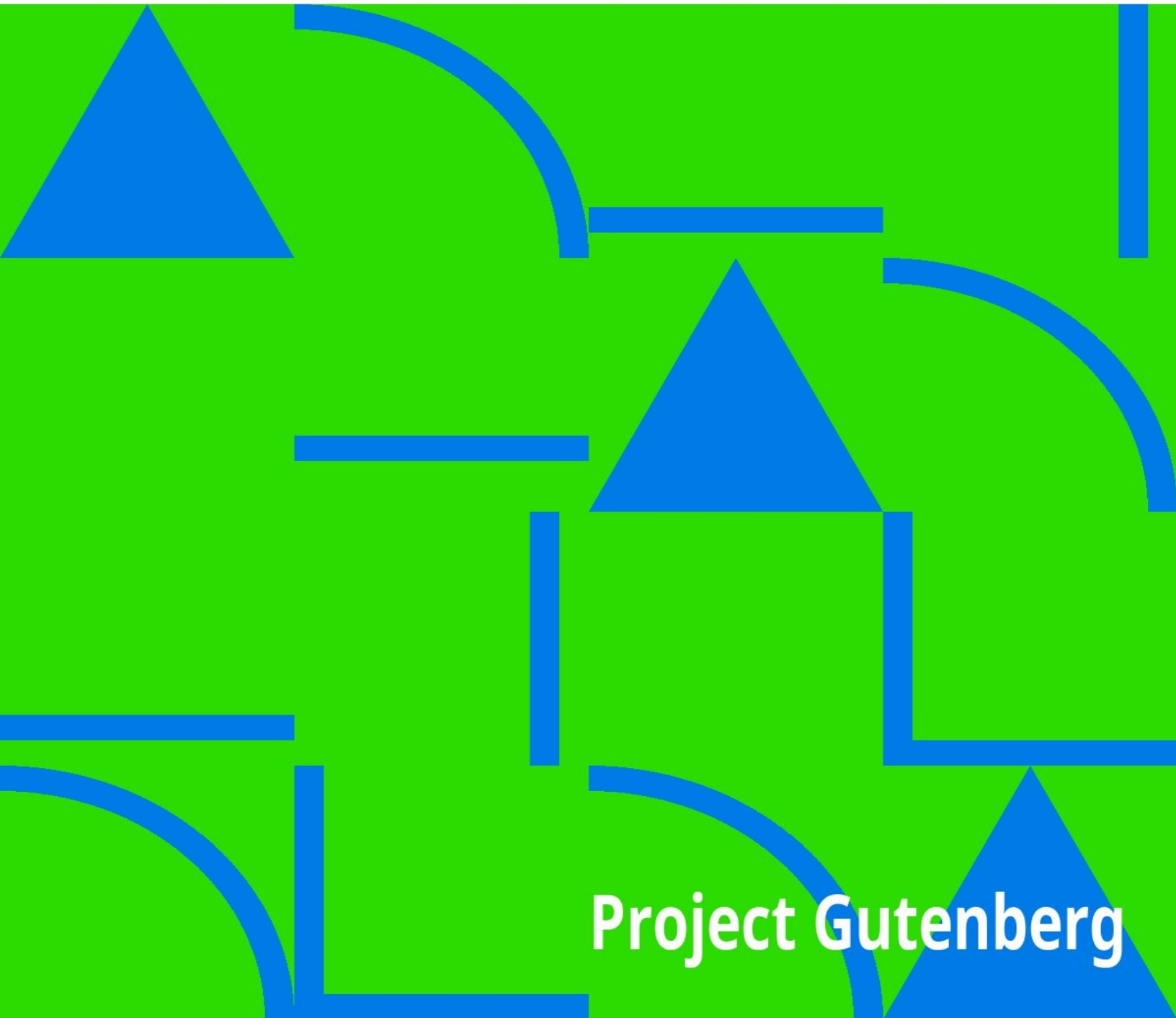
Airy Fairy Lilian

Duchess



The Project Gutenberg EBook of Airy Fairy Lilian, by
Margaret Wolfe Hamilton (AKA Duchess)

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with
almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or
re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included
with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

Title: Airy Fairy Lilian

Author: Margaret Wolfe Hamilton (AKA Duchess)

Release Date: February 9, 2011 [EBook #35228]

Language: English

*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AIRY FAIRY LILIAN ***

Produced by Barbara Tozier, Bill Tozier, Martin Pettit and
the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at
http://www.pgdp.net

Transcriber's Note:

A Table of Contents has been added.

AIRY FAIRY LILIAN

BY
"THE DUCHESS"

AUTHOR OF "PORTIA," "MOLLY BAWN," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK
INTERNATIONAL BOOK COMPANY
3, 4, 5 AND 6 MISSION PLACE

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.
CHAPTER IV.
CHAPTER V.
CHAPTER VI.
CHAPTER VII.
CHAPTER VIII.
CHAPTER IX.
CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.
CHAPTER XII.
CHAPTER XIII.
CHAPTER XIV.
CHAPTER XV.
CHAPTER XVI.
CHAPTER XVII.
CHAPTER XVIII.
CHAPTER XIX.
CHAPTER XX.
CHAPTER XXI.
CHAPTER XXII.
CHAPTER XXIII.
CHAPTER XXIV.
CHAPTER XXV.
CHAPTER XXVI.
CHAPTER XXVII.
CHAPTER XXVIII.
CHAPTER XXIX.
CHAPTER XXX.
CHAPTER XXXI.
CHAPTER XXXII.
CHAPTER XXXIII.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

AIRY FAIRY LILIAN.

CHAPTER I.

"Home, sweet Home."
—*Old English Song.*

Down the broad oak staircase—through the silent hall—into the drawing-room runs Lilian, singing as she goes.

The room is deserted; through the half-closed blinds the glad sunshine is rushing, turning to gold all on which its soft touch lingers, and rendering the large, dull, handsome apartment almost comfortable.

Outside everything is bright, and warm, and genial, as should be in the heart of summer; within there is only gloom,—and Lilian clad in her mourning robes. The contrast is dispiriting: there life, here death, or at least the knowledge of it. There joy, here the signs and trappings of woe.

The black gown and funereal trimmings hardly harmonize with the girl's flower-like face and the gay song that trembles on her lips. But, alas! for how short a time does our first keen sorrow last! how swiftly are our dead forgotten! how seldom does grief kill! When eight long months have flown by across her father's grave Lilian finds, sometimes to her dismay, that the hours she grieves for him form but a short part of her day.

Not that her sorrow for him, even at its freshest, was very deep; it was of the subdued and horrified rather than the passionate, despairing kind. And though in truth she mourned and wept for him until her pretty eyes could hold no longer tears, still there was a mildness about her grief more suggestive of tender melancholy than any very poignant anguish.

From her the dead father could scarcely be more separated than had been the living. Naturally of a rather sedentary disposition, Archibald Chesney, on the death of the wife whom he adored, had become that most uninteresting and selfish of all things, a confirmed bookworm. He went in for study, of the abstruse and heavy order, with an ardor worthy of a better cause. His library was virtually his home; he had neither affections nor desires beyond. Devoting himself exclusively to his books, he suffered them to take entire possession of what he chose to call his heart.

At times he absolutely forgot the existence of his little three-year-old daughter; and if ever the remembrance of her did cross his mind it was but to think of her as an incubus,—as another misfortune heaped upon his luckless shoulders,—and to wonder, with a sigh, what he was to do with her in the future.

The child, deprived of a tender mother at so early an age, was flung, therefore, upon the tender mercies of her nurses, who alternately petted and injudiciously reproved her, until at length she bade fair to be as utterly spoilt as a child can be.

She had one companion, a boy-cousin about a year older than herself. He too was lonely and orphaned, so that the two children, making common cause, clung closely to each other, and shared, both in infancy and in early youth, their joys and sorrows. The Park had been the boy's home ever since his parents' death, Mr. Chesney accepting him as his ward, but never afterward troubling himself about his welfare. Indeed, he had no objection whatever to fill the Park with relations, so long as they left him undisturbed to follow his own devices.

Not that the education of these children was neglected. They had all tuition that was necessary; and Lilian, having a talent for music, learned to sing and play the piano very charmingly. She could ride, too, and sit her horse *a merveille*, and had a passion for reading,—perhaps inherited. But, as novels were her principal literature, and as she had no one to regulate her choice of them, it is a matter of opinion whether she derived much benefit from them. At least she received little harm, as at seventeen she was as fresh-minded and pure-hearted a child as one might care to know.

The County, knowing her to be an heiress,—though not a large one,—called systematically on her every three months. Twice she had been taken to a ball by an enterprising mother with a large family of unpromising sons. But as she reached her eighteenth year her father died, and her old home, the Park, being strictly entailed on heirs male, passed from her into the hands of a distant cousin utterly unknown. This young man, another Archibald Chesney, was abroad at the time of his kinsman's death,—in Egypt, or Hong-Kong, or Jamaica,—no one exactly knew which—until after much search he was finally discovered to be in Halifax.

From thence he had written to the effect that, as he probably should not return to his native land for another six months, he hoped his cousin (if it pleased her) would continue to reside at the Park—where all the old servants were to be kept on—until his return.

It did please his cousin; and in her old home she still reigned as queen, until after eight months she received a letter from her father's lawyer warning her of Archibald Chesney's actual arrival in London.

This letter failed in its object. Lilian either would not or could not bring herself to name the day that should part her forever from all the old haunts and pleasant nooks she loved so well. She was not brave enough to take her "Bradshaw" and look up the earliest train that ought to convey her away from the Park. Indeed, so utterly wanting in decency and decorum did she appear at this particular epoch of her existence that the heart of her only aunt—her father's sister—was stirred to its depths. So much so that, after mature deliberation (for old people as well as great ones move slowly), she finally packed up the venerable hair-trunk that had seen the rise and fall of several monarchs, and marched all the way from Edinburgh to this Midland English shire, to try what firm expostulation could do in the matter of bringing her niece to see the error of her ways.

For a whole week it did very little.

