to replace her as French governess.' I confess I lost hope as she spoke, still I begged for an interview with the incoming teacher, and a servant was sent to request her presence. A glance at her was enough. She was a short, stout, elderly young lady, with piercing black eyes and distinct moustaches. I had to muster my best French and apologize elaborately. Then I begged for some information touching Mademoiselle Laroche. Was she French? 'Yes, undoubtedly,—from Picardy.' 'Was she tall, or short? slight, or stout?' 'She was,' the French governess said, 'about her height, and a little, yes, a very little thinner.' The Englishwoman added that she did not look in good health. 'Did she sing?' I asked. No, she had never sang or played while in Mrs. Storrer's establishment. How long had she been there? About seven months. She had been engaged in May last, but did not come till the middle of June. Where had she gone? It was understood she had made an engagement to go to India, but she was extremely reserved. No one knew much about her except Mrs. Storrer, who was spending the holidays with a friend at Cheltenham. This was all I could extract. Heathcote was desperately put out by my eccentric proceedings. I was obliged to return with him and to give some explanation of my conduct. Then I went to the cab-stand, and found out the number of the cab; and to the police-station, and commissioned a constable to ascertain where the cab had taken Mademoiselle Laroche."

"I think your time and trouble have been thrown away," said Lady Gethin. "A fancied resemblance to Miss Lambert's voice was but shallow ground to build any hopes upon."

"It was not fancied," said Glynn, leaning back and looking straight before him with fixed, dreamy eyes. "The tones struck my ear, my heart, with instantaneous recognition. I cannot believe that any two people could speak so much alike. I must say the description doesn't tally, nor is it possible to account for her being in a ladies' school in England; still, that voice!"

"My dear Hugh, your imagination is so saturated with the tragic ideas you associate with that unhappy girl's flight—I mean her disappearance," for Glynn turned sharply towards her, "that you can hardly trust your own impressions. I wish you would put the affair out of your head. You were quite right to help the poor father as much as you could; but now—let this chapter of your life be closed, and begin afresh."

"Excellent advice, but useless to me. I can *not* forget!"

"Is it possible that on so short an acquaintance you were so severely hit?"

"Ay, in the first twenty-four hours of our acquaintance she touched my heart as no other woman ever did, and every subsequent interview added to her power. There was a sweet gravity about her which would be as charming in her white-haired age as in her fair youth! And yet so miserably faithless is this human nature of ours, there are moments when doubt plunges its jagged darts into me;—and for a hideous moment I think it possible she may have gone willingly with some unknown lover, but at any suggestion of the kind from another the doubt vanishes. It only gathers at rare intervals when I brood alone and grow morbid. In my saner moments I never doubt her; but the horror of the thing!—nothing diminishes that!"

He started up and began to pace the room. The anguish of his voice touched Lady Gethin, in spite of her conviction that he was weakly credulous.

"It is a terrible business altogether. What do you think of doing now?"

"I shall go down by an early train to Cheltenham to-morrow and see this Mrs. Storrer. My future movements will depend on what I gather from her."

"Shall you write to the father?"

"Not unless I have something definite to report. It would be cruel to rouse him out of his apathy by a gleam of false hope."

"You are a most unlucky fellow, Hugh; your life is quite spoilt by this entanglement."

"It is my fate," said Glynn. He rested his elbow on the mantelpiece and his head on his hand.

"You will return to-morrow night, I suppose?" said Lady Gethin.

"Most probably. I don't fancy I shall get any intelligence that will send me further afield."

"You must come and tell me your news as soon as possible."

"Of course I shall, gladly."

"Then dine with me the day after to-morrow. I shall not ask any one to break our solitude *à deux*."

"Thank you. It is an infinite comfort to talk to you, though I know very well you are sceptical on some points where I cling to belief."

After some more conversation they parted, and Glynn, disturbed, but scarcely hopeful, went home to snatch what repose he could before his early start next day.

While Glynn was making his way to Mrs. Storrer's temporary abode through muddy streets and a chilling shower of sleet, Deering sat over a glowing fire in the particular apartment occupied by him in his town house. He was in London for a few days on his way to visit a sporting friend in Leicestershire, and was utilizing the time by an interview with his solicitor, who had already risen to take leave, when Deering's valet entered and handed a card to his master, who, glancing at it with a frown, said:

"Ask him to sit down; I will see him presently," and he continued the conversation with his legal adviser, though his eyes wandered more than once to the card which lay beside him.

As soon as he was alone, Deering rang and desired that the gentleman who was waiting should be shown up. In another moment the door closed on Vincent, who was magnificent in a grand overcoat, with a sable collar and cuffs, and a pair of sealskin gloves. His finery, however, was no stay to his self-esteem, for his light-colored, hatchety face had an uneasy, crestfallen expression.

"Well," said Deering, without further salutation, "have you any news? There—sit down."

"Yes, I have news; not very satisfactory news," said Vincent in his nasal, drawling tones. "He's off!"

"Lambert! And to America?" cried Deering.

The other nodded. "I tracked him myself, saw him on board the New York steamer, and saw her steam away down the Mersey."

"Then he sailed from Liverpool? What was the meaning of that?"

"Can't tell. I think you are wrong in your conjectures. I don't think he knows any more about his daughter than we do."

"His start for America proves nothing."

"Perhaps not; but for over seven months he has been watched night and day, as you know, and not a trace of any communication with any one except business men and that woman who brought up the girl has been found."

"We don't know what his communication with her may have masked?"

"Well, not more than three letters have passed between them in all this time; nor has he remitted money in any direction, or made any expeditions beyond his daily round. He has been pretty steady in his attendance at the Bourse, and done well in a quiet way, but his life has been visible and regular. He has bothered M. Claude periodically, and he looks a good deal changed; but, no! if he knew his daughter's whereabouts he never could keep from giving some sign. He is a fiery, impulsive, open-mouthed fellow, who would be too proud of doing you to keep silent about it. If he were not within reach of the policeman he'd give *me* my quietus."

"No doubt," said Deering, with calm, complete acquiescence. "What is the name of the woman in Wales?"

"Mrs. Kellett."

"I thought we might have got something out of her."

"Well, I did not," returned Vincent. "Lambert was so ready to apply to her. Moreover, the man that went down to the place found she had been ill in bed at the very time Miss Lambert disappeared."

There was a pause. "It is the strangest case, I should think, that French detective ever came across," resumed Deering. "I suppose he never was baffled before. Who has any interest in taking her away? Have you any theory?"

"Not much of one. I am sometimes inclined to think she went off with Glynn. He was, I suspect, far gone about her."

"No," said Deering, thoughtfully. "No; he was with me when Lambert broke in like a madman, and no one could have aped the horror and astonishment *he* betrayed. No, he doesn't know anything,—or didn't a few weeks ago; but I wish to heaven he hadn't got over that fever. Should we ever find the girl we shall have to reckon with him, and he is a formidable antagonist."

"He can be dealt with, I suppose."

Deering did not heed him; he moved uneasily in his chair. His brow contracted with a look of fierce resolution. "Have you telegraphed to the New York police?"

"I waited to see you first."

"You had better do so. They have a description of Lambert, I suppose?"

"I rather think not."

"Send it then."

"What, by wire?"

"Yes;—but wait,—do it through the French detective. I don't want to appear in the matter. They were rather taken with the notion that Lambert himself had made away with his daughter?"

"At first, yes; but the last time I saw M. Claude he seemed to have quite given up the idea."

"You never know what he thinks. Now, what has your journey cost you?"

"I don't care to take any money at present; I will write when——"

"No," interrupted Deering, imperiously, "no letters—I will neither write nor receive them—a telegram, if absolutely necessary. If you have anything to tell, come and tell it, you can always find my address at the Club, and never give up the search. Here are twenty sovereigns,—I have no more gold about me, and I'll not give you notes,—take them, I insist. It suits me better to pay when I have the opportunity. Remember—the sum originally promised if you can find her dead, double if you find her alive. Now you may go—stop—wait till the servant comes." Vincent paused, and as the door opened, Deering said distinctly in courteous tones, "I am very much obliged to you for taking the trouble to call—I am interested in your search—and wish you all success. Good-morning."

Lady Gethin was restless and expectant until the hour arrived at which Glynn was due. She was profoundly interested in the mysterious disappearance of the girl who had made so deep an impression on her favorite nephew. She would like her to be discovered safe and well; but above all things, married to some worthy person, and so secure from doing or receiving harm. Then she should like to see her, perhaps assist at her reconciliation with her father. Anyhow it was a great mercy that she was well out of Hugh's way, for really the folly and weakness of men were such, etc., etc.

Glynn was a few minutes late, but was cordially welcomed.

"I see you have found nothing," exclaimed Lady Gethin, as soon as they were alone.

"It was a wild-goose chase," he replied with a weary look.

"You must tell me all about it after dinner. You seem in want of a glass of wine,—you shall have some of my best Burgundy, it is a splendid tonic."

The friendly hostess was greatly distressed at her guest's want of appetite; she pressed, him to eat, and prescribed various nostrums, which he rejected. As soon as the servants had left the room he brightened a little, and drawing his chair nearer hers, began his story in compliance with her reiterated entreaty, "Come, tell me everything."

He had, he said, found the head of the Clapham establishment easy enough; she was a composed, ceremonious, typical school-mistress; civil, but guarded. She listened attentively to his story, and declared her willingness to tell all she knew about the young French lady who had just quitted her service. She had been recommended by some English friends at Dinan; and her chief attraction was the fact of her being a Protestant. Hitherto Mrs. Storrer feared the introduction of a foreigner into her select and sacred household, but had no reason to regret the entrance of Mademoiselle Laroche within its precincts. It was early in May last that negotiations between herself and the French teacher began; but she did not enter upon her duties till the 15th of June.

"That," said Glynn, interrupting himself, "was the day of the ball,—the day before her disappearance."

Mrs. Storrer described Mademoiselle Laroche as about middle height, inclined to be stout, with hair and eyes between dark and fair; not particularly graceful; and as to age,—well, it was hard to say—she might be twenty-one,—she might be twenty-five,—appearances are deceptive. As to her voice—yes, it was pleasant, unusually soft for a French woman; but nothing remarkable! If he wished for Mademoiselle Laroche's address, Mrs. Storrer would be happy to furnish it, though

that would not be of much avail, as the family to whom she had gone were to start to-morrow or next day for India. She had not her address-book with her, but would send a note to the governess to forward it to Mr. Glynn.

"Finally, I showed her Miss Lambert's photograph, which I always carry about with me. She looked at it with a slow smile, and then turning it said: 'No, this is not Mademoiselle Laroche, this is a charming young lady.' Her quiet unconsciousness of any resemblance convinced me even more than her words that she could not know Elsie."

"Indeed," added Glynn, "a quiet young ladies' boarding-school seems the very last place where one could expect to find a girl so strangely and tragically lost. Yet even now, as I recall the voice I heard the day before yesterday, I cannot believe that I was mistaken! Is it not possible that a visitor might have entered and walked round the garden with the other two? unknown to the head governess."

"Of course it is possible, but very improbable. If Miss Lambert was carried away against her own will (which I do not believe), her captors would not let her go visiting; and if she aided in concealing herself, why, she would not seek acquaintances."

"True, and unanswerable. Still, when I think of the voice I heard little more than forty-eight hours ago, I cannot resist the conviction that if I could have burst through that accursed hedge I should have clasped Elsie—the real Elsie—in my arms."

"Good heavens, Hugh! *would* you have clasped her in your arms?"

"I would! if she had not repelled me! I tell you I would give life itself,—to find—the Elsie Lambert I believed in."

"Yes, but can you hope to do so? Must you not admit that the balance of evidence is *against* such a find?" cried Lady Gethin, distressed, yet deeply interested.

"There are beliefs and instincts," returned Glynn, "the deepest—the strangest, respecting which one cannot reason! Shall we ever understand the 'wherefore' that is beyond and above our material sense?"

"Never," said Lady Gethin, sharply. "There is a something we cannot define or fathom that stirs us as though a second self was being evolved from the coarser everyday serviceable ego; but it will always escape our ken! Nor will it do to trust these bewildering, shadowy promptings; we must act in the living present by the light of that most uncommon faculty, common sense. These dreamy tendencies are not like you! This unlucky business has upset your mental balance, Hugh. You have done your best to find this poor girl; she has no claim whatever upon you. You must try to put her out of your head, and take up your life again."

"I suppose I must," he returned thoughtfully; "but it will be hard. Curiously enough I found a letter awaiting me when I returned, from Lambert, dated Liverpool, informing me he was to sail next day for New York, where he had some faint hope of finding a clue to his daughter. He must have passed through London. I am surprised he did not call on me. I did not think he would have avoided me."

"It looks odd," said Lady Gethin. "By the way, let me see the daughter's photograph; I did not know you carried it about, or I should have asked for it before."

Glynn took out the little case in which the picture was carefully enclosed, and gave it to her. Lady Gethin looked long and thoughtfully at it.

"A sweet face," she said, "somewhat sad; but a fine expression; it seems somehow familiar to me. Photographs are seldom true representations, and she may be very unlike the idea this suggests; but I wish I could remember who it is she reminds of."

"It has not been fortunate for Elsie that her face suggests memories," said Glynn. "I have a strong conviction that if she had not attracted Deering's attention at those Auteuil races she would be still safe under her father's care."

"You mean to say you think that a man of Deering's position, character, standing, would give himself up to such scoundrelism. Hugh! it is too absurd!"

"I know it is; I always dismiss the thought, and then it gathers again like a mist over the morass of doubt in which I am plunged. However, if he is responsible for her disappearance he certainly does not know where she is now; but he is seeking for her. Claude, the French detective, let out as much the last time I saw him."

"Depend upon it the father knows she is in America."

"You think so? *I* doubt it."

"I wonder he is not more confidential with you. Does he know you were in love with her?"

"No, certainly not!"

"The whole affair is incomprehensible!—let me look at that photograph again! Who is it she reminds me of?"

Finding no reply in the stores of her memory, Lady Gethin shut up the case and restored it to Glynn, and to change the subject began to urge him to resume his former social habits and mix with his kind. "It will not render your chances of finding your lost love any the worse, perhaps better; for if you ever get a clue to her, I suspect it will be by accident. No one was ever really lost in this small world of ours unless, indeed, death folds its pall over the missing one."

"Yes, I shall probably find her; but how? and where?" said Glynn, with a sound of pain in his voice. "At any rate I shall follow your advice! I will try to shake off this despairing apathy; and, though I cannot turn phrases prettily, believe me I am warmly grateful for your sympathy, your forbearance; indeed, I do not know what I should do without it."

CHAPTER VIII.
DAWNING LIGHT.

Glynn was true to his promise. He forced himself back to something of his old routine. He took a deeper interest in business than before, and found something of relief in the mental effort it obliged him to make.

Men said Glynn was greatly changed since that bad fever he had had. Women thought him more interesting. The truth was hardly suspected. It suited the authorities of *la sûreté* that the *affaire Rue de L'Evêque* should not get into the public prints. The English newspapers had therefore never got hold of the story.

One of the chief interests in this new phase of Glynn's existence was to watch Deering, whom he frequently met.

That gentleman affected some intimacy with Glynn, and made many visits to the office of Messrs. Ottley, Hassali and Ince, *apropos* of his railway scheme.

Glynn did not reject his advances, though never lapsing into intimacy. Deering often spoke of Lambert, and volunteered the information that the New York police had their eye upon him, that he had arrived all right, landed, and gone away South almost immediately.

Gradually it dawned upon Glynn that Deering was watching *him*, that he suspected him of knowing more of Elsie's disappearance than any one else. He was careful not to let Deering see that he perceived this, and so, under the fair seeming of friendly acquaintanceship, the two men kept watch over each other with deadly pertinacity and keenness, Glynn keeping profoundest silence as to his conviction that he had heard Elsie's voice, a conviction that tormented him in all his silent, lonely hours. Often he accused himself of stupidity for too readily believing the stately Mrs. Storrer. But her quiet disavowal of all likeness in the photograph to her French teacher, coupled with Lambert's letter stating that he had some faint hope of finding a clue to his daughter in America, put him off the idea of hunting Mademoiselle Laroche further. Sometimes he felt that he would give all he possessed to shake himself clear of the haunting horror which poisoned his life. Then the memory of Elsie's sweet, grave, holy eyes would rise before him, and he felt that he could endure all things, hope all things, could he but find her, and restore her to what she was. On the whole, evil anticipations predominated. He had been greatly disappointed by Lambert's avoidance of him. He could not bear to think that the unhappy, bereaved father had withdrawn his confidence.

Thus battling with the fiends of doubt and fear that lacerated his heart, Glynn dragged himself on from day to day.

In the last week of February Deering's land-agent came to town, bringing with him maps, plans, and calculations. To Glynn's great surprise he proved to be a certain Dick Weldon, formerly one of his school-fellows. This recognition led to some intercourse. Glynn, without deliberate questioning, gathered a good deal of information, which threw a new light on Deering's character in some directions. On the subject of the quest which engrossed them both Glynn maintained a profound silence.

His old acquaintance dined with him, and they talked over bygone days and boyish escapades with zest, at least on Weldon's side. It was amazing to Glynn how fresh and full the details of past adventures—even small minutiæ—dwelt in his old acquaintance's mind, untroubled as it was by a crowd of varied experiences. He had, it seemed, led a quiet, busy life, humbly useful, but unexciting.

One cold, dry, dark evening Glynn had accepted an invitation to dine with Weldon at the hotel in Holborn where he usually stayed on his short visits to town.

Dinner was over, and both men were enjoying a cigar. The host had put one or two queries, evidently prompted by the curiosity which the contrast between Glynn's prosperity and his gloomy depression evoked, but he could draw forth no responsive confidence, and Weldon, falling back on his own interests, described his home, his wife, and children, pressing Glynn warmly to pay them a visit, when, to the great surprise of both, Deering was ushered in. He apologized shortly for his intrusion, and explained that he had just had private intelligence that the member for a borough town near Denham was dangerously ill, that even were he to recover it would be long before he could enter into public life again, and that he (Deering) wished to win the probably vacant seat. He therefore wished Weldon, who knew the local population, and was well able to feel its pulse, to leave town next morning, and put matters in train for an immediate canvass, as the retirement of the sitting member would most probably be announced in a day or two.

As soon as he could withdraw without too rude a display of indifference, Glynn rose to say good-night; when Deering, somewhat to his annoyance, proposed to go with him.

"I have no more to say now, Weldon. As soon as the death or retirement is declared, I will go down to Denham, and we will not let the grass grow under our feet!"

On reaching the entrance of the hotel, they stopped, intending to call a cab, and while waiting Glynn's attention was attracted by two cloaked and veiled women, who were standing close together just within the doorway. One was tall and stout, the other barely of middle size, her shoulders, even through the rain-cloak wrapped round her, showed unmistakable grace,—unmistakable and familiar; a small hat was entirely enveloped in a thick veil, which was tied over her face, the ends being brought loosely round the throat to the front. Glynn's eyes were riveted on this figure, while he seemed to be peering into the darkness, and felt nervously anxious not to direct Deering's notice to the object which attracted him.

"If he could only hear her speak!" He listened intently.

"It is useless, we must try an omnibus, it is really safer," he overheard the taller lady say. The other murmured something, and turning her head, displayed, in spite of her muffling, a morsel of white neck, and a glimpse of golden-brown hair. Glynn's heart beat. At all risks he must keep that girl in view; any mistake was better than to lose the faintest chance. But Deering must not know his suspicions. Surely the faint suggestions of a likeness would strike him also? But Deering made no remark, nor did he seem to see.

At last the taller of the two women said, "Come," and went forth into the street. At that moment an Islington omnibus drove up. She stepped forward under the nearest lamp, and tried to stop it by waving her umbrella. The vehicle was full, and the two cloaked figures walked slowly away towards Oxford Street.

"Excuse me," said Glynn, abruptly, "I am anxious to get home; I will walk on and take my chance of a cab."

"Very well," returned Deering, "I'll come with you."

Glynn was dismayed. Did Deering suspect, as he did, that this cloaked and veiled figure might be Elsie Lambert? If so, what could he do to save her from his recognition?

His heart thrilled with pain and delight at the bare idea of standing once more face to face with his lost love. What secrets would that meeting unveil? Meanwhile he never lost sight of the figures going on before them, and Deering spoke at intervals.

"There's an empty hansom at last," he cried.

"I am going on a little further," said Glynn. "But don't let me interfere with you."

"Oh! I don't mind walking with you; I have no engagement I care to keep," he replied.

"Why does he persist?" thought Glynn. "I am going to look in on an artist friend near Tottenham Court Road," he said aloud.

"Oh! very well; queer places these fellows put up in. By the way, I have had another report of our mutual acquaintance, Lambert. He is at St. Louis, and has changed his name for the third or fourth time."

"Indeed! then you must have had a telegram?"

"Yes, that is, our friends, Claude and Co., have communicated theirs to me. If Lambert begins to try concealment we'll find out something."

"I trust we shall," said Glynn mechanically, his eyes greedily following the two figures, lamp after lamp shedding its light upon them as they passed.

"Will he never go?" he thought, quivering with excitement.

It was an extraordinary situation to be thus dogging the footsteps of the quarry you wished to preserve from your fellow-hunter, and yet to be unavoidably leading that hunter on her track.

"I fancy you don't want me," said Deering at last. "If so——"

"Why should you think I do not?" interrupted Glynn, nervously afraid to betray his burning anxiety to be rid of him.

"I can't exactly tell why," said Deering, laughing, "but I am sure I am right."

"Well, do whichever you like," said Glynn with well-assumed indifference,—"come on with me to Tottenham Court Road, where you will be sure to find plenty of cabs, or pick up the first empty one we fall in with, and leave me to my fate."

Glynn was almost beside himself with hope, dread, and nervous tension.

Another Islington omnibus drove past and stopped. The two ladies darted to it, exchanged a hasty hand pressure, and then the shorter of the two mounted swiftly, and vanished into the interior.

"Good-night!" cried Glynn, abruptly; "the humble 'bus will suit me admirably."

Before his astonished companion could reply he was beside the vehicle, which was still standing, as a stout and irritable elderly gentleman was painfully disentangling himself from among the tightly-packed passengers.

"If you had only let me out first," he exclaimed angrily as he alighted.

"Trouble you for threepence," interrupted the conductor.

"Threepence! why, I only got in at Leather Lane."

"All right!—Islington!"

Another instant and Glynn occupied the stout man's place—nearer the door, but on the opposite side to the lady he was following—and they were rolling rapidly westward.

At first he would not let himself seem to see her, and by the light of the omnibus lamp he could hardly make out her features, so thick was the lace which concealed them. Suddenly he saw her start and draw her cloak closer together with a nervous movement. Had she recognized him?

Gradually, his eyes growing familiar with the light and the texture of the veil, the conviction grew upon him that he was not mistaken, that it *was* indeed Elsie Lambert. It was by a powerful exertion of will that he controlled the burning impulse to address her, to take the place beside her vacated by an old lady. She could not leave the conveyance without passing him; he would be quiet and careful. But if her father was seeking her in America, how came she here, alone, and evidently disguised? What frightful confession of weakness, betrayal, and duplicity awaited him! for this night he would know everything. He had her in his grasp, and she should not escape. The minutes were like drops of lead, and still the commonplace everyday 'bus rolled on, its occupants little dreaming what elements of tragedy were enclosed within it.

At last he observed Elsie—yes, it *was* Elsie—murmur something to her next neighbor, who immediately called out—

"Conductor, Chapel Street for this lady."

The omnibus stopped. Glynn kept quietly in his place, but sprang out the moment she had passed him. The omnibus drove rapidly away.

The slight dark figure was but a few paces before him in a quiet street leading from the omnibus line. The longed-for, dreaded moment had come. He walked rapidly past her, turned round suddenly, and confronting her, exclaimed:

"Miss Lambert—Elsie! you cannot wish to avoid me?"

She stopped, and put out both her hands with a repellent gesture of helpless terror that touched Glynn's heart with immense pity.

"Is it possible you fear me?" he said, catching both her hands in his.

She was silent, motionless; but as he almost unconsciously drew her nearer to him, he felt that she was trembling so violently that she could scarcely stand.

"Do not fear, I will not betray you to any one. I will help you if I can. Will you not speak to me? Is it the Elsie I used to know?"

With a long, quivering sigh she whispered, "It is."

"Let me look at your face once more," said Glynn in a low intense tone. "Don't you know you may trust me?"

"It is not for myself I fear," she said in the same hushed, frightened voice, as she yielded to the movement by which he drew her under a lamp; and loosening her veil, she lifted it, raising her eyes with their well-remembered expression of thoughtful candor to his. How lovely they were! With what rapture Glynn read in them the confirmation of her assurance that she was the same Elsie he had loved and lost. But she was changed; the sweet eyes were unutterably sad, and the delicate cheek was less rounded. The soft lips were pale, and quivered nervously, and the hand he still held was thinner. She seemed unable to suppress the excessive trembling that had seized her. Glynn's whole soul went out to her in love and trust; he could hardly resist the impulse to clasp her to his heart, to shelter her against all ill in his bosom. But might she not be the wife of another man? Anything might have happened during the terrible blank; and, above all, he must win her confidence.

"Ah, yes, you are indeed the same. Why—why have you given us all this sorrow, this fearful anxiety? Think of what your poor father has suffered! Do you know that he has gone to America to search for you?"

"My father!" she repeated, "my poor dear father!" Then she paused, as if resisting the inclination to speak.

"I must not keep you here in the cold, dark street. I cannot let you go alone. May I not come with you?"

"Oh, no, no, no," she repeated; "you must let me go. I cannot, dare not let you come with me. I must not tell you anything."

"Now that I have found you, do you think I will lose sight of you again?"

"You will, I am sure, do what is best for me, and kindest," said Elsie, trying to be calm, and wrapping the veil round her face again. "Let us move on; we shall attract attention."

She did not resist when he drew her arm through his own, and they slowly paced up the street in which he had overtaken her.

"Do you think me capable of betraying you?" asked Glynn.

"No," after a pause, as if to plan her speech; "but I have more than myself to think of. You must not ask me any questions."

"Can you say nothing? Is there no way in which I can help you?"

"I fear not—I do not know—I—" she stopped and drew a long, sobbing breath—"I dare not speak. Any word might betray more than I ought."

"For your father's sake!—think of all he must endure. Have you any duty to come before what you owe him?"

He waited for her reply as for a sentence of life or death.

"Think of him! do I *not* think of him? My love and duty are his only. But"—she tried to withdraw her arm—"you must let me go; I dare not stay."

"I cannot let you go unless you promise to meet me again, or tell me where I may see you. No, I will not release your arm. Elsie—Miss Lambert, I have been seeking you for seven months; my brain has reeled at the horror of its own picture of your fate; I cannot let you go now. Why do you distrust me? Let me take you home. How could I leave you here in the dark alone?"

"Oh, do not torment me!" she exclaimed, and her voice expressed such pain that Glynn almost hesitated to persevere in his efforts to detain her. "In truth I long to take you with me; I am sure you are kind and true, and I fear to be alone; but I will brave anything, endure anything rather than say whence I came and whither I go. Do not be angry with me."

She burst into an agony of tears, leaning against him as if from sheer inability to stand alone.

"Good God! Elsie, what *can* I do to comfort and help you? I implore you to trust me. If I let you go now without retaining some clue by which I can find you, I can never forgive myself."

"I long to tell you much, all, but I must not. Yet I might get leave; I might write. Give me your address; I *may* write to you."

"Will you promise this, solemnly, faithfully?"

"If I do, will you let me go? I am late already. He will be so anxious."

"*He!* who?" a throb of fierce jealousy vibrated through Glynn's heart. "If you promise to see me once more, when and where you will, I will trust you and let you go. You see, I have more faith in you than you have in me."

"No; *you* are free, I am not. I have faith in you, but—Well, promise for promise. I will promise to write to you before Friday night, if you will promise not to make any attempt to discover me until after I have written."

"Good; then promise for promise."

"I promise to write to you, and—and if possible to see you."

"There must be nothing about possibility," said Glynn, sternly. "Give me an unconditional promise, or I shall not leave you!"

She hesitated, and then said solemnly, "I promise."

"And I trust your promise," returned Glynn. "On my part I promise not to make any attempt to track you until I have received your letter, or rather until I have seen you."

There was a moment's silence, then Elsie, who seemed to recover herself a little, said softly, "Then, good-night!"

"I cannot part with you yet," cried Glynn, passionately; "I cannot bear to let you go alone. Tell me, did you recognize me in the omnibus?"

"Not all at once; a little while after I had got in. At first, for some time, I thought you did not know me—I hoped you did not."

"I knew you at the door of the hotel, and followed you."

She started. "I *must* go now, I have stayed too long. Call a cab for me, and tell the driver to go to the Great Northern Station. I will direct him after."

"I cannot bear to let you go alone."

"You must!" impressively. "I am braver than I used to be."

"At least hold my arm till we find a cab," said Glynn, pressing hers to his side, as they turned back to the thoroughfare from which the street led. Elsie submitted to his guidance silently. Glynn's heart beat strongly with mixed emotions. The rapture of meeting her was great—the fear of losing her still greater. His promise forbade his following her, and he seemed as far from solving the mystery of her disappearance as ever. She was moved at the mention of her father, yet not in the way he expected; she had evidently suffered. Was he culpably weak in letting her go? But he had no choice. He could not resist her tears, her distress.

Soon, too soon, they found a cab. Glynn scrutinized the driver; he did not look like a ruffian. With an effort he subdued his reluctance to part with her, and assisted her into the conveyance, remembering with a pang how he had handed her into the carriage after the ball and sent her forth to—he could not tell what wretchedness and wrong.

"You will be true to your word," he said, pressing her hand as he gave her his card.

"I will," she whispered. "Perhaps it may prove fortunate that I have met you."

"God grant it," he returned; then drawing back, said aloud, for the benefit of the driver, "You will let me know if you arrive all right;" and waited till the man had ascended the box, when he asked and obtained his ticket. That at least was something to have and to hold. Elsie drew up the

window and leaned back well out of sight. The cab rolled away into the darkness, and Glynn was left standing alone. Collecting himself, he walked briskly away in a southwesterly direction. Lady Gethin was right, a mere accident brought him the fulfilment of his passionate desire—that which he had sought for with such agonizing eagerness. How strange that Deering should have been with him when he caught sight of something familiar in the neck and shoulders of the cloaked figure! He would not soon forget the torment of that walk along the dusky street, the dread of drawing Deering's attention to the object of his own intense observation, the difficulty of getting rid of him. Surely the stars in their courses fought for him (Glynn). Good must come out of so strange a turn of fortune's wheel. At least he had found Elsie safe—safe apparently from any pressing danger, and though looking ill and worn, comparatively well. He had therefore room for hope.

But she was evidently under the influence of some strong will, the pressure of some great necessity. Would she be true to her promise? Yes, a thousand times yes! With the sight of her fair, sad face, the sound of the tremulous voice, all his faith in her returned. It was marvellous the sort of tender reverence she inspired in him—this inexperienced creature, who was almost young enough to be his daughter, and utterly unlearned in the world's lore which was so familiar to himself! She was not even a highly-accomplished, deeply-read young lady. There was an old-fashioned charm of sincerity and earnestness about her infinitely attractive. But she must have undergone some severe shock, or trial. Her nerves seemed shattered. When should he know all? Would any blame attach to her? And Glynn answered his own question with a resolute "No." Then giving himself up to the first real intense passion he had ever felt, he resolved to win her, to wed her, to know even a few months' entire happiness—if she would share that happiness—unless the secret to be revealed hid some insurmountable barrier.

So far sure of his own consent, Glynn felt more composed; but the hours dragged fearfully.