Lilian was independent in more ways than one. She had considerable spirit and five hundred pounds a year in her own right. Not only did she object to leave the Park, but she regarded with horror the prospect of going to reside with the guardians appointed to receive her by her father. Not that this idea need have filled her with dismay. Sir Guy Chetwoode, the actual guardian, was a young man not likely to trouble himself overmuch about any ward; while his mother, Lady Chetwoode, was that most gracious of all things, a beautiful and lovable old lady.

Why Mr. Chesney had chosen so young a man to look after his daughter's interests must forever remain a mystery,—perhaps because he happened to be the eldest son of his oldest friend, long since dead. Sir Guy accepted the charge because he thought it uncivil to refuse, and chiefly because he believed it likely Miss Chesney would marry before her father's death. But events proved the fallacy of human thought. When Archibald Chesney's demise appeared in the *Times* Sir Guy made a little face and took meekly a good deal of "chaffing" at his brother's hands; while Lady Chetwoode sat down, and, with a faint sinking at her heart, wrote a kindly letter to the orphan, offering her a home at Chetwoode. To this letter Lilian had sent a polite reply, thanking "dear Lady Chetwoode" for her kindness, and telling her she had no intention of quitting the Park just at present. Later on she would be only too happy to accept, etc., etc.

Now, however, standing in her own drawing-room, Lilian feels, with a pang, the game is almost played out; she must leave. Aunt Priscilla's arguments, detestable though they be, are unhappily quite unanswerable. To her own heart she confesses this much, and the little gay French song dies on her lips, and the smile fades from her eyes, and a very dejected and forlorn expression comes and grows upon her pretty face.

It is more than pretty, it is lovely,—the fair, sweet childish face, framed in by its yellow hair; her great velvety eyes, now misty through vain longing, are blue as the skies above her; her nose is pure Greek; her forehead, low, but broad, is partly shrouded by little wandering threads of gold that every now and then break loose from bondage, while her lashes, long and dark, curl upward from her eyes, as though hating to conceal the beauty of the exquisite azure within.

She is not tall, and she is very slender but not lean. She is willful, quick-tempered, and impetuous, but large-hearted and lovable. There is a certain haughtiness about her that contrasts curiously but pleasantly with her youthful expression and laughing kissable mouth. She is straight and lissome as a young ash-tree; her hands and feet are small and well shaped; in a word, she is *chic* from the crown of her fair head down to her little arched instep.

Just now, perhaps, as she hears the honest sound of her aunt's footstep in the hall, a slight pout takes possession of her lips and a flickering frown adorns her brow. Aunt Priscilla is coming, and Aunt Priscilla brings victory in her train, and it is not every one can accept defeat with grace.

She hastily pulls up one of the blinds; and as old Miss Chesney opens the door and advances up the room, young Miss Chesney rather turns her shoulder to her and stares moodily out of the window. But Aunt Priscilla is not to be daunted.

"Well, Lilian," she says, in a hopeful tone, and with an amount of faith admirable under the circumstances, "I trust you have been thinking it over favorably, and that——"

"Thinking what over?" asks Lilian; which interruption is a mean subterfuge.

"——And that the night has induced you to see your situation in its proper light."

"You speak as though I were the under house-maid," says Lilian with a faint sense of humor. "And yet the word suits me. Surely there never yet was a

situation as mine. I wish my horrid cousin had been drowned in——. No, Aunt Priscilla, the night has not reformed me. On the contrary, it has demoralized me, through a dream. I dreamt I went to Chetwoode, and, lo! the very first night I slept beneath its roof the ceiling in my room gave way, and, falling, crushed me to fine powder. After such a ghastly warning do you still advise me to pack up and be off? If you do," says Lilian, solemnly, "my blood be on your head."

"Dreams go by contraries," quotes Miss Priscilla, sententiously. "I don't believe in them. Besides, from all I have heard of the Chetwoodes they are far too well regulated a family to have anything amiss with their ceilings."

"Oh, how *you do* add fuel to the fire that is consuming me!" exclaims Lilian, with a groan. "A well-regulated family!—what can be more awful? Ever since I have been old enough to reason I have looked with righteous horror upon a well-regulated family. Aunt Priscilla, if you don't change your tune I vow and protest I shall decide upon remaining here until my cousin takes me by the shoulders and places me upon the gravel outside."

"I thought, Lilian," says her aunt, severely, "you promised me yesterday to think seriously of what I have now been saying to you for a whole week without cessation."

"Well, so I am thinking," with a sigh. "It is the amount of thinking I have been doing for a whole week without cessation that is gradually turning my hair gray."

"It would be all very well," says Miss Priscilla, impatiently, "if I could remain with you; but I cannot. I must return to my duties." These duties consisted of persecuting poor little children every Sunday by compelling them to attend her Scriptural class (so she called it) and answer such questions from the Old Testament as would have driven any experienced divinity student out of his mind; and on week-days of causing much sorrow (and more bad language) to be disseminated among the women of the district by reason of her lectures on their dirt. "And your cousin is in London, and naturally will wish to take possession in person."

"How I wish poor papa had left the Park to me!" says Lilian, discontentedly, and somewhat irrelevantly.

"My dear child, I have explained to you at least a dozen times that such a gift was not in his power. It goes—that is, the Park,—to a male heir, and——"

"Yes, I know," petulantly. "Well, then I wish it *had* been in his power to leave it to me."

"And how about writing to Lady Chetwoode?" says Aunt Priscilla, giving up the argument in despair. (She is a wise woman.) "The sooner you do so the better."

"I hate strangers," says Lilian, mournfully. "They make me unhappy. Why can't I remain where I am? George or Archibald, or whatever his name is, might just as well let me have a room here. I'm sure the place is large enough. He need not grudge me one or two apartments. The left wing, for instance."

"Lilian," says Miss Chesney, rising from her chair, "how old are you? Is it possible that at eighteen you have yet to learn the meaning of the word 'propriety'? You—a *young girl*—to remain here alone with a *young man*!"

"He need never see me," says Lilian, quite unmoved by this burst of eloquence. "I should take very good care of that, as I know I shall detest him."

"I decline to listen to you," says Miss Priscilla, raising her hands to her ears. "You must be lost to all sense of decorum even to imagine such a thing. You and he in one house, how should you avoid meeting?"

"Well, even if we did meet," says Lilian, with a small rippling laugh impossible to quell, "I dare say he wouldn't bite me."

"No,"—sternly,—"he would probably do worse. He would make love to you. Some instinct warns me," says Miss Priscilla, with the liveliest horror, gazing upon the exquisite, glowing face before her, "that within five days he would be making *violent* love to you."

"You strengthen my desire to stay," says Lilian, somewhat frivolously, "I should so like to say 'No' to him!"

"Lilian, you make me shudder," says Miss Priscilla, earnestly. "When I was your age, even younger, I had a full sense of the horror of allowing any man to mention my name lightly. I kept all men at arm's length, I suffered no jesting or foolish talking from them. And mark the result," says Miss Chesney, with pride: "I defy any one to say a word of me but what is admirable and replete with modesty."

"Did any one ever propose to you, auntie?" asks Miss Lilian with a naughty laugh.

"Certainly. I had many offers," replies Miss Priscilla, promptly,—which is one of the few lies she allows herself; "I was persecuted by suitors in my younger days; but I refused them all. And if you will take my advice, Lilian," says this virgin, with much solemnity, "you will never, *never* put yourself into clutches of a *man*." She utters this last word as though she would have said a tiger or a serpent, or anything else ruthless and bloodthirsty. "But all this is beside the question."

"It is, rather," says Lilian, demurely. But, suddenly brightening, "Between my dismal dreaming last night I thought of another plan."

"Another!" with open dismay.

"Yes,"—triumphantly,—"it occurred to me that this bugbear my cousin might go abroad again. Like the Wandering Jew, he is always traveling; and who knows but he may take a fancy to visit the South Pole, or discover the Northwestern Passage, or go with Jules Verne to the centre of the earth? If so, why should not I remain here and keep house for him? What can be simpler?"

"Nothing,"—tritely,—"but unfortunately he is not going abroad again."

"No! How do you know that?"

"Through Mr. Shrude, the solicitor."

"Ah!" says Lilian, in a despairing tone, "how unhappy I am! Though I might have known that wretched young man would be the last to do what is his palpable duty." There is a pause. Lilian's head sinks upon her hand; dejection shows itself in every feature. She sighs so heavily that Miss Priscilla's spirits rise and she assures herself the game is won. Rash hope.

Suddenly Lilian's countenance clears; she raises her head, and a faint smile appears within her eyes.

"Aunt Priscilla, I have yet another plan," she says, cheerfully.

"Oh, my dear, I do hope not," says poor Miss Chesney, almost on the verge of tears.

"Yes, and it emanated from you. Supposing I were to remain here, and he did fall in love with me, and married me: what then? Would not that solve the difficulty? Once the ceremony was performed he might go prying about all over the known

globe for all that I should care. I should have my dear Park. I declare," says Lilian, waxing valiant, "had he but one eye, or did he appear before me with a wooden leg (which I hold to be the most contemptible of all things), nothing should induce me to refuse him under the circumstances."

"And are you going to throw yourself upon your cousin's generosity and actually ask him to take pity on you and make you his wife? Lilian, I fancied you had some pride," says Miss Chesney, gravely.

"So I have," says Lilian, with a repentant sigh. "How I wish I hadn't! No, I suppose it wouldn't do to marry him in that way, no matter how badly I treated him afterward to make up for it. Well, my last hope is dead."

"And a good thing too. Now, had you not better sit down and write to Lady Chetwoode or your guardian, naming an early date for going to them? Though what your father could have meant by selecting so young a man as a guardian is more than I can imagine."

"Because he wished me to live with Lady Chetwoode, who was evidently an old flame; and because Sir Guy, from all I hear, is a sort of Admirable Crichton—something as prosy as the Heir of Redclyffe, as dull as Sir Galahad. A goody-goody old-young man. For my part, I would have preferred a hoary-headed gentleman, with just a little spice of wickedness about him."

"Lilian, don't be flippant," in a tone of horror. "I tremble when I reflect on the dangers that must attend your unbridled tongue."

"Well, but, Aunt Priscilla,"—plaintively,—"one doesn't relish the thought of spending day after day with a man who will think it his duty to find fault every time I give way to my sentiments, and probably grow pale with disgust whenever I laugh aloud. Shan't I lead him a life!" says the younger Miss Chesney, viciously, tapping the back of one small hand vigorously against the palm of the other. "With the hope of giving that young man something to cavil at, I shall sustain myself."

"Child," says Miss Priscilla, "let me recommend a course of severe study to you as the best means of subduing your evil inclinations."

"I shall take your advice," says the incorrigible Lilian; "I shall study Sir Guy. I expect that will be the severest course of study I have ever undergone."

"Get your paper and write," says Miss Priscilla, who, against her will, is smiling

grimly.

"I suppose, indeed, I must," says Lilian, seating herself at her davenport with all the airs of a finished martyr. "'Needs must,' you know, Aunt Priscilla. I dare say you recollect the rest of that rather vulgar proverb. I shall seal my fate this instant by writing to Lady Chetwoode. But, oh!" turning on her chair to regard her aunt with an expression of the keenest reproach, "how I wish you had not called them a 'well-regulated family!'"

CHAPTER II.

"Be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils."—MILTON.

Through the open windows the merry-making sun is again dancing, its bright rays making still more dazzling the glory of the snowy table-cloth. The great silver urn is hissing and fighting with all around, as though warning his mistress to use him, as he is not one to be trifled with; while at the lower end of the table, exactly opposite Sir Guy's plate, lies the post upon a high salver, ready to the master's hand, as has been the custom at Chetwoode for generations.

Evidently the family is late for breakfast. As a rule, the Chetwoode family always is late for breakfast,—just sufficiently so to make them certain everything will be quite ready by the time they get down.

Ten o'clock rings out mysteriously from the handsome marble clock upon the chimney-piece, and precisely three minutes afterward the door is thrown open to admit an elderly lady, tall and fair, and still beautiful.

She walks with a slow, rather stately step, and in spite of her years carries her head high. Upon this head rests the daintiest of morning caps, all white lace and delicate ribbon bows, that match in color her trailing gown. Her hands, small and tapering, are covered with rings; otherwise she wears no adornment of any kind. There is a benignity about her that goes straight to all hearts. Children adore her, dogs fawn upon her, young men bring to her all their troubles,—the evil behavior of their tailors and their mistresses are alike laid before her.

Now, finding the room empty, and knowing it to be four minutes after ten, she says to herself, "The first!" with a little surprise and much pardonable pride, and seats herself with something of an air before the militant urn. When we are old it is so sweet to us to be younger than the young, when we are young it is so sweet to us to be just *vice versa*. Oh, foolish youth!

An elderly butler, who has evidently seen service (in every sense of the word), and who is actually steeped in respectability up to his port-wine nose, hovers around the breakfast, adjusting this dish affectionately, and straightening that, until all is carefully awry, when he leaves the room with a sigh of satisfaction.

Perhaps Lady Chetwoode's self-admiration would have grown beyond bounds, but that just at this instant voices in the hall distract her thoughts. The sounds make her face brighten and bring a smile to her lips. "The boys" are coming. She draws the teacups a little nearer to her and makes a gentle fuss over the spoons. A light laugh echoes through the hall; it is answered and then the door once more opens, and her two sons enter, Cyril, being the youngest, naturally coming first.

On seeing his mother he is pleased to make a gesture indicative of the most exaggerated surprise.

"Now, who could have anticipated it?" he says. "Her gracious majesty already assembled, while her faithful subjects—— Well," with a sudden change of tone, "for my part I call it downright shabby of people to scramble down-stairs before other people merely for the sake of putting them to the blush."

"Lazy boy! no wonder you are ashamed of yourself when you look at the clock," says Lady Chetwoode, smiling fondly as she returns his greeting.

"Ashamed! Pray do not misunderstand me. I have arrived at my twenty-sixth year without ever having mastered the meaning of that word. I flatter myself I am a degree beyond that."

"Last night's headache quite gone, mother?" asks Sir Guy, bending over her chair to kiss her; an act he performs tenderly, and as though the doing of it is sweet to him.

"Quite, my dear," replies she; and there is perhaps the faintest, the *very* faintest, accession of warmth in her tone, an almost imperceptible increase of kindliness in her smile as she speaks to her eldest son.

"That's right," says he, patting her gently on the shoulder; after which he goes over to his own seat and takes up the letters lying before him.

"Positively I never thought of the post," says Lady Chetwoode. "And here I have been for quite five minutes with nothing to do. I might as well have been digesting my correspondence, if there is any for me."

"One letter for you; five, as usual, for Cyril; one for me," says Guy. "All Cyril's." Examining them critically at arm's length. "Written evidently by *very* young women."

"Yes, they *will* write to me," returns Cyril, receiving them with a sigh and

regarding them with careful scrutiny. "It is nothing short of disgusting," he says presently, singling out one of the letters with his first finger. "This is the fourth she has written me this week, and as yet it is only Friday. I won't be able to bear it much longer; I shall certainly make a stand one of these days."

"I would if I were you," says Guy, laughing.

"I have just heard from Lilian Chesney," suddenly says Lady Chetwoode, speaking as though a bombshell had fallen in their midst. "And she is really coming here next week!"

"No!" says Guy, without meaning contradiction, which at the moment is far from him.

"Yes," replies his mother, somewhat faintly.

"Another!" murmurs Cyril, weakly,—he being the only one of the three who finds any amusement in the situation. "Well, at all events, *she* can't write to me, as we shall be under the same roof; and I shall dismiss the very first servant who brings me a *billet-doux*. How pleased you do look, Guy! And no wonder;—a whole live ward, and all to yourself. Lucky you!"

"It is hard on you, mother," says Guy, "but it can't be helped. When I promised, I made sure her father would have lived for years to come."

"You did what was quite right," says Lady Chetwoode, who, if Guy were to commit a felony, would instantly say it was the only proper course to be pursued. "And it might have been much worse. Her mother's daughter cannot fail to be a lady in the best sense of the word."

"I'm sure I hope she won't, then," says Cyril, who all this time has been carefully laying in an uncommonly good breakfast. "If there is one thing I hate, it is a young lady. Give me a girl."

"But, my dear, what an extraordinary speech! Surely a girl may be a young lady."

"Yes, but unfortunately a young lady isn't always a girl. My experience of the former class is, that, no matter what their age, they are as old as the hills, and know considerably more than they ought to know."

"And just as we had got rid of one ward so successfully we must needs get another," says Lady Chetwoode, with a plaintive sigh. "Dear Mabel! she was

certainly very sweet, and I was excessively fond of her, but I do hope this new-comer will not be so troublesome."

"I hope she will be as pleasant to talk to and as good to look at," says Cyril. "I confess I missed Mab awfully; I never felt so down in my life as when she declared her intention of marrying Tom Steyne."

"I never dreamed the marriage would have turned out so well," says Lady Chetwoode, in a pleased tone. "She was such an—an—unreasonable girl. But it is wonderful how well she gets on with a husband."

"Flirts always make the best wives. You forget that, mother."

"And what a coquette she was? If Lilian Chesney resembles her, I don't know what I shall do. I am getting too old to take care of pretty girls."

"Perhaps Miss Chesney is ugly."

"I hope not, my dear," says Lady Chetwoode, with a strong shudder. "Let her be anything but that. I can't bear ugly women. No, her mother was lovely. I used to think"—relapsing again into the plaintive style—"that one ward in a lifetime would be sufficient, and now we are going to have another."

"It is all Guy's fault," says Cyril. "He does get himself up so like the moral Pecksniff. There is a stern and dignified air about him would deceive a Machiavelli, and takes the hearts of parents by storm. Poor Mr. Chesney, who never even saw him, took him on hearsay as his only child's guardian. This solitary fact shows how grossly he has taken in society in general. He is every bit as immoral as the rest of us, only——"

"Immoral! My *dear* Cyril——" interrupts Lady Chetwoode, severely.

"Well, let us say frivolous. It has just the same meaning nowadays, and sounds nicer. But he looks a 'grave and reverend,' if ever there was one. Indeed, his whole appearance is enough to make any passer-by stop short and say, 'There goes a good young man.'"

"I'm sure I hope not," says Guy, half offended, wholly disgusted. "I should be inclined to shoot any one who told me I was a 'good young man.' I have no desire to pose as such: my ambition does not lie that way."

"I don't believe you know what you are saying, either of you," says Lady

Chetwoode, who, though accustomed to them, can never entirely help showing surprise at their sentiments and expressions every now and then. "I should be sorry to think everybody did not know you to be (as I do) good as gold."

"Thank you, Madre. One compliment from you is worth a dozen from any one else," says Cyril. "Any news, Guy? You seem absorbed. I cannot tell you how I admire any one who takes an undisguised interest in his correspondence. Now I"—gazing at his five unopened letters—"cannot get up the feeling to save my life. Guy,"—reproachfully,—"don't you see your mother is dying of curiosity?"

"The letter is from Trant," says Guy, looking up from the closely written sheet before him. "He wants to know if we will take a tenant for 'The Cottage.' 'A lady'"—reading from the letter—"'who has suffered much, and who wishes for quietness and retirement from the world.'"

"I should recommend a convent under the circumstances," says Cyril. "It would be the very thing for her. I don't see why she should come down here to suffer, and put us all in the dumps, and fill our woods with her sighs and moans."

"Is she young?" asks Lady Chetwoode, anxiously.

"No,—I don't know, I'm sure. I should think not, by Trant's way of mentioning her. 'An old friend,' he says, though, of course, that might mean anything."

"Married?"

"Yes. A widow."

"Dear me!" says Lady Chetwoode, distastefully. "A most objectionable class of people. Always in the way, and—er—very designing, and that."

"If she is anything under forty she will want to marry Guy directly," Cyril puts in, with an air of conviction. "If I were you, Guy, I should pause and consider before I introduced such a dangerous ingredient so near home. Just fancy, mother, seeing Guy married to a woman probably older than you!"

"Yes,—I shouldn't wonder," says Lady Chetwoode, nervously. "My dear child, do nothing in a hurry. Tell Colonel Trant you—you—do not care about letting The Cottage just at present."