The next day he had a visit in his private room from Deering, who was at the office on business, and said he was going to Denham for a few days. He then added that Vincent had presumed to call on him, to his great surprise, his excuse being, that he had heard from St. Louis that Lambert was there under another name, and had a wife and daughter with him; that the police were following him close, but could find no pretext at present for arresting him.

Glynn said very little in reply. He watched Deering keenly as he spoke, and came to the conclusion that he had no suspicion that Elsie was so near.

"I don't suppose we shall ever get to the bottom of the affair 'Rue de L'Evêque,' as the French detectives call it, till the law has got its grip on that scoundrel Lambert."

"I think he is more an adventurer than a scoundrel," said Glynn coldly; "and I confess I see no reason for supposing he is in the secret of his daughter's disappearance; but perhaps you know more than I do."

Deering looked at him with a quick, keen glance—a glance of dislike and distrust. "On the contrary, *you* were the intimate friend, the favored guest of Lambert, and of his charming daughter, of whom I suspect he made a profitable investment."

"It is blasphemy to say so," exclaimed Glynn indignantly. "Lambert may have a queer history, but no irreproachable member of the best society could be a better guardian of his daughter than he was! Do not let him hear you utter such an insinuation, should you ever meet again, or you might not like his reply!"

Deering elevated his eyebrows contemptuously. "You are remarkably loyal," he said. "Well, good-morning; I shall probably see you next week."

Thursday passed and no letter; well, there were twenty-four hours yet to spare. Glynn dined that day with Lady Gethin, and as usual outstayed the other guests.

"I haven't seen you for an age, Hugh," she said, settling herself in her favorite chair. "You are looking better, as if some life was waking up within you; but you are very restless and *distrait*; at dinner you did not seem able to attend to any one or anything for more than five minutes. Have you found any trace of the lost one?"

"I am too uncertain to talk about it—wait for a few days."

"Ah! then you have," cried her ladyship triumphantly. "I protest I would give my Louis Quatorze watch, diamonds and all, to know the truth of that extraordinary story, and to see the girl who has fascinated you—for she has—you know she has!"

"I will confess nothing, and discuss nothing with you, Lady Gethin," he returned laughing, and pulling his long dark moustaches. "I know the power of *your* fascination sufficiently to be aware that if I once began there is not a corner of my mind I would not turn inside-out for your inspection."

"Ah! that is all very fine," exclaimed Lady Gethin in high glee; "but you will not say a word more than you choose. If you ever find this young lady, you really must manage to let me see her."

"Would you come and see her?" asked Glynn, as delightful intoxicating possibilities floated before his eyes.

"Find me a decent excuse, and I'll come fast enough! Hugh, I suspect you know where she is?"

"I do not, indeed—I wish I did."

"Well, for Heaven's sake, do nothing foolish when she does appear, for you will find her, if she is

above ground."

Friday, and no letter. Glynn kept indoors nearly the whole day, sent an excuse to the house where he was engaged to dine, and sat, trying to read, and watching for the last delivery. It came, but brought him no letter from Elsie.

Then he called himself a drivelling fool, a weak-minded idiot. Why had he allowed the tears and terror of that unhappy girl to delude him? He ought to have kept her in his grasp once he had found her. But he had been so sure of her keeping faith. Now his very faith was shaken. What might not be revealed if Elsie had deceived him?

He could not sleep. He spent the night in planning schemes of detection. He found in the depths of his present depression the measure of the height of hope to which he had risen yesterday.

Next morning he rose, fevered by want of sleep, and eager to begin his search. He was dressed before the eight o'clock post came in, and was already writing, when several letters were brought to him, one directed in a stiff, careful, unknown hand, bearing the postmark of "Clapham." He tore it open and read—"Come on Saturday at two. 30, Garston Terrace, Towers Road, Islington." These lines were unsigned, and might be meant for any one, as there was no address, yet Glynn never doubted that the lines were meant for him, and were written by Elsie Lambert. At two o'clock! How near and yet how far! little over six hours. How should he get through them? He had work at his office, and must arrange for a free afternoon; that was not difficult; he had not been regularly in harness since his severe illness. Then he must supply himself with money. It was impossible to say what steps might be necessary. He was glad Deering had gone out of town. There seemed a fatality about his connection with Lambert. He always came to the front when there was any stir in the Lambert affair.

At last it was time to go citywards. First, however, he drove to Deering's house and ascertained that he had gone out of town. The morning hours fled away swifter than he had hoped, though he had a hard struggle to attend to the business before him. But he had acquired a good deal of self-mastery in the course of his varied experience, and few of those with whom he came in contact would have guessed that his heart was perpetually repeating the words, "What disclosures await me?"

After a vain attempt to eat, he took the train to King's Cross, and then hailed a cab, desiring the driver to put him down in Towers Road. This proved a long, dusty thoroughfare. Nor did he find Garston Terrace till after many inquiries and walking some distance. It was a little crooked lane, where some exceedingly new houses looked over a field and a few trees. The door was opened by a fresh-colored, countrified-looking old woman, in a beautifully white cap. Glynn was utterly at a loss, he did not know for whom he should inquire. He feared to mention a young lady; he thought of asking if there were rooms to let in the house—of a dozen things for the instant or two, during which they stood gazing at each other. At last the servant or owner of the house said, in a broad accent—

"You'll be the gentleman to see Mr. Smith?"

"I am," returned Glynn, infinitely relieved.

"Walk in, please." When he obeyed she opened the door of a tolerably large room at the back of the house, which looked into a small garden, behind which was a high dead wall, separating it from a manufactory of some humble sort.

It was very simply furnished—simple to plainness—yet neither ugly nor uncomfortable. Here his conductress left him, and disregarding her invitation to take a "cheer," he stood by the fire, his eyes fixed on the door in a state of painful expectancy. The sound of footsteps overhead, the murmur of voices made themselves heard, then the door slowly opened, and Elsie herself came in softly. She was dressed in black, but not in mourning, and looked deadly pale; her eyes seemed larger and darker than they used. She made a step or two into the room, and then stopped, holding out both hands, a smile curving her lip, which yet trembled, as if on the verge of tears.

Glynn seized the hands she offered, and, in the rapture of seeing her again, kissed them more than once. "I have imagined such horrors that I cannot restrain my joy at finding you," he exclaimed, his voice broken with intense feeling. "Why have you caused us this cruel anxiety?"

"How good you are to care so much," she said, looking at him with a wondering expression. "You will find I am not to blame. Oh! I feared I should never get leave to write to you, that you would think I had broken my promise! I wished to send for you long ago. I know we can trust you."

"*We!*" Good heavens! was she married, then? "We!" he repeated hoarsely,—"who—who do you mean?—your husband and yourself?"

"My husband!" a smile gleaming over her face. "I am not married! No—my father."

"Your father!" letting her withdraw her hands. "He is in America, is he not?"

"He is here—here in this house."

"I feel bewildered," said Glynn, taking the seat she pointed to and drawing it near her. "Will you not enlighten me?"

"I know so little, and my father wishes to tell you everything himself. Ah! you will see him so changed." A quick sob caught her breath, but she went on calmly: "He was changed enough when he first came, but he has been seriously ill. He caught a bad cold when travelling here, and has had inflammation of the lungs. He is so weak; will you come to him? Now he has agreed to let you come, he is quite anxious to see you."

"In a moment. Tell me, how are you yourself? You look weary, as if you had suffered."

"I have. It has been such a wretched, miserable time, almost unbearable, until my father came—always hiding, always a mystery."

"And how did Lambert—how did your father find you?"

"My father find *me*?" with an air of astonishment. "Ah! he will tell you everything. Come up-stairs to him."

Glynn rose to follow her with a faint feeling of disappointment. She was evidently delighted to see him, full of faith in him, but utterly devoid of that delicious consciousness which no woman in love can quite conceal; and grief for the supposed loss of this girl had almost cost him his life!—while for the present the mystery was more mysterious than ever.

Elsie led the way up a narrow stair to the upper story, the same look of neat simplicity characterizing the rest of the house, and opening the door of a good-sized bedroom, she said, "Here is Mr. Glynn, dear."

In a large arm-chair, his feet on a footstool, and covered with a warm plaid, propped by pillows, and close to a good fire, sat, or rather reclined, Lambert, a small table near him, on which stood a medicine-bottle and glass. A door leading into another room stood open.

Elsie was right. Her father was wofully changed. His cheeks were hollow; his skin yellow and wrinkled; his once half-humorous, half-defiant expression was gone, and replaced by a watchful, pitiful look, like a creature always expecting a blow, pathetic too in its wistfulness. One thin, claw-like hand grasped the arm of the chair. As he turned to gaze eagerly towards the door, a smile of pleasure, a sort of relieved look beamed over his face as Glynn advanced. "Ah! this is kind—this is like a good fellow, as I always thought you were," he whispered in a weak, tremulous voice. "I have just been wearying to see you, but afraid, afraid!" He sank back on his cushions, still holding Glynn's hand, and gazing at him imploringly.

"You know, Lambert, I am worthy of some trust, and desire nothing more than to be of service to you," said Glynn, suppressing all tokens of his immense surprise, and speaking with studied calmness. "You must not fatigue or excite yourself. Now that you have allowed me to know your address, I can come often to see you, and do anything you want in the way of commissions."

"Ah! but we must take care—we must take care." He sighed deeply, raising and letting fall his poor wasted hand with a despairing gesture.

While he spoke Elsie had measured out his medicine, and now gave it to him, saying, "Try not to speak too much, dear father. I will leave you to have a nice visit from Mr. Glynn all to yourself," with a sweet, kind smile and thankful look. "I shall see you before you go." She closed the door between the two rooms.

"Lock the other one, lock it, Elsie," said Lambert eagerly.

"Yes, I will." She disappeared.

"Come near me, nearer; we must speak low," said the invalid.

Glynn brought a chair close to his.

"Tell me," said Lambert, more calmly than he had yet spoken, "do you think your old comrade a malefactor? do you think I am dodging the police because I hide away from every one?"

"No! There is something wrong, of course,—concealment always implies that; but I suspect you are more sinned against than sinning; at any rate, I repeat, if I can serve you——"

"Ay!" interrupted Lambert; "but to serve me you must know all, and that is more than I can tell to-day; but I have broken no law—I don't know that I ever did, though I have done queer things—not for thirteen years though, for all that time I have led a decent life; and now it's for the good as well as the evil I have done that I am persecuted! Glynn, all I can find strength to say is, will you help me to save my Elsie? Will you be her guardian, and take care of her little fortune?"

"I will," said Glynn; "but I trust and see every reason to hope that you will be her guardian yourself for many a year!"

"That has nothing to do with it," impatiently. "I want you to take charge of her money, without deeds or papers, or lawyers, for I can see no one. Just give me a written acknowledgment. Her money stands in the name of the good woman who was my darling's foster-mother, and she is not fit to manage it, and is afraid to keep it. But I trust you, Glynn! O God! I *must* trust you! and when the money is transferred to you, then *you* must settle it on her, and appoint trustees." He paused, much exhausted.

"I will do exactly what you wish in the matter," said Glynn, anxious to soothe him, "and do my best to deserve the high confidence you place in me."

"Thank you, God bless you!" with a sigh of relief, laying his hand on Glynn's; "and you will lose no time about it. Mrs. Kellett shall call on you on Monday, and go with you to the brokers. The money is in Spanish bonds and Australian railways; it can be handed over to you with the stroke of a pen; but you know all that better than I do—ha, ha!" He laughed feebly. "I didn't know what a big boss you were when I wanted to make a match between my dear little girl and you."

"Miss Lambert deserves a better man than I am," said Glynn.

Lambert looked at him sharply. "There's one thing more, important enough, but not so pressing as the money. Do you know any lady that would be kind to Elsie, and look after her? she hasn't a

lady friend in the world—those French women are no use. But mind, she must be strong, with either money or rank, and a resolute woman, who knows the world. Lord! it can't be easy to find a clever, well-placed, kindly woman."

"Far from it, yet not impossible. I will undertake to search for this rarity; but before I do I must know more. I cannot ask another to put the faith in you that I do."

"Fair enough, fair enough! Well, I'll tell you a lot in a few days; I daren't begin now, it would kill me."

"You must keep up your heart, Lambert, you must live for your daughter."

"Live for her! I'd serve her best by dying for her!"

"She would not think so."

"No," cried the sick man with a burst of emotion, sobs that shook his frame, and tears for which when stronger he would have blushed; "*she* loves me! she believes in me! and come what may, here or hereafter, nothing can rob me of the fourteen years of happiness and redemption she has given me. May God reward her."

"Amen," said Glynn, softly. "I think you have talked enough; I will be ready for your friend on Monday. How shall I know her?"

"She shall bring a word, a line. Settle it with Elsie."

"May I come to-morrow?"

"Yes, if you can manage it safely! The one man that must *not* find me is Deering, and he is spending a fortune tracking me."

"This is most extraordinary."

"I dare say it seems so."

"May I put any question to Miss Lambert?"

"As many as you like; but she knows very little."

Here there was a tap at the door, and Elsie entered. "I think I must ask you to come away," she said.

"I fear I have stayed too long," returned Glynn.

"Will you come to-morrow?"

"Yes, without fail; at the same time."

Then followed a delightful half-hour with Elsie, who gave him a cup of tea in the sitting-room below.

"I can tell you nothing of my father's reasons," she said in reply to his queries. "I have simply obeyed him, for I am sure there is some great necessity, and he promises to explain all to me later. I cannot describe the state of despair my father gets into occasionally; his terror at the idea of our being discovered! but now, perhaps, he will tell you! You will come again, will you not?"

"I shall come to-morrow."

"I am so glad, so glad." Her voice trembled; she strove to keep her self-control; then resting her elbows on the table, she covered her face in her hands and burst into irrepressible tears.

"It has been all so terrible," she sobbed; "this concealment, this fear of I know not what; this shameful changing from one home to another. Shall we never be free and happy again?"

"You shall, you must," whispered Glynn. "Your father exaggerates his troubles, I am sure; he has promised to tell me everything, and I will never leave him till he is reinstated. You can *not* live on under such horrible conditions."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET OF THE PRISON HOUSE.

It was many a month since Glynn enjoyed such refreshing sleep as soothed his weary brain that night. To have found Elsie safe, unharmed, even though surrounded by a haze of doubtful circumstances, of painful mystery, was a blessed relief. All must turn out well, while Elsie was the same, untouched, unchanged.

To him she seemed more charming in her grief and terror than in the freshness of her beauty, which first attracted him. Though full of passion, his love was pure and true. To save its object from harm, or spare her suffering, he would even sacrifice himself. Something in the unconsciousness of her manner, her look, her words, warned him to keep the lover in the background for the present,—only for the present,—for deep in his heart he registered a vow to win her if tenderness, and loyalty, and perseverance could. He counted the cost, and decided that in winning her he should win all that would make life worth living. Glynn was not a conventional man. He liked society, but was not its slave. A quiet home, with such a companion, what could be a fairer lot? Would the day ever come when she would let him hold her to his heart, when her soft

arms would steal round his neck, and her sweet, sad, tremulous lips return his kisses? Whatever Lambert's circumstances, misdeeds, crimes, Glynn resolved to give his life to the tender, blameless daughter.

He started in good time next day, and spent a long, entrancing, disturbing afternoon with Elsie and her father.

With the latter he had not much private conversation, and in that little Lambert told him he had discovered early in their renewed acquaintanceship that Deering had fallen in love with Elsie, that he knew him to be a daring and unscrupulous man, and that, moreover, he had a very strong hold over Lambert himself, which made it exceedingly difficult to protect his daughter, without running certain risks, and to cut the gordian knot, he determined to hide her. This was so far successful, but the conviction that it was impossible to keep up the game was pressing on him, and with the consciousness of failing health, almost drove him mad.

"May I dine with you *tête-à-tête* the day after to-morrow? I have much to tell." This request reached Lady Gethin one morning at breakfast, and threw her into a state of delighted anticipation. She despatched a warm invitation, and wrote to decline one or two engagements for that day.