"Nonsense, mother! How can you be so absurd? Don't you think I may be considered proof against designing widows at twenty-nine? Never mind Cyril's

talk. I dare say he is afraid for himself. Indeed, the one thing that makes me hesitate about obliging Trant is the knowledge of how utterly incapable my poor brother is of taking care of himself."

"It is only too true," says Cyril, resignedly. "I feel sure if the widow is flouted by you she will revenge herself by marrying me. Guy, as you are strong, be merciful."

"After all, the poor creature may be quite old, and we are frightening ourselves unnecessarily," says Lady Chetwoode, in all sincerity.

At this both Guy and Cyril laugh in spite of themselves.

"Are you really afraid, mother?" asks Cyril, fondly. "What a goose you are about your 'boys'! Are we always to be children in your eyes? Not that I wonder at your horror of widows. Even the immortal Weller shared your sentiments, and warned his 'Samivel' against them. Never mind, mother; console yourself. I for one swear by all that is lovely never to seek this particular 'widder' in marriage."

False oath.

"You see he seems to take it so much for granted, my giving The Cottage and that, I hardly like to refuse."

"It would not be of the least consequence, if it was not situated actually in our own woods, and not two miles from the house. There lies the chief objection," says Lady Chetwoode.

"Yes. Yet what can I do? It is a pretty little place, and it seems a pity to let it sink into decay. This tenant may save it."

"It is a lovely spot. I often fancy, Guy," says his mother, somewhat sadly, "I should like to go and live there myself when you get a wife."

"Why should you say that?" says Guy, almost roughly. "If my taking a wife necessitates your quitting Chetwoode, I shall never burden myself with that luxury."

"You don't follow out the Mater's argument, dear boy," says Cyril, smoothly. "She means that when your sylvan widow claims you as her own she *must* leave, as of course the same roof could not cover both. But you are eating nothing, mother; Guy's foolish letter has taken away your appetite. Take some of this

broiled ham!"

"No, thank you, dear, I don't care for——"

"Don't perjure yourself. You know you have had a positive passion for broiled ham from your cradle up. I remember all about it. I insist on your eating your breakfast, or you will have that beastly headache back again."

"My dear," says his mother, entreatingly, "do you think you could be silent for a few minutes while I discuss this subject with your brother?"

"I shan't speak again. After that severe snubbing consider me dumb. But do get it over quick," says Cyril. "I can't be mute forever."

"I suppose I had better say yes," says Guy, doubtfully. "It looks rather like the dog in the manger, having The Cottage idle and still refusing Trant's friend."

"That reminds me of a capital story," breaks in the irrepressible Cyril, gayly. "By Jove, what a sell it was! One fellow met another fellow——"

"I shall refuse, of course, if you wish it," Guy goes on, addressing his mother, and scorning to notice this brilliant interruption.

"No, no, dear. Write and say you will think about it."

"Won't you listen to my capital story?" asks Cyril, in high disgust. "Very good. You will both be sorry afterward,—when it is too late."

Even this awful threat takes no effect.

"Unfortunately, I can't do that," says Guy, answering Lady Chetwoode. "His friend is obliged to leave the place she is now in, immediately, and he wants her to come here next week,—next"—glancing at the letter—"Saturday."

"Misfortunes never come single," remarks Cyril; "ours seem to crowd. First a ward, and then a widow, and all in the same week."

"Not only the same week, but the same day," exclaims Lady Chetwoode, looking at her letter; whereupon they all laugh, though they scarcely know why.

"What! Is she too coming on Saturday?" asks Guy. "How ill-timed! I am bound to go to the Bellairs, on that day, whether I like it or not, to dine, and sleep and spend my time generally. The old boy has some young dogs of which he is immensely proud, and has been tormenting me for a month past to go and see

them. So yesterday he seized upon me again, and I didn't quite like to refuse, he seemed so bent on getting my opinion of the pups."

"Why not go early, and be back in time for dinner?"

"Can't, unfortunately. There is to be a dinner there in the evening for some cousin who is coming to pay them a visit; and I promised Harry, who doesn't shine in conversation, to stay and make myself agreeable to her. It's a bore rather, as I fear it will look slightly heathenish my not being at the station to meet Miss Chesney."

"Don't put yourself out about that: I'll do all I can to make up for your loss," says Cyril, who is eminently good-natured. "I'll meet her if you wish it, and bring her home."

"Thanks, old man: you're awfully good. It would look inhospitable neither of us being on the spot to bid her welcome. Take the carriage and——"

"Oh, by Jove, I didn't bargain for the carriage. To be smothered alive in July is not a fascinating idea. Don't you think, mother,"—in an insinuating voice,—"Miss Chesney would prefer the dogcart or the——"

"My dear Cyril! Of course you must meet her in the carriage," says his mother, in the shocked tone that usually ends all disputes.

"So be it. I give in. Though when I arrive here in the last stage of exhaustion, reclining in Miss Chesney's arms, you will be to blame," says Cyril, amiably. "But to return to your widow, Guy; who is to receive her?"

"I dare say by this time she has learned to take care of herself," laughing. "At all events, she does not weigh upon my conscience, even should I consent to oblige Trant,"—looking at his mother—"by having her at The Cottage as a tenant."

"It looks very suspicious, her being turned out of her last place," Cyril says, in an uncomfortable tone. "Perhaps——" Here he pauses somewhat mysteriously.

"Perhaps what?" asks his mother, struck by his manner.

"Perhaps she is mad," suggests Cyril, in an awesome whisper. "An escaped lunatic!—a maniac!"

"I know no one who borders so much on lunacy as yourself," says Guy. "After all, what does it matter whether our tenant is fat, fair, and forty, or a lean old

maid! It will oblige Trant, and it will keep the place together. Mother, tell me to say yes."

Thus desired, Lady Chetwoode gives the required permission.

"A new tenant at The Cottage and a young lady visitor,—a permanent visitor! It only requires some one to leave us a legacy in the shape of a new-born babe, to make up the sum of our calamities," says Cyril, as he steps out of the low French window and drops on to the sward beneath.

CHAPTER III.

> "She was beautiful as the lily-bosomed Houri that gladdens the visions of the poet when, soothed to dreams of pleasantness and peace, the downy pinions of Sleep wave over his turbulent soul!"—*From the Arabic.*

All the flowers at Chetwoode are rejoicing; their heads are high uplifted, their sweetest perfumes are making still more sweet the soft, coquettish wind that, stealing past them, snatches their kisses ere they know.

It is a glorious day, full of life, and happy sunshine, and music from the throats of many birds. All the tenors and sopranos and contraltos of the air seem to be having one vast concert, and are filling the woods with melody.

In the morning a little laughing, loving shower came tumbling down into the earth's embrace, where it was caught gladly and kept forever,—a little baby shower, on which the sunbeams smiled, knowing that it had neither power nor wish to kill them.

But now the greedy earth has grasped it, and others, knowing its fate, fear to follow, and only the pretty sparkling jewels that tremble on the grass tell of its having been.

In the very centre of the great lawn that stretches beyond the pleasure-grounds stands a mighty oak. Its huge branches throw their arms far and wide, making a shelter beneath them for all who may choose to come and seek there for shade. Around its base pretty rustic chairs are standing in somewhat dissipated order, while on its topmost bough a crow is swaying and swinging as the soft wind rushes by, making an inky blot upon the brilliant green, as it were a patch upon the cheek of a court belle.

Over all the land from his lofty perch this crow can see,—can mark the smiling fields, the yellowing corn, the many antlered deer in the Park, the laughing brooklets, the gurgling streams that now in the great heat go lazily and stumble sleepily over every pebble in their way.

He can see his neighbors' houses, perhaps his own snug nest, and all the beauty and richness and warmth of an English landscape.

But presently—being a bird of unformed tastes or unappreciative, or perhaps fickle—he tires of looking, and flapping heavily his black wings, rises slowly and sails away.

Toward the east he goes, the sound of his harsh but homely croak growing fainter as he flies. Over the trees in their gorgeous clothing, across the murmuring brooks, through the uplands, over the heads of the deer that gaze at him with their mournful, gentle eyes, he travels, never ceasing in his flight until he comes to a small belt of firs, evidently set apart, in the centre of which stands "The Cottage."

It is considerably larger than one would expect from its name. A long, low, straggling house, about three miles from Chetwoode entrance-gate, going by the road, but only one mile, taking a short cut through the Park. A very pretty house, —with a garden in front, carefully hedged round, and another garden at the back, —situated in a lovely spot,—perhaps the most enviable in all Chetwoode,—silent, dreamy, where one might, indeed, live forever, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

In the garden all sorts of the sweetest old-world flowers are blooming,—pinks and carnations, late lilies and sweet-williams; the velvety heartsease, breathing comfort to the poor love-that-lies-a-bleeding; the modest forget-me-not, the fragrant mignonette (whose qualities, they rudely say surpass its charms), the starry jessamine, the frail woodbine; while here and there from every nook and corner shines out the fairest, loveliest, queenliest flower of all,—the rose.

Every bush is rich with them; the air is heavy with their odor. Roses of every hue, of every size, from the grand old cabbage to the smallest Scotch, are here. One gazes round in silent admiration, until the great love of them swells within the heart and a desire for possession arises, when, growing murderous, one wishes, like Nero, they had but one neck, that they might all be gathered at a blow.

Upon the house only snow-white roses grow. In great masses they uprear their heads, peeping curiously in at the windows, trailing lovingly round the porches, nestling under the eaves, drooping coquettishly at the angles. To-day a raindrop has fallen into each scented heart, has lingered there all the morning, and is still loath to leave. Above the flowers the birds hover twittering; beneath them the ground is as a snowy carpet from their fallen petals. Poor petals! How sad it is that they must fall! Yet, even in death, how sweet!

It is Saturday. In the morning the new tenant was expected; the evening is to bring the new ward. Lady Chetwoode, in consequence, is a little trouble-minded. Guy has gone to the Bellairs'. Cyril is in radiant spirits. Not that this latter fact need be recorded, as Cyril belongs to those favored ones who at their birth receive a dowry from their fairy godparents of unlimited good-humor.

He is at all times an easy-going young man, healthy, happy, whose path in life up to this has been strewn with roses. To him the world isn't "half a bad place," which he is content to take as he finds it, never looking too closely into what doesn't concern him,—a treatment the world evidently likes, as it regards him (especially the gentler portion of it) with the utmost affection.