"You are looking a different being," she said, when they had settled into their places for a long talk after dinner. "But what has become of you? I have not seen you for the last ten days. What have you been about? Have you found your young woman?"

Glynn looked straight at her, and to her amazement replied, "I have."

"You are not serious. Here? in famous London town?"

"I have."

"Well, I always said you would. Do tell me all about it."

And Glynn began at the beginning, and did tell her everything.

"This is indeed extraordinary!" she exclaimed with unusual gravity, at the end of his narrative. "But after all, they have told you very little; there is some ugly secret behind."

"I suspect there is," very gravely.

"Now that you have found your fair Helen, what are you going to do with her?" asked Lady Gethin, looking sharply at him.

"Marry her," was the unhesitating reply.

"Good heavens, Hugh! you are not in earnest?"

"Very much in earnest, I assure you."

"But your future father-in-law may be a murderer."

"But my future wife is not a murderess."

"Not yet"—emphatically. "Remember, crime is often hereditary. I never heard of such madness. Why, you will spoil your life."

"It would be ruined without her."

"And while the noble father is taken to Newgate, the happy pair will start for the Continent and return in time for the execution! I could shed tears over you, Hugh."

"Instead of hurting your eyes, do me a very great favor. Come with me to-morrow, and let me introduce you to Miss Lambert."

"I shall do nothing of the kind! How can you expect me to encourage you in such insanity?"

"Because your encouragement or discouragement will not affect my decision. I have a sincere respect for your opinion; you are a shrewd, far-seeing woman, and I think your view of the case perfectly natural, but I feel that my wisest course in this instance is to throw prudence overboard. Do, my dear aunt, grant me this petition! I am old enough to take the responsibility of any step upon myself, and I have no near relative to consider. Be my friend in this crisis; come and see the girl who has drawn me to her so magnetically; help me to save her, for as she possesses my soul I am resolved to give her my life."

"I protest, Hugh, you are a lover worth having. I hope she values you as you deserve."

"I do not think she has an idea I am a lover."

"Then you have not asked her to marry you?" cried Lady Gethin, visibly brightening.

"I have not ventured as yet; I am trying to prepare the way."

"Then," said Lady Gethin, "I will come, and you must agree to listen to any objections which may occur to me, rationally, without snapping my nose off, because I shall see things which would never strike *you*."

"Agreed."

"When shall I go?" resumed Lady Gethin. "I confess I am dying to see this lady-love of yours, this heroine of a still unsolved mystery. May I go to-morrow?"

Glynn took her hand and kissed it. "Thank you," was all he said, but there was that in his voice which made a troublesome lump rise in Lady Gethin's throat.

This entire and disinterested devotion touched her infinitely, and gave her an instant's glimpse of the loveliness life might have if tenderness and loyalty and self-forgetful generosity could only share and share alike, with science, statistics, and political economy.

"Not to-morrow," resumed Glynn after a pause. "I must give Lambert warning, for he is very nervous about any one coming near him. He is so possessed by the idea that he is being watched. It is an awful feeling, I had no conception *what* it is until I saw a man under its influence. I will settle with him and Elsie when they shall receive you. At present I am not quite so uneasy about them, for Deering is out of town. I am afraid he has some very strong hold on Lambert."

"Deering is not out of town; I saw him at the opera last night."

"Indeed!" Then after a pause, "It is amazing how Lambert has escaped detection so far, but it is inevitable. Why he dreads it, and what he is afraid of, remains to be told. I think he is longing to tell, yet dreads to do so, which is inconsistent with his assertion that he has broken no law."

"Hugh," said Lady Gethin, "I wish you would give *me* a promise, not to declare yourself to Miss Lambert until you know the whole truth."

"No, Lady Gethin, I will not pledge myself to anything," returned Glynn, smiling; and soon after he took his leave.

Things were looking brighter, he thought. If Lambert would only make a clean breast, something definite might be arranged.

The next day, glad of an excuse to present himself at Garston Terrace, Glynn was making his way towards one of the Metropolitan stations, when he met Deering coming to the office.

"I was going to call on you," he said.

"Sorry I cannot go back with you," returned Glynn, "but I have a special engagement. You will find Mercer, which will answer your purpose even better."

"No doubt. By the way, do you ever hear anything of the Lambert business?" looking searchingly at him.

"Never," said Glynn steadily.

"And I presume you take no further interest in it?"

"Yes, I do. I would give a good deal to get to the bottom of that affair," and Glynn returned Deering's gaze with equal keenness.

"Are you so ignorant, then?" asked Deering with a sneer. "Well, I heard this morning from a man I have employed (for I confess I am determined to track that scoundrel Lambert), that those stupid Yankee detectives have been on a false scent altogether. The man they have been following proves not to be Lambert, and they now suspect that while they have been dodging his double at St. Louis and other places, the real man has escaped to Canada. But he is certain to be found."

"I suppose so," said Glynn, with such equanimity that Deering's brows contracted, and he nodded a hasty adieu.

"I wonder how the mistake arose," thought Glynn, as he strode along; "but having found it out I fear they may get on the right track."

He took a longer *détour* than usual before approaching his goal. Arrived there, he found Elsie waiting to see the doctor after his visit to her father.

She looked very anxious. His nights, she said, were so feverish and restless that it was impossible he could make any real progress. Sometimes he was quite cheerful; then the cloud of nervous depression would settle down upon him, and nothing seemed to rouse or cheer him.

Glynn took care to speak to the doctor himself, and he gave the same account. He said the bronchial attack was cured, but an extraordinary degree of mental depression continued. Was Glynn aware of any hereditary tendency in that direction, which might account for much? It might be well to have a second opinion, but Mr. Lambert was so averse to call in any other medical man, he did not like to press it, etc., etc.

As soon as he had gone Glynn was summoned to the invalid, who was more than usually querulous and uneasy, until his visitor broached the subject of Lady Gethin's visit, describing her as the embodiment of all Lambert desired in the shape of a female friend for Elsie. Her father caught at the idea, but shrunk from his friend's proposition that he should be presented to her by his real name.

"Believe me, Lambert," said Glynn impressively, "it is useless to hope you can remain concealed much longer. If you would tell me all, I might be able to advise you; at present I cannot for want of knowledge."

"Well, look here, then," said Lambert, after a minute or two of profound thought, "you bring this lady to us; let her see what a sweet, elegant creature my Elsie is; maybe she will take a fancy to her. I'd like to see this aunt of yours too, Glynn; and as the doctor says I am to change the air and scene, I'm going down to the drawing-room to-morrow, so let her come the day after. I'll put on my coat, and get myself shaved, then I'll be fit to be seen. Do you think she will come the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, I am sure she will. She cannot fail to be charmed with Miss Lambert, and may be a very useful friend."

"Then bring her, in God's name," ejaculated Lambert, leaning back wearily; and Glynn, seeing he was inclined to sleep, stole quietly away to Elsie's sitting-room down-stairs.

He found Mrs. Kellett with her, and on hearing him say that he thought her father was sleeping, Elsie went away to see if he was wrapped up and comfortable, and for a minute or two Glynn felt at a loss what to say to Mrs. Kellett.

She was a tall, thin, dark-eyed woman, with grey hair, high cheek-bones, and a severe expression; but her smile was kind, her eyes steady and honest. She spoke very little, and her manner was guarded. Glynn had been favorably impressed on the only occasion when he had met her—their visit to the stock-broker's, and the transfer of Elsie's money to Glynn's care.

"I find Miss Lambert by no means so well as I should like to see her," he said at length.

"No, sir; and I am surprised she looks so well. Her life has been a very trying one for many months."

"It has. I trust its trials will soon be over."

"There seems little prospect of that unless Mr. Lambert will speak."

"As an old friend, Mrs. Kellett, you ought to beg him to explain his position, or, if the effort be too painful for him, to let you do it for him."

"But I do not know the whole story!" said Mrs. Kellett. "It is fourteen years since he gave that dear child into my care, and though I always suspected he had a history, and a strange one, I never knew it. He has always been a loving father, a just and generous paymaster. I know no more."

"It is the strangest case I have heard of," Glynn was beginning, when Elsie returned.

"He is sleeping quite peacefully," she said, "and he needs rest terribly."

"Then I must not stay longer," said Mrs. Kellett, "and I dare not come soon again. When I write it will be as usual under cover to your landlady."

She said good-bye to Glynn. Elsie followed her into the hall to speak some last words, and then returning, sat down on a low couch near the fire, and clasping her hands on her knee, gazed in dreamy silence at the glowing coals. Glynn, who stood leaning against the mantelpiece, waited and watched; the stillness, the loneliness, the isolation from all who had well known them, thrilled him with a strange sense of delicious power. Suddenly she said very softly, as if to herself:

"It will soon be a year since that day."

"What day?" asked Glynn.

"The day you came and dined with us at the Café de Madrid,—do you remember?"

"It is constantly in my thoughts; it is one of my most delightful memories! Do you know," coming and sitting down beside her, "that when I lie awake at night I recall the airs you sang that night, and hear again your delicious tones!"

"We were so happy then—at least I was."

"And I was," echoed Glynn. "I did not know how happy, until the misery of losing you taught me. Do you know that the horror of the whole thing nearly killed me? I had brain fever——"

"Had you!" cried Elsie, looking at him in great, sincere surprise. "It was very good of you to care so much! My father never said you tried to find me!"

"Why do you look so astonished?" he asked.

"Because—Oh, I shall tell you some day when I feel happier and braver."

"The lady I am going to bring here the day after to-morrow will tell you how ill I was. She was very kind, and helped to nurse me. She is a sort of aunt of mine."

"If she took care of you I shall like her. You have been such a true friend to my father," cried Elsie, with sudden warmth, and stretching out her hand she placed it in his.

Glynn was greatly surprised, and not altogether pleased by her extreme unconsciousness, but he gently retained the hand for a moment while she went on—

"Is it quite safe her coming here? I do not understand our extraordinary position, but it seems to me that our hiding-place is becoming too generally known. Does the lady know we are hunted fugitives?"

"She does, and I will answer for her good faith."

"There must be some very strong reason for my father's strange life!" and she lapsed into thought.

Then they spoke again of Lady Gethin, and the extraordinary chance which had brought them together. At last he was obliged to tear himself away. He never left her without an unspeakable pang, a dread of some crime being committed before he saw her again.

The dusk of a blustering March evening was deepening, and Elsie was struck by the minute directions he gave the old landlady to fasten the shutters, and lock the doors, to admit no

stranger, and put out the lights early.

"You are as fearful as my father," she said; "but I think we are very safe in this quiet neighborhood."

"Good-night. I suppose I must not come to-morrow? Well, the day after I will with Lady Gethin. If you want me in any way, telegraph."

Glynn was surprised to find Lady Gethin not only ready, but in a state of impatient expectancy when he reached her house on the day appointed.

"I suppose my kinsfolk and acquaintance would consider me insane if they knew I was thus encouraging you in so wild a project," she said, as she took Glynn's arm to go down-stairs.

"That can be of small consequence to you."

"Hum! I shouldn't like to be looked upon as an idiotic old woman. However, I am dying to get to the bottom of this mysterious affair, that's the truth. As to you—you are past praying for."

"Not past returning thanks for, I hope," said Glynn, as he handed her into her brougham, and told the coachman to drive to Euston Square station. Arrived there, Lady Gethin said she would not require the carriage again, as Mr. Glynn would see her home; and as soon as they reached the arrival platform they took a cab and drove to within an easy walking distance of Garston Terrace.

"I never was so far north before," said Lady Gethin, looking about her with interest. "It does not seem a very lively place. How long has this poor girl been shut up here?"

"She has been secluded altogether for nearly nine or ten months. It is time this persecution were over; a little courage and candor would soon put an end to it."

"Nice old woman," ejaculated Lady Gethin, as Mrs. Ritson, the landlady, opened the door and dropped a curtsey.

"Walk in, please," she said, and ushered them into a small front room, furnished as a *salle á manger*.

Lady Gethin immediately took a tour of inspection. "I don't know how it is, but this doesn't look quite like a lodging," she said, sitting down suddenly. "I don't think that old woman furnished this."

"I suspect you are on the look-out for mysteries," Glynn began, when Elsie came in, dressed in her ordinary costume of black, with a little scarf of fine creamy lace round her throat, and a bunch of daffodils beside it.

The excitement of seeing a stranger had brought a little color to her cheek, and as she stood still for a moment of graceful hesitation, Glynn's heart throbbed with tenderness and pride, and he thought it must puzzle Lady Gethin to find fault with so fair a creature. He turned to read her opinion in her countenance. She was gazing at Elsie with a curious expression of startled surprise, almost of recognition, and seemed too absorbed to remember the ordinary observances of a first introduction.

"I have brought my aunt, Lady Gethin, to see you, Miss Lambert," said Glynn, shaking hands with her.

"She is very kind to come," returned Elsie, with a slight pretty curtsey, expressive of respect to the age and position of her visitor.

"And I am very glad I came," said Lady Gethin, rising and holding out her hand, gravely, but cordially. "Mr. Glynn's interest in your father and yourself has induced me to offer a visit, even though not quite sure it will be acceptable."

"Oh, yes! it is most acceptable," cried Elsie, her eyes filling with tears, and feeling strangely fascinated by Lady Gethin's gaze.

"I am pleased to think so," said Lady Gethin, with more of her usual manner, as she resumed her seat.

"In a few minutes my father will be ready to receive you, if you will be so very good as to visit him—he has been so ill!"

"Yes, certainly, I want to see him very much. You do not look particularly well yourself! too much confinement in a sick-room, I suppose." A pause and long searching look.

"I have gone out very little for months."

"Excuse me, my dear, you will think me an intrusive old woman, but what is your name? Elsie, Elsie! that is quite strange to me. Do you remember your mother at all?"

"No—that is, like a faint, far-away dream!"

"What was her name?"

"I think I was called after her. I never speak about her, for my father cannot bear it. His sorrow must have been great."

"I suppose so—I suppose so," thoughtfully. "You will forgive my abruptness, I am not asking from idle curiosity."

"I have nothing to forgive." Here the tinkle of a bell was heard. "My father is ready; will you come?" said Elsie, rising. She conducted them into the drawing-room, where Lambert, shaved and smartened up, sat in his large chair, which had been brought down-stairs; a few flowers and some books gave an inhabited air to the room, while the exquisite neatness of the invalid and his surroundings bespoke loving care.

Lady Gethin's quick eye noted everything. Lambert brightened a little as he thanked her with simple courtesy for her visit. Glynn saw that she scrutinized him with profound attention, and drew him out rather than spoke to him.

Glynn himself had various matters to speak of with Elsie, who looked more like what she had been in Paris than she had since they had met again.

After some little time Lady Gethin turned to Elsie and said, gravely, "Will you forgive me, my dear young lady, if I ask you to leave me with your father and Mr. Glynn? I have one or two matters to speak of." She paused.

"Certainly," said Elsie, rising; "you will send for me when you want me," and with a smiling, wondering look at Glynn, she left the room.

The door being closed, Lady Gethin, turning to Lambert, said, "At the risk of awakening painful memories I must ask you a few questions! Your daughter so resembles a dear friend, or rather one who was a dear friend of mine long ago, that I cannot refrain. Pray has she any relations named Acton?"

"No," said Lambert, eyeing her suspiciously; "she has no relation in the world but myself."

"She must have some others, Captain Lambert!" persisted Lady Gethin. "Strange ideas rise in my mind, coupling the likeness with Deering's efforts to find her. The friend Miss Lambert resembles, and whose daughter she might be, was Isabel Acton, who married Gilbert Deering against the will of her people, and went away with him abroad, where she died."

"My God!" cried Lambert, turning ghastly white, "this is incredible!" He remained silent for a minute, his hands clasping and unclasping the arms of his chair, his mouth twitching, some strong emotion evidently working within him. "Ring the bell!" he said at length to Glynn. "Get me some brandy-and-water. I will tell you my whole story, and I'll want something to help me through. You look like a strong, good woman, Lady Gethin. You will not turn against my girl, though her father has been a bit of a blackguard in his time."