Even with that rare class, mothers blessed with handsome daughters, he finds favor, either through his face or his manner, or because of the fact that though a younger son, he has nine hundred pounds a year of his own and a pretty place called Moorlands, about six miles from Chetwoode. It was his mother's portion and is now his.

He is tall, broad-shouldered, and rather handsome, with perhaps more mouth than usually goes to one man's share; but, as he has laughed straight through from his cradle to his twenty-sixth year, this is scarcely to be wondered at. His eyes are gray and frank, his hair is brown, his skin a good deal tanned. He is very far from being an Adonis, but he is good to look at, and to know him is to like him.

Just now, luncheon being over, and nothing else left to do, he is feeling rather bored than otherwise, and lounges into his mother's morning-room, being filled with a desire to have speech with somebody. The somebody nearest to him at the moment being Lady Chetwoode, he elects to seek her presence and inflict his society upon her.

"It's an awful nuisance having anything on your mind, isn't it, mother?" he says, genially.

"It is indeed, my dear," with heartfelt earnestness and a palpable expectation of worse things yet to come. "What unfortunate mistake have you been making now?"

"Not one. 'You wrong me, Brutus.' I have been as gently behaved as a skipping lamb all the morning. No; I mean having to fetch our visitor this evening weighs upon my spirits and somehow idles me. I can settle to nothing."

"You seldom can, dear, can you?" says Lady Chetwoode, mildly, with unmeant irony. "But"—as though suddenly inspired—"suppose you go for a walk?"

This is a mean suggestion, and utterly unworthy of Lady Chetwoode. The fact is, the day is warm and she is sleepy, and she knows she will not get her forty winks unless he takes himself out of the way. So, with a view to getting rid of him, she grows hypocritically kind.

"A walk will do you good," she says. "You don't take half exercise enough. And, you know, the want of it makes people fat."

"I believe you are right," Cyril says, rising. He stretches himself, laughs indolently at his own lazy figure in an opposite mirror, after which he vanishes almost as quickly as even she can desire.

Five minutes later, with an open book upon her knee, as a means of defense should any one enter unannounced, Lady Chetwoode is snoozing comfortably; while Cyril, following the exact direction taken by the crow in the morning, walks leisurely onward, under the trees, to meet his fate!

Quite unthinkingly, quite unsuspiciously, he pursues his way, dreaming of anything in the world but The Cottage and its new inmate, until the house, suddenly appearing before him, recalls his wandering thoughts.

The hall-door stands open. Every one of the windows is thrown wide. There is about everything the unmistakable *silent* noise that belongs to an inhabited dwelling, however quiet. The young man, standing still, wonders vaguely at the change.

Then all at once a laugh rings out; there is an undeniable scuffle, and presently a tiny black dog with a little mirthful yelp breaks from the house into the garden and commences a mad scamper all round and round the rose trees.

An instant later he is followed by a trim maid-servant, who, flushed but smiling, rushes after him, making well-directed but ineffectual pounces on the truant. As she misses him the dog gives way to another yelp (of triumph this time), and again the hunt goes on.

But now there comes the sound of other feet, and Cyril, glancing up from his interested watch over the terrier's movements, sees surely something far, far lovelier than he has ever seen before.

Even at this early moment his heart gives a little bound and then seems to cease from beating.

Upon the door-step stands a girl—although quite three-and-twenty she still looks the merest girl—clad in a gown of clear black-and-white cambric. A huge coarse white apron covers all the front of this gown, and is pinned, French fashion, half-way across her bosom. Her arms, white and soft, and rounded as a child's, are bared to the elbows, her sleeves being carefully tucked up. Two little feet, encased in Louis Quinze slippers, peep coyly from beneath her robe.

Upon this vision Cyril gazes, his whole heart in his eyes, and marks with wondering admiration each fresh beauty. She is tall, rather *posée* in figure, with a small, proud head, and the carriage of a goddess. Her features are not altogether perfect, and yet (or rather because of it) she is extremely beautiful. She has great, soft, trusting eyes of a deep rare gray, that looking compel the truth; above her low white forehead her hair rolls back in silky ruffled waves, and is gathered into a loose knot behind. It is a rich nut-brown in color, through which runs a faint tinge of red that turns to burnished gold under the sun's kiss. Her skin is exquisite, pale but warm, through which as she speaks the blood comes and lingers awhile, and flies only to return. Her mouth is perhaps, strictly speaking, in a degree imperfect, yet it is one of her principal charms; it is large and lovable, and covers pretty teeth as white as snow. For my part I love a large mouth, if well shaped, and do not believe a hearty laugh can issue from a small one. And, after all, what is life without its laughter?

A little white cap of the "mob" description adorns her head, and is trimmed fancifully with black velvet bows that match her gown. Her hands are small and fine, the fingers tapering; just now they are clasped together excitedly; and a brilliant color has come into her cheeks as she stands (unconscious of criticism) and watches the depravity of her favorite.

"Oh! catch him, Kate," she cries, in a clear, sweet voice, that is now rather impetuous and suggests rising indignation. "Wicked little wretch! He shall have a good whipping for this. Dirty little dog,"—(this to the black terrier, in a tone of reproachful disgust)—"not to want his nice clean bath after all the dust of yesterday and to-day!"

This rebuke is evidently lost upon the reprobate terrier, who still flies before the enemy who follows on his heels in hot pursuit. Round and round, in and out, hither and thither he goes, the breathless maid after him, the ceaseless upbraiding

of his mistress ringing in his ears. The nice clean bath has no charms for this degenerate dog, although his ablutions are to be made sweet by the touch of those snowy dimpled hands now clasped in an agony of expectation. No, this miserable animal, disdaining all the good things in store for him, rushes past Kate, past his angry mistress, past the roses, out through the bars of the gate right into Cyril's arms! Oh, ill-judging dog!

Cyril, having caught him, holds him closely, in spite of his vehement struggles, for, scenting mischief in the air, he fights valiantly for freedom.

Kate runs to the garden-gate, so does the bare-armed goddess, and there, on the path, behold their naughty treasure held fast in a stranger's arms!

When she sees him the goddess suddenly freezes and grows gravely dignified. The smile departs from her lips, the rich crimson dies, while in its place a faint, delicate blush comes to suffuse her cheeks.

"This is your dog, I think?" says Cyril, pretending to be doubtful on the subject; though who could be more sure?

"Yes,—thank you." Then as her eyes fall upon her lovely naked arms the blush grows deeper and deeper, until at length her face is red as one of her own perfect roses.

"He was very dusty after yesterday's journey, and I was going to wash him," she says, with a gentle dignity but an evident anxiety to explain.

"Lucky dog!" says Cyril gravely, in a low tone.

Kate has disappeared into the background with the refractory pet, whose quavering protests are lost in the distance. Again silence has fallen upon the house, the wood, the flowers. The faintest flicker of a smile trembles for one instant round the corners of the stranger's lips, then is quickly subdued.

"Thank you, sir," she says, once more, quietly, and turning away, is swallowed up hurriedly by the envious roses.

All the way home Cyril's mind is full of curious thought, though one topic alone engrosses it. The mistress of that small ungrateful terrier has taken complete and entire possession of him, to the exclusion of all other matter. So the widow has not arrived in solitary state,—that is evident. And what a lovely girl to bring down and bury alive in this quiet spot. Who on earth can she be?

How beautiful her arms were, and her hands!—Even the delicate, tinted filbert nails had not escaped his eager gaze. How sweet she looked, how bright! Surely a widow would not be fit company for so gay a creature; and still, when she grew grave at the gate, when her smile faded, had not a wistful, sorrowful expression fallen across her face and into her exquisite eyes? Perhaps she, too, has suffered,—is in trouble, and, through sympathy, clings to her friend the widow.

After a moment or two, this train of thought being found unsatisfactory, another forces its way to the surface.

By the bye, why should she not be her sister,—that is, the widow's? Of course; nothing more likely. How stupid of him not to have thought of that before! Naturally Mrs. Arlington has a sister, who has come down with her to see that the place is comfortable and well situated and that, and who will stay with her until the first loneliness that always accompanies a change has worn away.

And when it has worn away, what then? The conclusion of his thought causes Cyril an unaccountable pang, that startles even himself. In five minutes—in five short minutes—surely no woman's eyes, however lovely, could have wrought much mischief; and yet—and yet—what was there about her to haunt one so?

He rouses himself with an effort and refuses to answer his own question. Is he a love-sick boy, to fancy himself enthralled by each new pretty face he sees? Are there only one laughing mouth and one pair of deep gray eyes in the world? What a fool one can be at times!

One can indeed!

He turns his thoughts persistently upon the coming season, the anticipation of which, only yesterday, filled him with the keenest delight. But three or four short weeks to pass, and the 12th will be here, bringing with it all the joy and self-gratulation that can be derived from the slaying of many birds. He did very well last year, and earned himself many laurels and the reputation of being a crack shot. How will it be this season? Already it seems to him he scents the heather, and feels the weight of his trusty gun upon his shoulder, and hears the soft patter of his good dog's paws behind him. What an awful sell it would be if the birds proved scarce! Warren spoke highly of them the other day, and Warren is an old hand; but still—but still——

How could a widow of forty have a sister of twenty—unless, perhaps, she was a

step-sister? Yes, that must be it. Step—— Pshaw!

It is a matter of congratulation that just at this moment Cyril finds himself in view of the house, and, pulling out his watch, discovers he has left himself only ten minutes in which to get himself ready before starting for the station to meet Miss Chesney.

Perforce, therefore, he leaves off his cogitations, nor renews them until he is seated in the detested carriage *en route* for Trustan and the ward, when he is so depressed by the roof's apparent intention of descending bodily upon his head that he lets his morbid imagination hold full sway and gives himself up to the gloomiest forebodings, of which the chief is that the unknown being in possession of such great and hitherto unsurpassed beauty is, of course, not only beloved by but hopelessly engaged to a man in every way utterly unworthy of her.

When he reaches Trustan the train is almost due, and two minutes afterward it steams into the station.

The passengers alight. Cyril gazes anxiously up and down the platform among the women, trying to discover which of them looks most likely to bear the name of Chesney.