"I will not," said Lady Gethin, stoutly.

"Do you wish me to leave you?" asked Glynn.

"No; my confession is as much for you as for my lady here." He paused while the servant placed the brandy-and-water beside him. "I must go a long way back," he resumed, when she had left the room. "It was about fifteen years ago when, after knocking about in Texas and California, I found myself at Chili in a very low condition, both as to money and prospects. Just at that time a railway had been begun by a clever adventurer who had been kicked out of 'Frisco, but persuaded the Government of Chili to take up his scheme. This railway was to a village up in the mountains, in the middle of a rich mineral district, teeming with wealth. The difficulty was to find ready money to pay current expenses; they were never more than a week ahead of the men's wages. To provide for this outlay, Jeafferson, the Yankee promoter, got together three or four gamblers to meet the men at the village where they were paid, and win back the cash just given out, and have it ready by the next pay-day. I was one of these fine gentlemen," bitterly. "We had a percentage on our winnings, and lots of food and drink at the bars, kept by the company,—that is, Jeafferson. It is curious how little I minded it all then, and what a rascally business it seems now! Among the *employés* there was a certain Deering, a cold, stern Englishman, an engineer. He was a silent, self-possessed fellow, proud and plucky as the devil. We all hated him, for he looked down on us. He seemed to see through the gambling scheme; he was always interfering, and warning the men against us, and making enemies on both sides. He had had a wife with him, but she was dead. I never saw her." He paused. Both Lady Gethin and Glynn drew a little nearer with breathless interest.

"Well," resumed Lambert, "one night I met Deering in a hotel in Lima with a tall Englishman not unlike himself, only fair, with whom he was talking over a bottle of wine; and they had papers and money lying on the table between them. They seemed greatly occupied with their conversation. I had had a hard ride, and a hard drink (I *did* drink then), and I couldn't resist trying to get up a quarrel with Deering, so I broke in on him and his friend and offered to stake as much as lay there and play him for the whole at poker, euchre, anything he liked. He answered me contemptuously, and rising, left the room. I was in an awful fury, and swore that I'd have his life, and a deal more. The tall friend who remained laughed and taunted me, and gave me more drink, so we grew a bit familiar. The upshot was, I went to see him in his private room; there we got abusing Deering to dirt, and I swore I'd have his life. When this man had listened awhile, says he: 'If you are in earnest, I know a party as would give a bigger pile than that' (meaning the money that had been on the table) 'to know that he was safe under the sod, and not only the serpent but the spawn to; for,' says he, 'he has a child, who may prove worse than the father.' This sobered me. Ay, you may look hard; it had an ugly sound, and blackguard as I had been, I was no cowardly assassin." He stopped, and signed to Glynn to give him some brandy-and-water.

"I parleyed with him a bit. However, I could get little out of him, except that there was a good sum to be mine if I would shoot my enemy. Well, I kept quiet. I felt somehow desperately disgusted, and all my fury against Deering began to die away. I said to my new acquaintance,

that he should hear from me, and next day I mounted my horse, and rode away to find Deering; not to challenge and shoot him, but to warn him against the treacherous devil that was thirsting for his life. It's truth I'm telling you. Do you believe me?" interrupting himself feverishly.

"I do," said Glynn, earnestly.

"Pray go on," urged Lady Gethin.

"Deering lived away at one of the stations in the mountains, an awful wild place, with a lot of Indians and half-breeds round him; the railway was pushed so far, and the next payments were to be made there. So men were busy rigging up a bar and a gaming saloon, with logs and what not, when I rode in. Lord! what a beautiful place it was! Just a strip of heaven peopled by fiends! I got in there a little after sundown and found Deering kicking up no end of a row, wanting to prevent the saloon being finished and opened. I spoke to him, as I hope—no! I don't hope anything,—but as I live, full of the best intentions. I asked him to come away out into the open with me a bit. There I tried to speak friendly to him, but it was no use. He turned on me and abused me like a pick-pocket, for one of a gang of sharpers. He stung me to the quick; I lost all control of myself, and pulling out my revolver, I challenged him to fight there on the spot. He said something about ridding the place of a pest. Just then a boy—oh, of about nineteen or twenty, a factotum of Jeafferson's—came up. We both asked him to see fair play. O God! it was soon over! He fell at my first fire. I had winged my man before, and didn't mind much. But somehow I felt sorry for him. Vexed with myself, I threw away my revolver, and knelt down beside him, calling to the boy to help; but a confused sound of shouting and a loud hum came from the village or camp, and the boy said, 'They are up to mischief there,' and away he ran. Deering seemed to hear it; he opened his eyes and muttered something—I could only make out the word 'destroy.' Then he caught my hand, and with a despairing, imploring look in his eyes,—I see it still,—groaned, 'My child—save her.' And holding his hand, I swore I'd take care of her so long as I had breath. He pointed to a ring on his little finger, and muttered, 'Take'; then he said, 'My child,' turned sharp, as if in pain, and was gone. I took the ring (I'll show it to you presently), then I made away to his shanty. The devils of miners, and navvies, and half-breeds had risen to revenge themselves, and were wrecking his place. One fellow called out that there was a pile of money in the house, that Deering had got down in the town yesterday. The lot of them were raging like furies and had just set fire to the hut, when I got up. There wasn't a sign of the child. I hunted through the place. The men all thinking I was dead against Deering, didn't interfere with me. At last, crouching in a corner behind a door, quite stupefied with fear, I found a little golden-haired darling, of three or four years old—all alone."

"Had she no nurse—or did the nurse forsake her?" asked Lady Gethin, as he paused. "How did he come to keep her in such a place?"

"That I cannot answer. I think Deering must have been desperately poor, or he would not have taken service with Jeafferson. Anyhow I took the child, who screamed at me in an agony of terror. I told her I would take her to her father. I wrapped a cloak that hung on the wall round her, and got out. She was quite still—so still that I feared she was dead. So I managed to saddle Deering's horse, which was fresh; and as night was falling I rode away, while those mad devils where shouting and dancing round the burning wreck." He stopped, quite exhausted.

"You had better not go on now," said Glynn. "I begin to understand your position. Lady Gethin will, I am sure, return to——"

"I *must* go on," interrupted Lambert. "I can't rest till I have finished; and there's a lot more to tell."

"He had better get through it," said Lady Gethin.

"When I got down to Lima, I went to an out-of-the-way eating-house, where I sometimes put up when funds were low. The woman that kept it was a good soul when sober. I got her to take care of the child for a day and a night. She didn't ask questions. Then I thought what to do, for I was at the end of my cash. It struck me as a grand 'ploy,' if I could get the price of poor Deering's life out of the long fellow at the hotel, and build up a fortune for the child. So I went to him, and told him what had happened, and a good deal more—faith! I said I found the child suffocated with the smoke, and just squeezed my hand round its throat to make sure. He took it all quite easy. 'You are a handy scoundrel,' he said; and I answered, 'You are an unhandy one. Now, are you going to keep your word, and give me over what you wouldn't give poor Deering?'

"'What he wouldn't take,' says he. 'How do I know you are speaking truth?'

"'Send and see,' said I. 'If you cheat me, I'll raise the hue and cry against you.'

"'Who will believe you against me?' said he with a sneer. 'I am an Englishman of unblemished character. What would your assertions be against mine? However, I don't want to cheat you. Come here to-morrow.'

"To make a long story short, the woman who had had the care of the child came roaring and crying to this man, who was another Deering,—he never disguised his name,—and said the child had been killed, or at any rate burned to death, and Deering was killed too while she was away, taking some food to her husband. Anyhow that long devil was satisfied, and gave me the money. I must hurry a bit.

"I had agreed to quit South America, and so I took a passage to Melbourne. I never thought the child would live; she pined and seemed silly. There was a good woman on board the vessel we sailed in who took to my little darling. She had lost her baby and her husband. He was the skipper of a ship that traded between San Francisco and Callao, and sometimes to Melbourne.

She was wonderful fond of Elsie. I called her Elsie after a little sister of my own; I never knew what name she had been christened. This good woman is Mrs. Kellett. She was going to join a sister who was married in Melbourne, and intended getting work of some kind, as she had little or no money.

"Well, the upshot was, that she agreed to take charge of Elsie. I paid well; and then I took to breaking horses, then I bought and sold them, and made a good bit, and saved—Lord, how I saved! I left off drink,—two glasses of beer in the day was my allowance. If I could only make up to that child for all I had robbed her of!—and she began to know me. The day she first put her little arms round my neck, and stroked my face, and wouldn't let me go, I made a darned fool of myself, and cried. Mrs. Kellett, not understanding, says, 'She'll be as sensible as any child yet.' Ah! so she is. One time I wasn't lucky, that is, I got next to nothing for myself, for I kept the profits of Elsie's money separate from my own, and it's wonderful how everything I undertook for that child prospered. It was then I went over to California, and scraped around a bit, and collected gold-dust and nuggets; some I bought, some I dug myself. It was there I fell in with *you*, Glynn. I seemed a penniless adventurer, didn't I? Aha, my boy!—I had nigh a thousand pounds' worth stitched into my belt. I kept out a little just to throw away and keep up with the others, but did you ever see me forget myself in drink?"

"I was always struck by your extreme temperance," returned Glynn.

"Ah! well, those were happy days," resumed Lambert. "After that spurt I went back to Melbourne. Presently Mrs. Kellett wanted to go home; her brother had come into his uncle's farm; he was a widower, with a lot of boys, and wrote for his sister to keep his house; so I came with her, and saw the place, and left my precious child there, where she throve like a lily for near five years. I settled in Paris, always working her money and my own very cautiously, and looking forward to the day she'd come and take care of her father. I declare to God, I used to forget she wasn't my own child! When she was, as I reckoned, about twelve, I put her into the convent, and used to have her out on holidays. She never enjoyed them more than I did, and she grew fonder and fonder of me. Then I made a snug little nest for her, and took her home for good. Then I met you, Glynn, and now I'm coming to the trouble. You remember Vincent. Well, when I first met him with some very respectable Americans in Paris, I was puzzled with the notion that I had seen him before, and I told him so. Then he grinned, and said he was the boy that had witnessed my duel with Deering. We agreed to bury the past, as it wasn't exactly a letter of recommendation. I wasn't over-pleased with him, but he was uncommon civil, and used to come to the house, and I got accustomed to him. Then he proposed for Elsie, and I refused him; still he hung on, and asked a second time; after that he got spiteful. You know all about that time, Glynn! Wasn't it a slice out of heaven? It didn't last long. You were at the Davilliers' the evening I came in, and saw Deering talking to my Elsie, and looking at her. By Heaven, I understood his looks! and if I had had my knife in my belt, as in the old days, he'd have looked his last. I thought the sight of me would have frightened him."

Lambert paused, and lay back in his chair.

"Did he recognize you?" cried Lady Gethin with breathless interest.

"Ay, that he did. He was calm, and civil, and damnably superior, and came the next day to call, and sat talking so softly and elegantly to my blessed child. At last he begged for a private interview with me,—said he had something of importance to say. I was obliged to go to his hotel, there was no use refusing." Lambert stopped, took a little more brandy-and-water, drew a long breath, and began again. "As soon as the door was closed he asked me to come up by his writing-table. Then looking straight at me he exclaimed, 'You lied to me. You did *not* strangle Gilbert Deering's infant! I recognized the girl's likeness to her mother at the first glance.'

"'What's that to you?' said I. 'There's a crime the less on your conscience.'

"He laughed harshly. 'I confess she was worth sparing; she is a charming creature. You seem to have brought her up remarkably well, but I think you have done enough. I propose to assume her guardianship in future.' Then he went on to offer me money—*me!*—to give up my child. I saw his infernal scheme, and I burst out in a fury. I threatened to expose him. 'Try,' he replied, 'and see what will become of it. I shall simply tell my story. I went out to Chili to find my cousin, who had succeeded to the family estate of Denham. I had a considerable sum of money with me for his use. A desperate scoundrel sees us discussing business matters, and the money on a table before us. He follows poor Gilbert, murders and robs him; incites the ruffians of the place to fire Deering's house. In the scuffle Gilbert's little girl is supposed to be burnt—years after I discover her in Paris. I denounce the murderer, save my young cousin, unveil the monster on whom she has lavished her filial affection—and——'

"'Lose your estates,' I interrupted. 'You didn't want to murder Gilbert Deering for nothing. How would my story tell against yours?'

"'My good friend, not a soul would believe *your* word against mine. Your antecedents would put you out of court!'

"'You would need a witness or two,' said I.

"'I might find one,' he said, with an air of careless security that thrilled me with fear. I thought of his strange intimacy with Vincent. But *he* wouldn't be such a villain as to forswear himself? 'I'll give you a few days to reflect,' he went on. 'This is my proposition. Hand over the girl to my custody. I will find her a good husband, and generally take care of her. You make yourself scarce; be off to America, and drink yourself to death. I'll give you two hundred a year while you are

above ground. Refuse, and I'll lodge information against you in consequence of revelations made to me by your friend Vincent. Now take your choice. My position is impregnable; every one knows Gilbert Deering was murdered; it only remains to discover the murderer. *If* I am driven to this, I shall stand out in bright colors as a just and chivalrous kinsman, and no doubt some compromise beneficial to me can be arranged. Of this I am resolved,—to get rid of *you*.' He would not say another word, and I left him, feeling more than half-mad with helpless rage—ay! and terror! I am no coward, I could face death as steadily as any man; but to leave my Elsie at the mercy of such a villain, with the stain of my public execution on her life, with the bitter knowledge that I had killed her real father, to blot out all tender, kindly recollection of me—no, I could not face *that*. Then to hand her over to a wretch who would destroy her if he could: that idea drove me wild. I tell you in my agony I half determined to put an end to her and to myself, as the best and most merciful mode of cutting the knot." He paused, shuddering. "No poor words can tell the horror of those days. I had more than one interview with Deering, and the calm way he affected to believe his own lies drove me wild. I urged that the disappearance of the large amount of money with which he was entrusted to give his cousin would tell against him. He said he had given the money to Gilbert, and that I had robbed him of it. I appealed to Vincent. Vincent coolly told me that I had shot Deering in the back. I was utterly powerless; all I could gain, was time.

"I pretended to take the proposition of giving her up to Deering into consideration. They thought I was going to yield. Then you came back, and I played a last card. I asked you to marry my Elsie. I thought she would be safe, and I'd go away and hide. But you couldn't, or wouldn't."

Glynn started up. "I don't know," he began.

"Let me finish," interrupted Lambert; "I have nearly done. I was desperate, and at bay. The thought came into my mind to hide my darling. I ran over to England, telegraphed to Mrs. Kellett to meet me at a neighboring town, and told her something of my difficulties. She knew my love for my child, and obeyed my instructions. I transferred all the money I could to her name. I took counsel with her as to where Elsie should stay, and when she (Mrs. Kellett) should come to Paris, and many details I haven't time to tell. A day or two before the ball Mrs. Kellett, down at her brother's place, was laid up with a severe cold, and was waited on by a faithful old servant who was partly in her confidence, and let no one else into her room; whereas in the night she had slipped out of the house and walked to the nearest station, where she caught the first train to London, and came through to Paris, bringing with her some English-made clothes to dress Elsie in. I did not warn my jewel, lest she should betray any uneasiness, but at the last moment I made her promise to come home from the ball,—*not* to go to Madame's. This between ourselves.

"Then I met her, and took her into the kitchen of the empty *étage* below us. I had to contrive to get hold of the key. She was terribly startled; but I made her believe her hiding was essential to my safety. She changed her clothes, and tried to eat something. We waited till I heard the *concierge* moving about, for the danger was in going out. I had brought Mrs. Kellett in with myself the night before as soon as the house was shut up, so that no voice but mine was heard when the *concierge* asked, 'Who was there?' Well, they got out exactly as that thief of a detective guessed, while the *concierge* was at the pump. They walked quietly along over the Pont d'Alma, where they got rid of the ball-dress, and near the Invalides took a *fiacre*; thus they got off by the first train.