A preternaturally tall young lady, with eyes like sloes and a very superior figure, attracts him most. She is apparently alone, and is looking round as though expecting some one. It is—it must be she.

Raising his hat, Cyril advances toward her and makes a slight bow, which is not returned. The sloes sparkle indignantly, the superior figure grows considerably more superior; and the young lady, turning as though for protection from this bad man who has so insolently and openly molested her in the broad daylight, lays her hand with an expression of relief upon the arm of a gentleman who has just joined her.

"I thought you were never coming," she says, in a clear distinct tone meant for Cyril's discomfiture, casting upon that depraved person a glance replete with scorn.

As her companion happens to be Harry Bellair of Belmont, Mr. Chetwoode is rather taken aback. He moves aside and colors faintly. Harry Bellair, who is a young gentleman addicted to huge plaids, and low hats, and three or four lockets

on his watch chain, being evidently under the impression that Cyril has been "up to one of his larks," bestows upon him in passing a covert but odiously knowing wink, that has the effect of driving Cyril actually wild, and makes him give way to low expressions under his breath.

"Vulgar beast!" he says at length out loud with much unction, which happily affords him instant relief.

"Are you looking for me?" says a soft voice at his elbow, and turning he beholds a lovely childish face upturned somewhat timidly to his.

"Miss Chesney?" he asks, with hesitation, being mindful of his late defeat.

"Yes," smiling. "It *is* for me, then, you are looking? Oh,"—with a thankful sigh,—"I am so glad! I have wanted to ask you the question for two minutes, but I was afraid you might be the wrong person."

"I wish you had spoken," laughing: "you would have saved me from much ignominy. I fancied you something altogether different from what you are," with a glance full of kindly admiration,—"and I fear I made rather a fool of myself in consequence. I beg your pardon for having kept you so long in suspense, and especially for having in my ignorance mistaken you for that black-browed lady." Here he smiles down on the fair sweet little face that is smiling up at him.

"Was it that tall young lady you called a 'beast'?" asks Miss Lilian, demurely. "If so, it wasn't very polite of you, was it?"

"Oh,"—with a laugh,—"did you hear me? I doubt I have begun our acquaintance badly. No, notwithstanding the provocation I received (you saw the withering glance she bestowed upon me?), I refrained from evil language as far as she was concerned, and consoled myself by expending my rage upon her companion,—the man who was seeing after her. Are you tired?—Your journey has not been very unpleasant, I hope?"

"Not unpleasant at all. It was quite fine the entire time, and there was no dust."

"Your trunks are labeled?"

"Yes."

"Then perhaps you had better come with me. One of the men will see to your luggage, and will drive your maid home. She is with you?"

"Yes. That is, my nurse is; I have never had any other maid. This is Tipping," says Miss Chesney, moving back a step or two, and drawing forward with an affectionate gesture, a pleasant-faced, elderly woman of about fifty-five.

"I am glad to see you, Mrs. Tipping," says Cyril, genially, who does not think it necessary, like some folk, to treat the lower classes with studied coldness, as though they were a thing apart. "Perhaps you will tell the groom about your mistress's things, while I take her out of this draughty station."

Lilian follows him to the carriage, wondering as she goes. There is an air of command about this new acquaintance that puzzles her. Is he Sir Guy? Is it her guardian in *propria persona* who has come to meet her? And could a guardian be so—so—likable? Inwardly she hopes it may be so, being rather impressed by Cyril's manner and handsome face.

When they are about half-way to Chetwoode she plucks up courage to say, although the saying of it costs her a brilliant blush, "Are you my guardian?"

"I call that a most unkind question," says Cyril. "Have I fallen short in any way, that the thought suggests itself? Do you mean to insinuate that I am not guarding you properly now? Am I not taking sufficiently good care of you?"

"You *are* my guardian then?" says Lilian, with such unmistakable hope in her tones that Cyril laughs outright.

"No, I am not," he says; "I wish I were; though for your own sake it is better as it is. Your guardian is no end a better fellow than I am. He would have come to meet you to-day, but he was obliged to go some miles away on business."

"Business!" thinks Miss Chesney, disdainfully. "Of course it would never do for the goody-goody to neglect his business. Oh, dear! I know we shall not get on at all."

"I am very glad he did not put himself out for me," she says, glancing at Cyril from under her long curling lashes. "It would have been a pity, as I have not missed him at all."

"I feel intensely grateful to you for that speech," says Cyril. "When Guy cuts me out later on,—as he always does,—I shall still have the memory of it to fall back upon."

"Is this Chetwoode?" Lilian asks, five minutes later, as they pass through the

entrance gate. "What a charming avenue!"—putting her head out of the window, "and so dark. I like it dark; it reminds me of"—she pauses, and two large tears come slowly, slowly into her blue eyes and tremble there—"my home," she says in a low tone.

"You must try to be happy with us," Cyril says, kindly, taking one of her hands and pressing it gently, to enforce his sympathy; and then the horses draw up at the hall door, and he helps her to alight, and presently she finds herself within the doors of Chetwoode.

CHAPTER IV.

"Ye scenes of my childhood, whose loved recollection
Embitters the present, compared with the past."—BYRON.

When Lady Chetwoode, who is sitting in the drawing-room, hears the carriage draw up to the door, she straightens herself in her chair, smoothes down the folds of her black velvet gown with rather nervous fingers, and prepares for an unpleasant surprise. She hears Cyril's voice in the hall inquiring where his mother is, and, rising to her feet, she makes ready to receive her new ward.

She has put on what she fondly hopes is a particularly gracious air, but which is in reality a palpable mixture of fear and uncertainty. The door opens; there is a slight pause; and then Lilian, slight, and fair, and pretty, stands upon the threshold.

She is very pale, partly through fatigue, but much more through nervousness and the self-same feeling of uncertainty that is weighing down her hostess. As her eyes meet Lady Chetwoode's they take an appealing expression that goes straight to the heart of that kindest of women.

"You have arrived, my dear," she says, a ring of undeniable cordiality in her tone, while from her face all the unpleasant fear has vanished. She moves forward to greet her guest, and as Lilian comes up to her takes the fair sweet face between her hands and kisses her softly on each cheek.

"You are like your mother," she says, presently, holding the girl a little way from her and regarding her with earnest attention. "Yes,—very like your mother, and she was beautiful. You are welcome to Chetwoode, my dear child."

Lilian, who is feeling rather inclined to cry, does not trust herself to make any spoken rejoinder, but, putting up her lips of her own accord, presses them gratefully to Lady Chetwoode's, thereby ratifying the silent bond of friendship that without a word has on the instant been sealed between the old woman and the young one.

A great sense of relief has fallen upon Lady Chetwoode. Not until now, when her fears have been proved groundless, does she fully comprehend the amount of

uneasiness and positive horror with which she has regarded the admittance of a stranger into her happy home circle. The thought that something unrefined, disagreeable, unbearable, might be coming has followed like a nightmare for the past week, but now, in the presence of this lovely child, it has fled away ashamed, never to return.

Lilian's delicate, well-bred face and figure, her small hands, her graceful movements, her whole air, proclaim her one of the world to which Lady Chetwoode belongs, and the old lady, who is aristocrat to her fingers' ends, hails the fact with delight. Her beauty alone had almost won her cause, when she cast that beseeching glance from the doorway; and now when she lets the heavy tears grow in her blue eyes, all doubt is at end, and "almost" gives way to "quite."

Henceforth she is altogether welcome at Chetwoode, as far as its present gentle mistress is concerned.

"Cyril took care of you, I hope?" says Lady Chetwoode, glancing over her guest's head at her second son, and smiling kindly.

"Great care of me," returning the smile.

"But you are tired, of course; it is a long journey, and no doubt you are glad to reach home," says Lady Chetwoode, using the word naturally. And though the mention of it causes Lilian a pang, still there is something tender and restful about it too, that gives some comfort to her heart.

"Perhaps you would like to go to your room," continues Lady Chetwoode, thoughtfully, "though I fear your maid cannot have arrived yet."

"Miss Chesney, like Juliet, boasts a nurse," says Cyril; "she scorns to travel with a mere maid."

"My nurse has always attended me," says Lilian, laughing and blushing. "She has waited on me since I was a month old. I should not know how to get on without her, and I am sure she could not get on without me. I think she is far better than any maid I could get."

"She must have an interest in you that no new-comer could possibly have," says Lady Chetwoode, who is in the humor to agree with anything Lilian may say, so thankful is she to her for being what she is. And yet so strong is habit that involuntarily, as she speaks, her eyes seek Lilian's hair, which is dressed to perfection. "I have no doubt she is a treasure,"—with an air of conviction.

"Come with me, my dear."

They leave the room together. In the hall the housekeeper, coming forward, says respectfully:

"Shall I take Miss Chesney to her room, my lady?"

"No, Matthews," says Lady Chetwoode, graciously; "it will give me pleasure to take her there myself."

By which speech all the servants are at once made aware that Miss Chesney is already in high favor with "my lady," who never, except on very rare occasions, takes the trouble to see personally after her visitors' comfort.

* * * * * * *

When Lilian has been ten minutes in her room Mrs. Tipping arrives, and is shown up-stairs, where she finds her small mistress evidently in the last stage of despondency. These ten lonely minutes have been fatal to her new-born hopes, and have reduced her once more to the melancholy frame of mind in which she left her home in the morning. All this the faithful Tipping sees at a glance, and instantly essays to cheer her.

Silently and with careful fingers she first removes her hat, then her jacket, then she induces her to stand up, and, taking off her dress, throws round her a white wrapper taken from a trunk, and prepares to brush the silky yellow hair that for eighteen years has been her own to dress and tend and admire.

"Eh, Miss Lilian, child, but it's a lovely place!" she says, presently, this speech being intended as a part of the cheering process.

"It seems a fine place," says the "child," indifferently.

"Fine it is indeed. Grander even than the Park, I'm thinking."

"'Grander than the Park'!" says Miss Chesney, rousing to unexpected fervor. "How can you say that? Have you grown fickle, nurse? There is no place to be compared to the Park, not one in all the world. You can think as you please, of course,"—with reproachful scorn,—"but it is *not* grander than the Park."