"I was careful to make no discovery, till I thought they would be safe on board the Calais boat. Once landed safely in England, and steaming to London, it would be next to impossible to track them. In London, they drove to the Great Northern, and thence, late in the evening, to the South-Western; from that to a lady's school at Clapham, kept by a cousin of Mrs. Kellett's, where Elsie was to go as a teacher without salary.

"I made up my mind to do without letters for months; only one I *must* have, to say she was safe; that was sent to a false name at Marseilles, where I journeyed to get it. I had given Mrs. Kellett a certain set of advertisements to be inserted week after week in the *Daily News*, on Wednesdays and Fridays, which informed me that all was well; and one which was only to be inserted if my presence was required,—a danger signal, in fact. I knew the shrewd devils I had to deal with; the money power that Deering wielded. Nothing gave me a chance but the eight or nine hours' start before the police were on the track.

"So I waited and waited, never writing to England except to Mrs. Kellett now and again, letters composed for inspection; never remitting money; waiting, watching for a chance of seeming to go back to America; really, of joining my jewel, and I found it at last; but there, I can't say another word. If it hadn't been for this unlucky illness, we'd have been on our way to Australia. There, give me some more."

He lay back profoundly exhausted. Glynn held the glass to his lips, while he exchanged a look of wonder and sympathy with Lady Gethin.

CHAPTER X.

A TRUE LOVER'S KNOT.

Lambert's hearers were silent for a few minutes. Both perceived the danger and difficulty of his situation. If Deering stuck to his text, and could trust Vincent to show equal pertinacity, all probabilities were on the side of the man of high character, fortune, and position.

Lady Gethin and Glynn might believe his story, from the internal evidence of sympathy and sentiment, but to the legal mind that would not be worth a straw.

If Deering chose, he might obtain Lambert's condemnation as a robber and murderer, and purchase revenge by the sacrifice of his estate. Thus a blow—a fatal blow—would be dealt to Elsie, whose tender, faithful nature would suffer intensely from the shock of such knowledge.

To Glynn there seemed but one means of security to both—one he was most ready to adopt. As his wife, Elsie would be out of Deering's reach, and with such a champion of her rights, he could not hope to make very favorable terms; still, for character's sake, he was almost bound to support his assertions should a whisper of them reach any ears save Vincent's and Lambert's. While he thought, Lambert seemed to revive.

"I never heard of such an utter villain!" exclaimed Lady Gethin. "I perfectly remember the death of old Deering. The next heir had been carried off by fever just before, making way rather unexpectedly for Gilbert.

"This man, Travers Deering, who had had a quarrel with his cousin, was in the office of the family solicitor, and was sent out to look for him in South America, as he had not been heard of for some time. The story goes that he met him and gave him rather a large sum of money for his expenses, which Gilbert took away up to some barbarous place, where he had left his baby girl. He was murdered and robbed in an outbreak of roughs, and the child was burned, they said, in the fire which consumed Gilbert's hut or house. It was all in the papers at the time, and Deering made search for the child, offered rewards, etc., and did not take possession of the property for some little time."

"That lynching business was a stroke of luck for Deering," said Lambert feebly.

"If not inconvenient, I should like to see the ring you mentioned," said Lady Gethin.

"Certainly," said Lambert. "Glynn, ask Elsie to bring the little despatch-box from the table in my room."

Glynn went to deliver the message, and Elsie, who came down-stairs, inquired anxiously if her father was not overtired. Glynn assured her that he seemed better for the relief of complete confidence. "I trust we shall be able to find a way out of all his difficulties," he concluded.

Elsie brought the box, and placing it in his hands, looked up in his eyes with a sweet, frank smile. "If his mind is at rest, he will soon be better."

"I am sure he will," said Glynn, his heart swelling with infinite compassion, as he thought of the tangled villainous mesh which had twined itself round her pure and simple life. To him belonged the task of protecting and delivering her. "And you too," he added, "you need rest and a sense of security."

"When I see *him* well, I too shall be myself again."

Glynn took her hand, and kissed it reverently. Something of consciousness called the color to her cheek at the touch of his lips, and it was with a faint, delicious glow of hope that Glynn went back to Lambert, who, drawing out a key which hung to his watch-chain, unlocked the box. After a little search he produced a small case from which he took an old-fashioned gold ring, two hands clasped, and a bracelet of tiny turquoises on each wrist. "There," said Lambert, "that is the ring I took from the poor fellow's hand after he had breathed his last."

Lady Gethin took it, and sat looking at it for a moment or two, her keen black eyes suffused with tears. "This is indeed a message from the grave," she said, with much emotion. "I gave this ring to Isabel Acton, a few days before she married my relative, Gilbert Deering. I was very poor at the time, and had little or nothing to give, so took this quaint old thing from my finger to put on hers. I never saw the poor girl again."

"What an extraordinary piece of evidence!" exclaimed Glynn.

"It corroborates the effect of your daughter's remarkable likeness to her mother. 'There *is* a providence that shapes our ends,'" said Lady Gethin in a low tone, and silence fell upon them, from which she was the first to rouse herself.

"There is no time to be lost in making some arrangement that will relieve you from this horrible condition of fear and concealment. Let us consult my lawyer."

"A lawyer!—no, no!" cried Lambert. "That would be dangerous."

"We must proceed with infinite caution," observed Glynn. "Deering's position is a strong one. *You* have only your own word to weigh against his. If we could get hold of Vincent?"

"There is little chance of that," said Lambert. "If I could only be sure my precious Elsie were safe."

"She shall come and stay with me," cried Lady Gethin with enthusiasm.

"That would be going into the lion's jaws," said Glynn. "This is my plan: I have learned to love your daughter (as I still consider her); let me try and win her; and let us keep all dark till she is my wife."

Lambert stretched out his hand to grasp Glynn's; he tried to speak in vain, and burst into a fit of hysterical weeping.

"Moreover," continued Glynn solemnly, "I promise, that if Deering resigns his bold attempts at revenge, no love of mere wealth shall induce me to open up the question of Elsie's parentage or

your past life."

The sound of her father's sobs brought Elsie into the room, and broke off the conversation.

"It is altogether the most extraordinary romance I ever heard of," said Lady Gethin, when Glynn called a few days after these exciting disclosures. "I have been thinking what is best to be done. Suppose I take Elsie abroad with me, and you follow. You can be married quietly, and then snap your fingers at Deering. Lambert alone he could easily crush, but Lambert as 'father-in-law to a very magnificent three-tailed Bashaw' is a different matter. I am deeply interested in your little lady-love, and I am by no means disposed to give up her inheritance to that double-dyed traitor."

"You must remember I have not yet been accepted. I have not even tried my chance."

"Pray do not lose any more time. She would never be such a fool as to refuse you! You are really a very acceptable sort of man."

"Thanks for the compliment. But I hesitate; because I dread the complications which would ensue if she refuses me!"

"Fiddle-de-dee. She won't refuse you! *I* would not refuse you were I a young lady."

Glynn laughed, and then grew grave. "I was rather annoyed yesterday to hear from Mrs. Kellett, who is staying at her cousin's school at Clapham, that she is afraid she is being watched—she is not sure; but of course she is nervously on the *qui vive*. She rarely ventures to Garston Terrace; and the blessed day I found Elsie they had met at that hotel in Holborn to arrange some money matters, as Mrs. Kellett is afraid to write."

"What a dreadful state of things! So it *was* Elsie's voice you heard at Clapham! Was that Mrs. Storrer in the secret?"

"Not altogether. When Elsie first went she thought she was French; afterwards Mrs. Kellett partially confided in her, and between them they prepared the story of her having gone with a family to India, in case of inquiries."

"Well!" said Lady Gethin, "I shall make my preparations for going abroad; and you go and settle things with Elsie and her father. By the way, have you found out how he escaped from the steamer where Vincent absolutely saw him *en route* for America?"

"By a very clever dodge. Lambert waited and watched till he found a needy countryman something of his own height and color, who wished to go to New York. He offered to pay this man's passage from Liverpool if he would go under the name of Lambert. This he readily agreed to. Lambert went to see him off. His representative wore a mackintosh of a peculiar cut, a chimney-pot hat, and a large, white comforter muffling the lower part of his face. Lambert had a brown cloth overcoat, and fur travelling-cap. He and his friend talked together on the deck till the last moment, and then seeing Vincent (of whose presence he had been aware) move off, he slipped behind some shelter with his friend, and changed coat and hat in hot haste; Lambert twisted the comforter round his throat and face, and joined the crowd on the gangway a little behind Vincent. The fellow paused on the pier to watch the rest go by; and Lambert passed him with the utmost *sang-froid*, even stopping to wave his hand to his friend on deck, and then walked smartly on, jumped into a cab, and caught the London train."

"Well done! But the most determined will, the most inventive brain, cannot keep up concealment in these days *if* you are looked for! Suppose you were to see Deering yourself, Hugh?"

"No; the only chance for present peace is to let him suppose that I am ignorant of the truth."

"Perhaps so! I must say I am most reluctant to let that wretch escape."

"So am I; but I think of Elsie before everything. Well, go away and settle everything with her; tell her to be ready to start for the Continent on Monday."

It was late before Glynn reached Garston Terrace; he had had some business to attend to, and took a hasty meal at his club, thus securing a long evening.

Never did the way seem so long. He was resolved that if an opportunity offered, or even if it did not, to avow his affection to Elsie, and try to obtain her promise in return.

When he reached the door, the landlady informed him that Missee "was very much upset, and waiting for him in the drawing-room." The moment he entered she flew to him with outstretched hands, which he took and tenderly held.

"Why have you been so long? Oh! I have seen him. He has followed us here! What shall we do?—how shall we escape?"

"Whom have you seen?" asked Glynn, drawing her to him, distressed at the wild fear in her eyes.

"Vincent!" she whispered. "I saw him from my bedroom about three hours ago; my room is to the front. He did not see me, I am sure; he was looking round when I first caught sight of him, and his back was towards me, so I kept behind the curtain. Oh! Mr. Glynn, it will kill my father, I know it will! What can we do? Will you not help us?"

"I would give my life to buy peace for you, sweetest," cried Glynn passionately. "Give me the right to be with you, to guard you and your father! I love you with all my heart and soul. Give me a little love in return! be my own dear wife. I swear, whether you are or not, that accursed

American shall do you no harm. Elsie, beloved! will you be mine?" He grasped her hands tightly, and held her eyes with his, as if he would penetrate her heart's secret. At first an expression of profoundest amazement flitted over her face, succeeded by a deep burning blush, as she shrank back from him.

"Are you sure this is not compassion?" she asked, in a very low voice.

"Compassion? No; why should it be compassion? Do you not feel, do you not see, that I love you, as men rarely love?" A curious, amused smile stole round Elsie's lips, and her eyes sunk to the ground. "What do you smile at?" asked Glynn, surprised in his turn.

"At your change of mind. Some seven or eight months ago you refused to marry me!"

"How do you know?" cried Glynn, feeling as if the glowing currents in his veins were arrested and turned to ice.

"By means of which I ought to be and am ashamed."

"Tell me!"

"You were sitting after dinner with my father, and I came into my own little room. The curtain was down, but I heard him say something about 'my jewel,' as he so often called me, and," hesitating, "I listened. I know it was shameful, but I could not resist. What struck me most was that he offered to go away, not to see me. I wondered what sort of man you could be to need such an assurance!"

"What could you have thought of me?" cried Glynn. "Can you ever forgive my insane folly?"

"Oh! I did not mind! These plans of marriage are often made by thoughtful parents. You hardly knew me then; it would have been foolish to agree to what might not have been suitable. I did not dream of marrying you. You seemed to me too——"

"Old?" suggested Glynn, more charmed than ever with her sweet, grave simplicity, and thirsting to kiss the lovely mouth that spoke so melodiously.

"No," with a smile, "not old, but grand; I cannot exactly express what I mean. I did not want to marry you. Indeed, I was so taken up with what my father said about keeping away from me, that I did not think much about you."

"Will you think of me now?" exclaimed Glynn. "Look at me, dearest! read my heart in my eyes. Believe me, there is nothing in heaven above, or earth beneath, that I desire as I desire your love!"

Elsie grew a little pale.

"I am half-frightened at the idea. It is not good for you; it is not wise of you; though I am ignorant of the world, I know it must be bad for any man to marry a girl who has been obliged to hide away as I have been—who is surrounded with mystery and fear, and who could never, never forsake her dear father even for you!"

"Even for me! then you love me a little, Elsie?"

"I do!" with a slight sob. "I love you for your loyalty and goodness to my father. I love you"—she stopped and added with gentle solemnity—"for yourself." Yielding to his passionate embrace, she clung to him and burst into a fit of wild weeping that surprised and disturbed him. "I hope it is not wrong to let you love me," she murmured brokenly; "I do not know what is behind, and if we must part——"

"We never shall unless by your special wish, my own, my life. *I* know everything, and you shall know everything by and by. Will you not wait and trust your father and me?"

"I will," she returned, and Glynn felt her "I will" was equal to another's oath. She disengaged herself from his arms, and stood for an instant with clasped hands in silent, prayerful thought. Glynn waited till she stirred, and then taking her hand, began softly to explain to her the necessity of a speedy marriage, and Lady Gethin's wish to take her abroad at once. This Elsie demurred to; she could not leave her father, who, though wonderfully recovered in health, was greatly depressed and despondent.

"Let us go and consult him," said Glynn.

"Oh, yes; I have forgotten him too long. Shall we tell him that I saw Vincent?"

"No, certainly not. The knowledge will not add to his safety, and may injure him. He must leave this——"

"He is very safe here. The house is really ours. Mrs. Kellett took it furnished for a year. The landlady is really her old servant, who knew me as a child. She was here for two months before we came. She will never say anything that could betray us."

"Ah! an excellent plan. But come to your father—we must consult him."

Lambert was reading a newspaper when they entered his room. He was looking stronger and more like himself than Glynn had seen him since they had met in London. He welcomed them cordially, glancing from one to the other, as if perceiving traces of unusual emotion. "Lambert," said Glynn, "we have come to ask your consent. I am so infinitely happy as to have won Elsie's; you will not withhold yours?"

"My God, I thank Thee!" murmured Lambert. "My child—my Elsie, you will be safe now, and I have done with life."

Elsie ran to him, and putting her arms round his neck kissed him over and over again, exclaiming, "No, my own dear father, you will begin life anew; the best of it is to come. He loves you, too; he will help me to make you happy."

When they were a little calmer Glynn began to speak of Lady Gethin's plans, and rather to Elsie's surprise Lambert was eager to adopt them. He declared it would make his mind quite easy to know that his daughter was under Lady Gethin's care; that he would soon be able to travel, and join them with Glynn. He seemed eager that this plan should be carried out.

"Father," said Elsie, taking his hand in both hers, "will you not trust me?—will you not tell me *the* secret?"

"Well, not quite all of it," said Lambert, with a peculiar look at Glynn. "You see, my dear, a long time ago I was foolish enough to get mixed up in a political plot to upset the Government in Ireland. Well, it never came to anything; a blackguard connected with it betrayed everything, and he was murdered out—oh, out in California. Well, unfortunately I was the last person seen with him, and Deering has got evidence that might hang me. Now I don't want a row until I have the means of disproving his assertions. Of course he has an object in all this, and of course you don't believe *I* would take a life?"

"*You*, dear, dear father! No, indeed; but why—why were you obliged to hide *me*? Would it not be better to face it all?"

"I hid you, my darling, because that red devil had a design to remove you from my guardianship on the plea that I was a criminal; and as to facing it, I'll do that when I have counter evidence, which I hope to get."

"Which is only prudent," put in Glynn.

"It is all very strange," said Elsie, trembling visibly. "They cannot hurt him, can they?"—to Glynn. "They shall not. And you," she continued, turning to him, "you wish to marry me in the face of all this?"

"As ardently as if you were the daughter of the proudest potentate in Europe."

Elsie was silent, her bosom heaved, tears hung heavy on her long lashes, and it was only by a strong effort of her habitual self-control that she resisted an outburst of tears.