"I meant larger, ninny," soothingly.

"It is not larger."

"But, darling, how can you say so when you haven't been round it?"

"How can *you* say so when *you* haven't been round it?"

This is a poser. Nurse meditates a minute and then says:

"Thomas—that's the groom that drove me—says it is."

"Thomas!"—with a look that, had the wretched Thomas been on the spot, would infallibly have reduced him to ashes; "and what does Thomas know about it? It is *not* larger."

Silence.

"Indeed, my bairn, I think you might well be happy here," says nurse, tenderly returning to the charge.

"I don't want you to think about me at all," says Miss Chesney, in trembling tones. "You agreed with Aunt Priscilla that I ought to leave my dear, dear home, and I shall never forgive you for it. I am not happy here. I shall never be happy here. I shall die of fretting for the Park, and when I am *dead* you will perhaps be satisfied."

"Miss Lilian!"

"You shan't brush my hair any more," says Miss Lilian, dexterously evading the descent of the brush. "I can do it for myself very well. You are a traitor."

"I am sorry, Miss Chesney, if I have displeased you," says nurse, with much dignity tempered with distress: only when deeply grieved and offended does she give her mistress her full title.

"How dare you call me Miss Chesney!" cries the young lady, springing to her feet. "It is very unkind of you, and just now too, when I am all alone in a strange house. Oh, nurse!" throwing her arms round the neck of that devoted and long-suffering woman, and forgetful of her resentment, which indeed was born only of her regret, "I am so unhappy, and lonely, and sorry! What shall I do?"

"How can I tell you, my lamb?"—caressing with infinite affection the golden head that lies upon her bosom. "All that I say only vexes you."

"No, it doesn't: I am wicked when I make you think that. After all,"—raising her face—"I am not quite forsaken; I have you still, and you will never leave me."

"Not unless I die, my dear," says nurse, earnestly. "And, Miss Lilian, how can you look at her ladyship without knowing her to be a real friend. And Mr. Chetwoode too; and perhaps Sir Guy will be as nice, when you see him."

"Perhaps he won't," ruefully.

"That's nonsense, my dear. Let us look at the bright side of things always. And by and by Master Taffy will come here on a visit, and then it will be like old times. Come, now, be reasonable, child of my heart," says nurse, "and tell me, won't you look forward to having Master Taffy here?"

"I wish he was here now," says Lilian, visibly brightening. "Yes; perhaps they will ask him. But, nurse, do you remember when last I saw Taffy it was at——"

Here she shows such unmistakable symptoms of relapsing into the tearful mood again, that nurse sees the necessity of changing the subject.

"Come, my bairn, let me dress you for dinner," she says, briskly, and presently, after a little more coaxing, she succeeds so well that she sends her little mistress down to the drawing-room, looking her loveliest and her best.

CHAPTER V.

"Thoughtless of beauty, she was beauty's self,
Recluse amid the close-embowering woods."
—THOMSON.

Next morning, having enjoyed the long and dreamless sleep that belongs to the heart-whole, Lilian runs down to the breakfast-room, with the warm sweet flush of health and youth upon her cheeks. Finding Lady Chetwoode and Cyril already before her, she summons all her grace to her aid and tries to look ashamed of herself.

"Am I late?" she asks, going up to Lady Chetwoode and giving her a little caress as a good-morning. Her very touch is so gentle and childish and loving that it sinks straight into the deepest recesses of one's heart.

"No. Don't be alarmed. I have only just come down myself. You will soon find us out to be some of the laziest people alive."

"I am glad of it: I like lazy people," says Lilian; "all the rest seem to turn their lives into one great worry."

"Will you not give me a good-morning, Miss Chesney?" says Cyril, who is standing behind her.

"Good-morning," putting her hand into his.

"But that is not the way you gave it to my mother," in an aggrieved tone.

"No?—Oh!"—as she comprehends,—"but you should remember how much more deserving your mother is."

"With sorrow I acknowledge the truth of your remark," says Cyril, as he hands her her tea.

"Cyril is our naughty boy," Lady Chetwoode says; "we all spend our lives making allowances for Cyril. You must not mind what he says. I hope you slept well, Lilian; there is nothing does one so much good as a sound sleep, and you looked quite pale with fatigue last night. You see"—smiling—"how well I know

your name. It is very familiar to me, having been your dear mother's."

"It seems strangely familiar to me also, though I never know your mother," says Cyril. "I don't believe I shall ever be able to call you Miss Chesney. Would it make you very angry if I called you Lilian?"

"Indeed, no; I shall be very much obliged to you. I should hardly know myself by the more formal title. You shall call me Lilian, and I shall call you Cyril,—if you don't mind."

"I don't think I do,—much," says Cyril; so the compact is signed.

"Guy will be here surely by luncheon," says Lady Chetwoode, with a view of giving her guest pleasure.

"Oh! will he really?" says Lilian, in a quick tone, suggestive of dismay.

"I am sure of it," says Guy's mother fondly: "he never breaks his word."

"Of course not," thinks Lilian to herself. "Fancy a paragon going wrong! How I hate a man who never breaks his word! Why, the Medes and Persians would be weak-minded compared with him."

"I suppose not," she says aloud, rather vaguely.

"You seem to appreciate the idea of your guardian's return," says Cyril, with a slight smile, having read half her thoughts correctly. "Does the mere word frighten you? I should like to know your real opinion of what a guardian ought to be."

"How can I have an opinion on the subject when I have never seen one?"

"Yet a moment ago I saw by your face you were picturing one to yourself."

"If so, it could scarcely be Sir Guy,—as he is not old."

"Not very. He has still a few hairs and a few teeth remaining. But won't you then answer my question? What is your ideal guardian like?"

"If you press it I shall tell you, but you must not betray me to Sir Guy," says Lilian, turning to include Lady Chetwoode in her caution. "My ideal is always a lean old gentleman of about sixty, with a stoop, and any amount of determination. He has a hooked nose on which gold-rimmed spectacles eternally stride; eyes that look one through and through; a mouth full of trite phrases,

unpleasant maxims, and false teeth; and a decided tendency toward the suppression of all youthful follies."

"Guy will be an agreeable surprise. I had no idea you could be so severe."

"Nor am I. You must not think me so," says Lilian, blushing warmly and looking rather sorry for having spoken; "but you know you insisted on an answer. Perhaps I should not have spoken so freely, but that I know my real guardian is not at all like my ideal."

"How do you know? Perhaps he too is toothless, old, and unpleasant. He is a great deal older than I am."

"He can't be a great deal older."

"Why?"

"Because"—with a shy glance at the gentle face behind the urn—"Lady Chetwoode looks so young."

She blushes again as she says this, and regards her hostess with an air of such thorough good faith as wins that lady's liking on the spot.

"You are right," says Cyril, laughing; "she *is* young. She is never to grow old, because her 'boys,' as she calls us, object to old women. You may have heard of 'perennial spring;' well, that is another name for my mother. But you must not tell her so, because she is horribly conceited, and would lead us an awful life if we didn't keep her down."

"Cyril, my dear!" says Lady Chetwoode, laughing, which is about the heaviest reproof she ever delivers.

All this time, her breakfast being finished, Lilian has been carefully and industriously breaking up all the bread left upon her plate, until now quite a small pyramid stands in the centre of it.

Cyril, having secretly crumbled some of his, now, stooping forward, places it upon the top of her hillock.

"I haven't the faintest idea what you intend doing with it," he says, "but, as I am convinced you have some grand project in view, I feel a mean desire to be associated with it in some way by having a finger in the pie. Is it for a pie? I am dying of vulgar curiosity."

"I!"—with a little shocked start; "it doesn't matter, I—I quite forgot. I——"

She presses her hand nervously down upon the top of her goodly pile, and suppresses the gay little erection until it lies prostrate on her plate, where even then it makes a very fair show.

"You meant it for something, my dear, did you not?" asks Lady Chetwoode, kindly.

"Yes, for the birds," says the girl, turning upon her two great earnest eyes that shine like stars through regretful tears. "At home I used to collect all the broken bread for them every morning. And they grew so fond of me, the very robins used to come and perch upon my shoulders and eat little bits from my lips. There was no one to frighten them. There was only me, and I loved them. When I knew I must leave the Park,"—a sorrowful quiver making her voice sad,—"I determined to break my going gently to them, and at first I only fed them every second day,—in person,—and then only every third day, and at last only once a week, until"—in a low tone—"they forgot me altogether."

"Ungrateful birds," says Cyril, with honest disgust, something like moisture in his own eyes, so real is her grief.

"Yes, that was the worst of all, to be so *soon* forgotten, and I had fed them without missing a day for five years. But they were not ungrateful; why should they remember me, when they thought I had tired of them? Yet I always broke the bread for them every morning, though I would not give it myself, and to-day"—she sighs—"I forgot I was not at home."

"My dear," says Lady Chetwoode, laying her own white, plump, jeweled hand upon Lilian's slender, snowy one, as it lies beside her on the table, "you flatter me very much when you say that even for a moment you felt this house home. I hope you will let the feeling grow in you, and will try to remember that here you have a true welcome forever, until you wish to leave us. And as for the birds, I too love them,—dear, pretty creatures,—and I shall take it as a great kindness, my dear Lilian, if every morning you will gather up the crumbs and give them to your little feathered friends."

"How good you are!" says Lilian, gratefully, turning her small palm upward so as to give Lady Chetwoode's hand a good squeeze. "I know I shall be happy here. And I am so glad you like the birds; perhaps here they may learn to love me, too. Do you know, before leaving the Park, I wrote a note to my cousin,

asking him not to forget to give them bread every day?—but young men are so careless,"—in a disparaging tone,—"I dare say he won't take the trouble to see about it."

"I am a young man," remarks Mr. Chetwoode, suggestively.

"Yes, I know it," returns Miss Chesney, coolly.

"I dare say your cousin will think of it," says Lady Chetwoode, who has a weakness for young men, and always believes the best of them. "Archibald is very kind-hearted."

"You know him?"—surprised.

"Very well, indeed. He comes here almost every autumn to shoot with the boys. You know, his own home is not ten miles from Chetwoode."

"I did not know. I never thought of him at all until I knew he was to inherit the Park. Do you think he will come here this autumn?"