"You are fit for the best king that ever sat on a throne," cried Lambert: "and Glynn is worthy of you. Now, my darling, go—go write a letter to Mrs. Kellett and tell her everything; Glynn will post it (we are desperately cautious about communicating with Mrs. Kellett), and I will have a little talk with Glynn."

Elsie, who looked shocked and shaken, kissed her father's hand lovingly, and exclaimed:

"You can never be accused seriously. Surely there is no danger? Why does Mr. Deering hate you? I did not believe there was such wickedness except in books."

With an appealing look at Glynn, she left the room.

"It was a good thought," said Lambert, leaning back with a deep sigh, "a very good thought, to make her believe I was mixed up with the rebel Irish; so I *have* been, but not much. Anything rather than the truth. I tell you, Glynn, she must *never* know that I killed her own father, of whom she has still a confused memory, for she has let out that I sometimes seem different from the picture her early memory presents of me. I'd die out-right rather, Glynn. The toils press me closer and closer, but my Elsie will be safe with you."

"As safe as love and care can make her," said Glynn in a low, solemn tone.

"Then it matters little about me," said Lambert, and remained silent for a few minutes with a look of deepest despondency.

"Suppose you let me see Deering on your behalf?" suggested Glynn. "I might——"

"No, no," interrupted Lambert vehemently; "none must meddle with him but me. Once Elsie is away, I will go and see him. If he knows she is safe out of his reach, the black villain, he may come to terms. But he'd do anything for revenge. I believe he could hang me; and he *might* choose to destroy me, and through me my darling. No; I will see him myself as soon as I am a trifle stronger." Lambert rose, and walked up and down the room with a sort of feeble energy very touching. "If I could get out," he said, "I'd gather strength, and I don't want to face that scoundrel till I have the pluck to stand up to him. Oh, Glynn, Glynn, I feel as if he would get the better of me!"

"You must keep up your heart, Lambert, for *her* sake. If Deering knows that Elsie is, or soon will be, my wife, and that you will not press any claim upon him, he will be glad enough to keep quiet."

"May be so, may be so; anyway, you lifted a great load off my mind by making it all right with my jewel. I'll let you go now, I am desperate tired. You go and have a little talk with Elsie while I rest and think what's best to be done. You tell Elsie to get all ready to start with Lady Gethin; and, Glynn, promise me one thing—never let her know that I shot her father. Your hand on it."

"I promise you," said Glynn gravely.

Another delightful hour with Elsie, and he was obliged to go. He had persuaded her to accompany Lady Gethin, and had undertaken not to lose sight of her father until he conveyed him safely to Lausanne. The idea that Deering was plotting against his life had greatly affected her.

"There must be much you do not tell me," she said. "The whole thing seems so strange and terrible."

"No doubt it does," said Glynn. "Later, I am sure, your father will tell you more. Now, my love, my darling, I must leave you."

"Before you go," said Elsie, raising her eyes to his with a grave smile, "tell me your name! I never heard it, and I want to know; I want to call you by some name more familiar than Mr. Glynn in my thoughts."

"I hope you will, dearest. I am called Hugh."

"Hugh! I do not know that name. I like it. It sounds strong." Then, with a vivid blush, but a certain steadiness, as if she had made up her mind, she said, "Good-night, dear Hugh."

Glynn clasped her in his arms, and kissing her tenderly implored her to take courage and believe that her father's innocence would yet be proved, and the villainy plotted against him frustrated.

It was a dreadful wrench for Elsie to part from her father. It needed the united influence and urging both of Glynn and Lambert to persuade her at the last. For the few days intervening between Glynn's avowal and Elsie's departure, Lambert walked every morning in the little garden behind the house, leaning on his daughter's arm. He seemed feverishly eager to regain strength now that the local doctor who attended him ceased his visits, and declared him convalescent.

Lambert, having determined to declare himself to Deering, was less nervously anxious to keep in hiding, and even drove with Glynn and Elsie as far as Lady Gethin's the morning of the day the latter were to start for the Continent. He wanted, he said, to see the last of his child.

"The last for the next few weeks," corrected Glynn.

"May be so, may be so," said Lambert, with a sad ring in his voice.

Lady Gethin made him welcome, and at once evinced an inclination to pet Elsie, who was too much overcome by the dread of leaving her father to heed the minute kindnesses heaped upon her.

"Don't be too downcast about her," said Lady Gethin, who was in her element at the head of affairs and in the centre of a romantic mystery. "When she is clear away, and has had a few cheering letters from her father, she will be all right. The sooner he makes things square with Deering the better. I can never believe he would be such a headstrong idiot as to throw away a splendid estate and high position for the sake of mere revenge."

"Mere revenge! It is a powerful incentive. Remember the ill-health of that crippled boy of his! I doubt if he cares to transmit much to him, and then he no doubt counts on a compromise that he would be left the life-use of the property."

"To which I hope and trust you would never consent, Hugh! I'd take that wretch's skin off, if I could! In fact I have set my heart on seeing *you* master of Denham one of these days. It is infamous that wickedness should flourish in high places."

"I prefer keeping my word to Lambert that Elsie should never know how her real father died, to possessing the finest property in the kingdom."

"Well, you need not break your word; neither need you be Quixotic."

These sentences were exchanged in the dining-room, from which Lambert and Elsie had retired to have a few words in private in Lady Gethin's boudoir. Thither she and Glynn followed them, the latter drawing Elsie into the conservatory adjoining.

"The next fortnight will be awfully blank," he exclaimed, when they were out of earshot. "By that time I trust all difficulties will be surmounted, and I shall be able to start with your father for Lausanne; then I trust there will only be peace and love for you both in the future."

"Would to God this terrible interval were over!" said Elsie, with a quivering sigh.

"I intend to insist on your father's staying with me in my chambers until he is free to join you! Trust him to me, dearest," replied Glynn.

"How good you are! How can I ever thank you enough?" cried Elsie, and carried away by tenderness and gratitude her arms stole round his neck, and she kissed him repeatedly in all the simple sincerity of unhesitating affection.

Soon after, as it was growing late, Lambert proposed returning to his lodgings. He had said good-bye to Lady Gethin, and tenderly embraced Elsie. He had even gone half-way down-stairs when he suddenly paused, and turning back exclaimed, "I must take one more look at her," and ascending to the drawing-room, took her hand in both his own. Gazing intently into her face, he said softly, "My own jewel! Have I made you happy? Will you pardon me any wrong I may have done you?"

"Wrong!—you have done me nothing but good. No father ever made a daughter happier than you have made me."

"Then give me a loving thought now and again. God bless you, my darling. Good-bye, good-bye."

"Only for a little while, dearest, best!" she exclaimed. "Be careful, and come to me soon!"

Lambert made no reply. He hurried into the cab which waited below, and accompanied by Glynn returned to his lodgings in safety.

There was little or no difficulty in persuading Lambert to accept his future son-in-law's invitation. Though greatly pleased to know Elsie was with Lady Gethin, he evidently shrank from being alone, and was in so low and nervous a condition that Glynn insisted on carrying him off to his chambers the day after Elsie's departure.

Here he revived considerably, and was able to receive a visit from Mrs. Kellett. Letters from Elsie and Lady Gethin also cheered him. Still he was not himself, and his restlessness was painful at times.

Glynn carefully avoided any appearance of change in his habits, and went out to dinners and parties as usual. At one of these he encountered Deering, and took the initiative by asking if he had been all this time in the country, as he had not met him anywhere lately.

"I stayed longer than I intended at Denham, putting matters in train for the election, and now that radical fellow Smithson will neither die or retire. But you have been rather scarce lately. I haven't seen you in the haunts of men."

"I think I have been as much about as usual. By the way, is your American friend Vincent in town? I fancied I saw him the other day in Bond Street."

"Vincent! yes; at least he was last week. The fellow is a born detective. He will not give up the chase after Lambert and his daughter. It seems he found out that the woman who brought Miss Lambert up is staying at Clapham, and he has been dodging her, thinking he will track the Lamberts through her. By the way, the American police are duffers: they have at last found out that they have been hunting the wrong man. My own belief is that Lambert never quitted England."

"Perhaps not," returned Glynn. "Are you to be at the Milton wedding next week? Lady Agnes is your sister-in-law, is she not?"

"No, only my wife's cousin; she is not very well,—Lady Frances I mean,—and I have begged off the festivity. I go down to Denham on Wednesday for a few days. I am making some alterations there, and want to look after them."

"Well, good-night."

Glynn returned with so much information for Lambert, who was evidently stirred by it. "I am better and stronger," he said, rising and stretching himself: "I'll take heart, and go talk to him in the midst of his ill-gotten property; maybe he'll hear reason. If not——"

"If not, let *me* see him and remonstrate."

"Anyway, I'll not bear this state of misery any longer; I'll find freedom somehow!" cried Lambert, with an air of determination.

CHAPTER XI.
PAID IN FULL.

"I feel like myself," said Lambert to his host, a few days after the encounter above recorded. "I'll go down to Denham to-morrow, and get my interview with Deering over."

"I am not at all sure you are equal to it, Lambert; you are feverish and excited. Why not wait till he comes up to town?"

"Because I'd feel safer in the country. That fellow is just traitor enough to keep me in talk while he sent for a constable, and made a charge of murder against me. Constables are not so near at hand in the country."

"I think you are mistaken; I don't fancy Deering will cut off his nose to spite his face."

"It's hard to tell. Anyhow I'll try him. I suppose there is some village or town near where a man could put up?"

"There is a village at Denham, I believe, but the railway-station is five or six miles off, I am told, at a town called Earlshall, where no doubt you will find accommodation. I wish you would leave the matter in my hands, Lambert."

"That I cannot; but I think I am sufficiently backed up now to make terms with him."

"I wish you could carry the war into the enemy's country, but that without witnesses would be impossible," returned Glynn. "Make the best terms you can. I agree with you in thinking that no amount of wealth could atone for shocking and grieving Elsie."

"Nothing could!" ejaculated Lambert. "And suppose I am hanged, will you be true to my darling?"

"Yes, even if I believed you guilty of murder, I would stick to her!"

Lambert seized and pressed his hand, and after a moment's silence resumed:

"I'll go and sleep at my own place to-night; it's nearer the Great Northern, and I'll start off to-morrow morning. Maybe I'll be lucky, hey?" He pulled out Elsie's last letter and read it through in silence. "She is happy anyway, but she's wearying for her old dad! God bless her! God bless her, and watch over her!"—with a burst of feeling. "The blessing of a vagabond like myself isn't worth much, but there it is. Maybe but for me she'd be a great lady now, and holding her own in the sight of all men."

"And perhaps but for you she would be in her grave, or struggling in poverty and degradation," said Glynn.

"Who can tell?" rejoined the other, and he left the room to prepare for his return to his own abode.

"I'll not write to you, Glynn," were his last words at starting; "I'll just come straight back and tell you everything."

"Do; and remember that the bolder front you can show, the greater the chance of his yielding. Speak as if you had a cloud of witnesses to back you."

"Ay, that's the plan! I'll try it, if only my nerves keep as steady as they feel to-day."

The chief inn of Earlshall, a small town on the borders of Northshire, was full and busy one morning in May, more than twelve months from the opening of this true history. It was market-day, and the coffee-room resounded with the loud voices and creaking boots of the neighboring farmers, who had looked in for a mouthful and "a drop of drink" somewhat stronger than coffee.

The stables were full of strong, serviceable nags, worthy of the shire which bred them, and the busy hostlers had scarce time to attend to the demand of a stranger, who had been staying for the last two days at the inn, that one or other of them should saddle the horse he had ridden each day since he arrived.

"Hand it over to me, and I'll saddle him myself," he said at length. "I am no fool about a horse, and can generally manage all I want with my own hands." So saying, he proceeded to saddle the steed he had selected, and soon trotted out of the yard.

A stranger was a novelty at Earlshall, and several inquiries were addressed to "mine host," who mixed on pleasant, easy terms with his guests. "The visitor was from 'Lunnon' or from furrin parts." But he knew a horse when he saw one; he had been over to Denham all day long; the landlord's opinion was that likely he came from a newspaper, and he hoped as how he would write up the 'Black Horse.' There was a letter for him that morning from Denham. "I know the paper and the crest stamped outside," added the host; "I dare say he's an electioneering chap."

Unconscious of these comments Lambert rode on, with a grey, set face, and firmly-closed mouth. The letter he had received that morning had been brief:—"I will hear what you have to say, but I do not wish a criminal to cross my threshold. You must meet me by the Deer's Barn in the Beech Wood, about a mile from the village. Any one will direct you." This had no signature, and was addressed to "Mr. Smith." Lambert took it out and read it, gnashing his teeth as he did so.

"The insolent, daring villain," he muttered; "can I do nothing to turn his flank? If he had a gleam of conscience he would be less daringly unscrupulous, but he hasn't enough to make a coward of him. Glynn is my best card, but Deering knows his strength; he has only to lie boldly, and I am at his mercy. But he'll never get hold of *her*: she is safe from him." Then his thoughts wandered away to a bit of country near Mrs. Kellett's home, where in some of his many visits to his darling daughter, he had led her little Welsh pony, while she talked to him of her own simple fancies—of her dearly loved pets, of the wild flowers, and birds, and insects, all of which were so familiar to the country-bred child. What a foretaste of heaven it all was! No soiled sinner purified by purgatorial fires and admitted into the divine calm of celestial joy could have felt more keenly the sense of regeneration and revival than the poor battered wanderer who had devoted himself to the care of his enemy's orphan; and now, as he reflected that he had brought misfortune to the creature he so fondly loved, that he had unconsciously put her and himself into the power of a bold scoundrel, his heart throbbed with fury so wild, so overpowering, that he was almost alarmed at himself.

"I must keep my brain clear," he muttered. "I wish I could get quit of this mad desire to shoot Deering,—it wouldn't do,—it wouldn't do. I could never stroll through cool country lanes with my Elsie again; I never could stroke her bright hair with this right hand if it had committed murder. *That* I have never done. No, Deering, you infernal liar, never!—only in fair fight have I killed my man."

He stopped with an odd sense of confusion, finding that he spoke aloud. His horse stumbling at the same time, the current of his thoughts changed. He began to look forward. Elsie and Glynn were married; they had a beautiful home in London, and he (Lambert) a snug little apartment in Paris—he was more at home in Paris—and they visited each other. Then as years stole on, and he didn't care to move about much, he would sit in his chair, and Elsie would soothe him with her heavenly songs, her delicious voice. Ah well, he might bring Deering to reason; if not, well, he could never meet Elsie's eyes when opened to the knowledge of deeds hidden away in his past life. Anyhow he must commit no act of violence; this 'must not' but thinly veiled a strange kind of

conviction that something beyond himself would compel him to do a desperate deed.

When he reached the very humble little hostelry distinguished by the sign of the 'Saracen's Head,' the crest of the Deerings, which stood beside the village green of Denham, Lambert was cool and collected enough. He dismounted, and desired that his horse should be given a feed of oats, that the girths should be loosened, but the saddle was not to be removed, "for," said he very deliberately, "I want to finish a sketch of the Deer's Barn, and get back to catch the up-train at Earlshall about six, so I may want the horse all in a hurry."

So saying, he walked quietly through the great old wrought-iron gates, and up the stately avenue for a few hundred yards. Then striking to the left, he quickened his pace, and plunged into the beautiful woods all flushed with the first tender green of spring, trampling down the great feathery fronds of the fern, the variously-tinted leafage of the undergrowth, till he reached an open space, from which a heath and gorse-grown upland sloped gently towards some distant hills. And all these grand woods, this beautiful sweep of hills, these groups of dappled deer, that murmuring brown stream, the solemn, stately beeches that clustered round the barn which stood at the verge of the deer-park,—all these were Elsie's; and as he thought, Travers Deering came out from the shadow of the rough, picturesque edifice and advanced to meet him.

The two men came face to face, a little in the rear of the barn, and stood in silence for a few seconds, eyeing each other with deadly hatred; nor was the gaze of the unscrupulous villain a shade less steady or unflinching than that of the man he intended to make his victim.

"Pray why have you taken the trouble to come down here, when you might have seen me in town next week?" asked Deering coolly.

"For various reasons, chiefly because I could not wait."

"Then you have something important, something favorable for yourself to propose. First, where is Elsie? You know?"

"I do."

"Is she in England?"

"No."

"Will you tell me where she is?"

"I will further on."

"Very good. Let me hear what you have to say," taking out a cigar, and striking a fusee he lit it with elaborate composure.

"I succeeded in hiding myself and my child from you and your devilish designs," began Lambert in a voice that vibrated with the anger he could hardly control; "and if I had not been struck down by illness, my girl and I would have been out of your reach at the other side of the world. However, I couldn't carry out my plans, and I know one cannot keep out of sight forever, so I made up my mind to see if we can't come to an agreement. Let us go, and I'll never say a word against you, or meddle in any way."

"Is that all you have to say for yourself?" returned Deering contemptuously. "I thought you had something new."

"So I have! I have found a man who believes my story, and he is a backer not to be despised."

"And he is?" asked Deering, without taking his cigar from his lips.

"Glynn! You know him."

"Ha! and he believes your little romance?"—a look of concentrated fury contracting his brow. "Satisfactory to *you*; but unfortunately men's beliefs are not evidence. Now I have positive evidence."

"Deering!—you are the most accursed scoundrel that ever disgraced God's earth! Were it not for my child, I'd gladly pay forfeit with my life for the pleasure of killing you."

"I dare say! Knowing my man, I am not such a blockhead as to come here unarmed," and he made a motion with his hand to his breast-pocket.

"Good," cried Lambert, and he laughed a peculiar wild laugh. "But this is nonsense," he resumed; "let us talk like reasonable beings. Just see what folly it is to throw away fortune, and all this"—waving his hand towards the trees and upland—"for what?—a whim, a bit of revenge! When you have destroyed me, and planted a thorn in Elsie's heart that'll pierce her through her life long—for you *can* do that, though she's beyond your power to harm more—how will you like to turn out of this grand place, and count every penny in your pocket?"

"I don't intend to do either; I shall be rewarded for my disinterested honesty by keeping the estate for my life. My son, a mere helpless cripple, can exist on a trifle; my lady wife is only half alive as it is, and probably may resign the frail half she possesses before long, then I may marry my sweet cousin, and all will go well and happily when we have hung *you*, you blundering blackguard"—with a sudden flash of rage and hatred.

"Gently," said Lambert, thinking the moment was come to play his trump card. "You'll not be able to carry out your neat little scheme. My Elsie is engaged to Glynn, and will be his wife before three weeks are over. She is staying with Lady Gethin until the wedding takes place!"

Deering was moved at last; he started back.

"What! has Glynn known your secret during——"

"The last month, and more," interrupted Lambert.

"And Lady Gethin?—is *she* equally well informed?"

"She is."

Deering grew deadly white; his sharp, cruel-looking teeth pressed his under lip for a moment of silence before he burst out:—"Infernal idiot! you have driven the last nail into your own coffin. Elsie, Glynn's wife! I'd strangle her with my own hands first! You have left me no alternative. I must in mere self-defence attack *you*. You have shattered your own safeguard! If you have told Glynn and that sharp-tongued old woman, I must not keep quiet any longer. Their credulity does not weaken my position; it is impregnable, *if* I have pluck enough to stand to my guns, *which I have*! You have left me nothing but revenge, and I'll have *that*. Who will believe a word you utter? I'll make your visit here the starting-point of my accusation. You have come to extract money! and threaten me with the claims of Gilbert Deering's daughter. I, having always suspected you, and having recently met Vincent and heard his story, I lay the matter before a magistrate, both to obtain and bestow justice. Then let Glynn marry the *protégée* of a disgraced, detected criminal if he will, nothing shall save *you* from appearing in Elsie's eyes as the murderer of her own father, the destroyer of her life. There! I tell you my plan; repeat it or not as you choose. Your words, your story, your very existence are in vain. I have but to be firm, and you go to a dishonored grave, followed by the horror and disgust of the creature on whom you spent your life!—ay! who, rejected by Glynn, will yet be mine."

Lambert had listened with a wild mingling of fury and despair. He gazed at Deering to see if there was any sign of faltering, of hesitation, but the leader of the rebel angels himself could not have looked more determined to "make evil his good." Contempt as well as hatred gleamed from his fierce light eyes, a sudden sense that all hope was over, that a dark cloud streaked with blood was already rising between him and his darling, his jewel, pressed with maddening force upon Lambert.

Deering misunderstood his momentary stunned silence, and added with a sneer: "I am master of your fate. Find a way out of the dilemma if you can."

"There is *one* way left," cried Lambert hoarsely; and snatching a revolver from his breast-pocket, he fired almost before he ceased to speak.

The ball pierced Deering's right temple. With a groan he fell to the ground, dead, helpless, harmless!

Lambert stood quite still for an instant, his pistol still held out, waiting lest Deering might rise and attack him, but his enemy was quieted forever. Lambert then put up his own weapon carefully, and bending over the prostrate form, took out the pocket-revolver to which Deering had alluded. Examining it he found the six chambers loaded, then aiming low into the brushwood, he discharged one of them, and laid the pistol at a short distance from the dead man's outstretched right arm, as though it had fallen from his hand: all this with singular mechanical deliberateness. Then he turned and walked briskly, not hurriedly, back to the little inn.

A great deadly calm had fallen upon him. There was no more danger from Deering, nothing to fear from his vile projects; but he, Lambert, had died too, he had done that of which he dreaded being falsely accused. He had done with life, but at least he had cleared a venomous beast out of his darling's path; nothing now remained but to efface himself.

"None will ever know the exact truth, and my jewel will always believe the best of me; time will heal up her wounds, ay, soon, soon." He paused and looked round him. How beautiful the country looked; how sweet the air, laden with the odor of violets and fresh grass! He had loved life, and enjoyed it, and done his best in his own rough way, and now he firmly believed he was doing his best still. No horror at his own act thrilled him; he had but executed wild justice. His thoughts grew strangely confused. He fancied at intervals he was going back to Paris to his little home there, and that he would find Elsie at the piano, and Madame Weber knitting. Then he would pull himself together, and think hard of a certain plan he was trying to mature.

Reaching the little inn he called for his horse, and asked for a glass of ale.

"You'll have to ride sharp," said the landlord, as Lambert paid his bill. "I thought you wouldn't be back in time; that's what you artist gentlemen don't think of. We've lots of 'em sketching about Denham woods in summer-time."

"Ah! few have done so complete a bit of work as I have," returned Lambert grimly, as he started at a quick trot.

His horse was fresh and free, and did the distance to Earlshall within the time allowed by his rider. The hostler remarked that the gentleman must have been took ill or summat, he had such a ghastly, dazed look in his face. "Anyway, he did not forget to tip me handsome afore he ran off to catch the train."

Meantime the first and second dressing-bells rang in Denham House, but the master did not come in from the walk he had evidently prolonged. Weldon had come over to dine and discuss business with his employer, and endeavored to keep up a conversation with Lady Frances, sitting in state in the grand solemn drawing-room. The dinner-hour was long past, and Lady Frances grew uneasy. Deering's valet was called, but could give no explanation of his master's absence. Night closed in while search was being made, and then a cold and rigid figure, that a few hours ago was the lord and master of Denham, was brought reverently back, carried by the

gamekeepers and gardeners, and followed by the awe-struck men who had assisted in the search. The revolver, which had apparently fallen from his hand, was recognized by the valet as belonging to his master; indeed he saw it in its accustomed place that very morning. Yet neither Lady Frances or Weldon could accept the idea of suicide. He was so active, so full of schemes, so instinct with life. But there was the incontrovertible fact—Deering of Denham was no more, and Bertie his son reigned in his stead.

Away by the beautiful shores of Lake Leman Elsie Lambert enjoyed a growing sense of security. Lady Gethin was a strong protectress. Lambert wrote cheerfully, and seemed to enjoy his visit to Glynn; and the latter's frequent letters were an ever-increasing source of delight, while it was an ennobling education, in Elsie's estimation, to answer them. With Lady Gethin she grew in favor day by day; her thoughtful softness, her delight in learning, and her delicious voice charmed the somewhat *exigeant* dowager. Again and again she vowed to herself that she would never rest till she had won back that dear girl's rights, and exposed Deering. "I believe every word that good soul Lambert says," was the general climax of her meditations.

Lady Gethin was pondering these things one day as she sat, after luncheon, on the delightful balcony of their hotel overlooking the lake.

She had begun to speculate when Glynn would join them, and what preliminary arrangements would be necessary previous to the wedding, which she hoped would soon take place. The approach of a waiter disturbed her. He brought a telegram. It was from Glynn. "Keep all newspapers, especially English ones, from Elsie; will be with you on Wednesday."

"There is something dreadfully wrong," said Lady Gethin to herself, "and the wrong is with Lambert. I trust the poor man's head hasn't turned with all his troubles. I hope Hugh will write. This is Saturday: one, two, three days to wait and hold my tongue. Why, it is more than human nature can endure."

But though carefully keeping the papers from her young *protégée*, no very difficult task, Lady Gethin searched them diligently herself, and soon found the word of the riddle, first in a column headed "Mysterious Death of Mr. Deering of Denham," followed by all particulars, and an account of the stranger artist, who had been sketching in Denham woods, and had, according to the evidence of the hotel-keeper at Earlshall, received a letter with the Deering crest the day previous to the fatal event.

In another column was an account of a robbery and murder in a railway-carriage between York and London. On reaching an intermediate station, one of the carriages of the up-train was found open and empty, the door swinging to and fro, while the cushion beside it was smeared as if something bleeding had knocked against it. The carpet was displaced, and some sovereigns and loose silver scattered about.

On search being made, the body of a middle-aged man, well dressed, and apparently in good circumstances, was found lying beside the rails some miles back, his head and face shattered, his pockets turned inside out, and at a little distance lay an American revolver. His purse was gone, but a valuable watch was still in his pocket, and an old envelope, with an American stamp, addressed, "M. Lambert, Rue de L'Evêque, Paris," was the only clue to his identity.

After reading these ghastly details, Lady Gethin spent an anxious and miserable time until Glynn appeared. He had sent a hasty line to Elsie, to say he was trying to clear away an accumulation of business in order to be with her on Wednesday.

"I suppose my father will come with him? It is strange he does not mention him. Nor has my father written for several days," said Elsie.

"Oh! Hugh will explain everything when he comes," replied Lady Gethin; who immediately after declared she had a sick headache, and retired to bed, to avoid the distressing sight of Elsie's unconscious content.

Lady Gethin contrived to impress Elsie with the idea that Glynn would not arrive till late in the evening, and so managed to secure a short interview with him before he went in to break his sad news to the orphan.

He looked ill and worn.

"Oh, Hugh! what an awful business," exclaimed Lady Gethin.

"A profound tragedy," he returned. "To *you* I may venture to confess my belief that Lambert first shot Deering and then blew his own brains out. He couldn't have been recognized, poor fellow! His head was so shattered, and the curious thing is, he had on different clothes from any I had ever seen him in. I suspect he bought them somewhere between Earlshall and London. It was the day after Deering's murder Lambert destroyed himself. I have been expecting every day to find that he has been identified in some way with the artist who spent a couple of days sketching at Denham. Of course the watch and a ring, and the man's figure generally, were enough for me. *I* knew who he was fast enough. I attended the examination, and gave my evidence frankly. Nothing was said about Deering. Now let me go to Elsie! I both long and dread to see her."

Lady Gethin led him up-stairs to their private sitting-room, and said, "Elsie dear, here is Hugh sooner than we expected him," and discreetly closed the door.

Glynn paused just within it, and gave himself one moment of delighted contemplation, as Elsie

sprang forward to greet him. She wore a dress of soft grey, and a deep red rose, with its green leaves, at her throat. The evening sun lit up the golden sheen of her hair; she had color in her cheek; the light of joy in her eyes; and he had come to darken all.

"Oh! you have come at last!" she cried, forgetting for one brief moment even her father.

"My Elsie, my love, my life!" he exclaimed, clasping her closely to him, while his heart throbbed with sympathy and sorrow. At the sound of his voice she drew back and looked intently in his face. "Ah! you have brought bad news. My father—he is ill?—he is dead?" A short, breathless pause between each question.

"He is," returned Glynn, solemnly gathering her again to his heart. "He is at peace, and I must be husband and father both to you, my darling."

"Oh, no, no! not dead!" she cried piteously. "I may see him once more. He will speak to me again. Take me to him, dear Hugh!" Breaking away from him: "Let us go at once."

"It would be of no avail, dearest!—you could not even recognize him!"

"How! why! Why did you not send for me when he was ill?"

"But he was not ill, darling! He was killed on the railway; he must have leant against the door of the carriage, and it probably flew open. He fell, and it is supposed was instantaneously killed."

"Shall I never, never see him again? It is too cruel!" She wrung her hands and looked despairingly round her; then with a sharp cry threw herself into his arms, and an agony of tears came to her relief.

With infinite care and tenderness Glynn soothed the poignancy of her first grief, and soon persuaded her she could show no better respect for the dear dead than by fulfilling engagements to which he had agreed. Some months later, therefore, a very quiet wedding took place at Lady Gethin's residence. Glynn's clerical cousin from Clapham and the faithful Mrs. Kellett were the only guests, and gradually time and tranquillity healed the wound which death had inflicted.

But Lambert lived ever tenderly cherished in his daughter's memory, and Glynn found that the best comfort he could give his young wife was by describing the cheerfulness and returning sense of enjoyment displayed by her father during the time he spent with his intended son-in-law. The mortal agony that darkened his last hours she never knew. Even when in the course of time she was obliged to believe she was not his daughter, her sense of loving gratitude was only deepened and exalted.

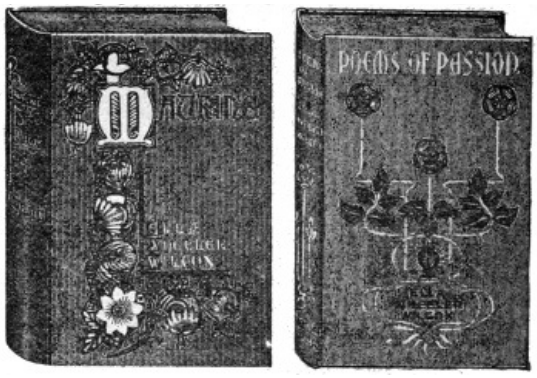
Ten years later. Scene: a reception at Lady Frances Verner's. Speakers: a well-known dowager and a nephew just returned from India, whom she is lionizing.

"Yes; Lady Frances is very handsome, and has a good deal of quiet animation. She was the widow of that poor Deering of Denham, who shot himself some years ago. That stout, broad-shouldered man with the blue ribbon is Admiral Verner, and the pale, delicate-looking lad—talking to Madame Ronika, the great violinist—is young Deering, who writes such beautiful poetry."

"Who is that distinguished-looking woman—the smaller of the two talking to Admiral Verner? She has such a sweet, pensive face, and great blue eyes."

"Oh, you mean Mrs. Glynn. She is greatly admired by artists and those sort of people, and has *such* a romantic history. Her father was murdered by the Indians or the Kaffirs; she was saved by a Yankee gold-digger. *He* brought her up in the Rocky Mountains among an awfully lawless set of men. Then he took her to Paris, and I believe she was to come out as the daughter of the Incas, in a ballet or some such thing, when Glynn saw her and married her, which seemed rather idiotic. However, old Lady Gethin recognized her remarkable likeness to a dear friend who married Gilbert Deering, and whose daughter she proved to be. Then they found the nurse to whom the Yankee had given her, so the Deerings thought it better to come to an amicable settlement. Lady Frances keeps her dower, and young Deering the estates for his life; but this charming Mrs. Glynn, or her son, will succeed him. They are great friends. What splendid diamonds she has!"

"Well!" exclaimed the Indian nephew, "truth really is stranger than fiction."



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