"I hope so. Last year he was abroad, and we saw nothing of him; but now he has come home I am sure he will renew his visits. He is a great favorite of mine; I think you, too, will like him."

"Don't be too sanguine," says Lilian; "just now I regard him as a usurper; I feel as though he had stolen my Park."

"Marry him," says Cyril, "and get it back again. Some more tea, Miss—Lilian?"

"If you please—Cyril,"—with a light laugh. "You see, it comes easier to me than to you, after all."

"*Place aux dames!* I felt some embarrassment about commencing. In the future I shall put my *mauvaise honte* in my pocket, and regard you as something I have always longed for,—that is, a sister."

"Very well, and you must be very good to me," says Lilian, "because never having had one, I have a very exalted idea of what a brother should be."

"How shall you amuse yourself all the morning, child?" asks Lady Chetwoode. "I fear you're beginning by thinking us stupid."

"Don't trouble about me," says Lilian. "If I may, I should like to go out and take a run round the gardens alone. I can always make acquaintance with places

quicker if left to find them out for myself."

When breakfast is over, and they have all turned their backs with gross ingratitude upon the morning-room, she dons her hat and sallies forth bent on discovery.

Through the gardens she goes, admiring the flowers, pulling a blossom or two, making love to the robins and sparrows, and gay little chaffinches, that sit aloft in the branches and pour down sonnets on her head. The riotous butterflies, skimming hither and thither in the bright sunshine, hail her coming, and rush with wanton joy across her eyes, as though seeking to steal from them a lovelier blue for their soft wings. The flowers, the birds, the bees, the amorous wind, all woo this creature, so full of joy and sweetness and the unsurpassable beauty of youth.

She makes a rapid rush through all the hothouses, feeling almost stifled in them this day, so rich in sun, and, gaining the orchard, eats a little fruit, and makes a lasting conquest of Michael, the head-gardener, who, when she has gone into generous raptures over his arrangements, becomes her abject slave on the spot, and from that day forward acknowledges no power superior to hers.

Tiring of admiration, she leaves the garrulous old man, and wanders away over the closely-shaven lawn, past the hollies, into the wood beyond, singing as she goes, as is her wont.

In the deep green wood a delicious sense of freedom possesses her; she walks on, happy, unsuspicious of evil to come, free of care (oh, that we all were so!), with nothing to chain her thoughts to earth, or compel her to dream of aught but the sufficing joy of living, the glad earth beneath her, the brilliant foliage around, the blue heavens above her head.

Alas! alas! how short is the time that lies between the child and the woman! the intermediate state when, with awakened eyes and arms outstretched, we inhale the anticipation of life, is as but one day in comparison with all the years of misery and uncertain pleasure to be eventually derived from the reality thereof!

Coming to a rather high wall, Lilian pauses, but not for long. There are few walls either in Chetwoode or elsewhere likely to daunt Miss Chesney, when in the humor for exploring.

Putting one foot into a friendly crevice, and holding on valiantly to the upper

stones, she climbs, and, gaining the top, gazes curiously around.

As she turns to survey the land over which she has traveled, a young man emerges from among the low-lying brushwood, and comes quickly forward. He is clad in a light-gray suit of tweed, and has in his mouth a meerschaum pipe of the very latest design.

He is very tall, very handsome, thoughtful in expression. His hair is light brown, —what there is of it,—his barber having left him little to boast of except on the upper lip, where a heavy, drooping moustache of the same color grows unrebuked. He is a little grave, a little indolent, a good deal passionate. The severe lines around his well-cut mouth are softened and counterbalanced by the extreme friendliness of his kind, dark eyes, that are so dark as to make one doubt whether their blue is not indeed black.

Lilian, standing on her airy perch, is still singing, and imparting to the surrounding scenery the sad story of "Barb'ra Allen's" vile treatment of her adoring swain, and consequent punishment, when the crackling of leaves beneath a human foot causing her to turn, she finds herself face to face with a stranger not a hundred yards away.

The song dies upon her lips, an intense desire to be elsewhere gains upon her. The young man in gray, putting his meerschaum in his pocket as a concession to this unexpected warbler, advances leisurely; and Lilian, feeling vaguely conscious that the top of a wall, though exalted, is not the most dignified situation in the world, trusting to her activity, springs to the ground, and regains with mother earth her self-respect.

"How could you be so foolish? I do hope you are not hurt," says the gray young man, coming forward anxiously.

"Not in the least, thank you," smiling so adorably that he forgets to speak for a moment or two. Then he says with some hesitation, as though in doubt:

"Am I addressing my—ward?"

"How can I be sure," replies she, also in doubt, "until I know whether indeed you are my—guardian?"

"I am Guy Chetwoode," says he, laughing, and raising his hat.

"And I am Lilian Chesney," replies she, smiling in return, and making a pretty

old-fashioned reverence.

"Then now I suppose we may shake hands without any breach of etiquette, and swear eternal friendship," extending his hand.

"I shall reserve my oath until later on," says Miss Chesney, demurely, but she gives him her hand nevertheless, with unmistakable *bonhommie*. "You are going home?" glancing up at him from under her broad-brimmed hat. "If so, I shall go with you, as I am a little tired."

"But this wall," says Guy, looking with considerable doubt upon the uncompromising barrier on the summit of which he had first seen her. "Had we not better go round?"

"A thousand times no. What!"—gayly—"to be defeated by such a simple obstacle as that? I have surmounted greater difficulties than that wall many a time. If you will get up and give me your hands, I dare say I shall be able to manage it."

Thus adjured, Guy climbs, and, gaining the top, stoops to give her the help desired; she lays her hand in his, and soon he draws her in triumph to his side.

"Now to get down," he says, laughing. "Wait." He jumps lightly into the next field, and, turning, holds out his arms to her. "You must not risk your neck the second time," he says. "When I saw you give that tremendous leap a minute ago, my blood froze in my veins. Such terrible exertion was never meant for—a fairy!"

"Am I so very small?" says Lilian. "Well, take me down, then."

She leans toward him, and gently, reverentially he takes her in his arms and places her on the ground beside him. With such a slight burden to lift he feels himself almost a Hercules. The whole act does not occupy half a minute, and already he wishes vaguely it did not take so *very* short a time to bring a pretty woman from a wall to the earth beneath. In some vague manner he understands that for him the situation had its charm.

Miss Chesney is thoroughly unembarrassed.

"There is something in having a young guardian, after all," she says, casting upon him a glance half shy half merry, wholly sweet. She lays a faint emphasis upon the "young."

"You have had doubts on the subject, then?"

"Serious doubts. But I see there is truth in the old saying that 'there are few things so bad but that they might have been worse.'"

"Do you mean to tell me that I am 'something bad'?"

"No"—laughing; "how I wish I could! It is your superiority frightens me. I hear I must look on you as something superlatively good."

"How shocking! And in what way am I supposed to excel my brethren?"

"In every way," with a good deal of malice: "I have been bred in the belief that you are a *rara avis*, a model, a——"

"Your teachers have done me a great injury. I shudder when I contemplate the bitter awakening you must have when you come to know me better."

"I hope so. I dare say"—naively—"I could learn to like you very well, if you proved on acquaintance a little less immaculate than I have been led to believe you."

"I shall instantly throw over my pronounced taste for the Christian virtues, and take steadily to vice," says Guy, with decision: "will that satisfy your ladyship?"

"Perhaps you put it a little too strongly," says Lilian, demurely. "By the bye"—irrelevantly,—"what business took you from home yesterday?"

"I have to beg your pardon for that,—my absence, I mean; but I could not help it. And it was scarcely business kept me absent," confesses Chetwoode, who, if he is anything, is strictly honest, "rather a promise to dine and sleep at some friends of ours, the Bellairs, who live a few miles from us."

"Then it wasn't really that bugbear, business? I begin to revive," says Miss Chesney.

"No; nothing half so healthy. I wish I had some more legitimate excuse to offer for my seeming want of courtesy than the fact of my having to attend a prosy dinner; but I haven't. I feel I deserve a censure, yet I hope you won't administer one when I tell you I found a very severe punishment in the dinner itself."

"I forgive you," says Lilian, with deep pity.

"It was a long-standing engagement, and, though I knew what lay before me, I

found I could not elude it any longer. I hate long engagements; don't you?"

"Cordially. But I should never dream of entering on one."

"I did, unfortunately."

"Then don't do it again."

"I won't. Never. I finally make up my mind. At least, most certainly not for the days you may be expected."

"I fear I'm a fixture,"—ruefully: "you won't have to expect me again."

"Don't say you fear it: I hope you will be happy here."

"I hope so, too, and I think it. I like your brother Cyril very much, and your mother is a darling."

"And what am I?"

"Ask me that question a month hence."

"Shall I tell you what I think of you?"

"If you wish," says Lilian, indifferently, though in truth she is dying of curiosity.

"Well, then, from the very first moment my eyes fell upon you, I thought to myself: She is without exception the most—— After all, though, I think I too shall reserve my opinion for a month or so."

"You are right,"—suppressing valiantly all outward symptoms of disappointment: "your ideas then will be more formed. Are you fond of riding, Sir Guy?"

"Very. Are you?"

"Oh! am I not? I could ride from morning till night."

"You are enthusiastic."

"Yes,"—with a saucy smile,—"that is one of my many virtues. I think one should be thoroughly in earnest about everything one undertakes. Do you like dancing?"

"Rather. It entirely depends upon whom one may be dancing with. There are some people"—with a short but steady glance at her—"that I feel positive I

could dance with forever without knowing fatigue, or what is worse, *ennui*. There are others——" an expressive pause. "I have felt," says Sir Guy, with visible depression, "on certain occasions, as though I could commit an open assault on the band because it would insist on playing its waltz from start to finish, instead of stopping after the first two bars and thereby giving me a chance of escape."

"Poor 'others'! I see you can be unkind when you choose."

"But that is seldom, and only when driven to desperation. Are you fond of dancing? But of course you are: I need scarcely have asked. No doubt you could dance as well as ride from morning until night."

"You wrong me slightly. As a rule, I prefer dancing from night until morning. You skate?"

"Beautifully!" with ecstatic fervor; "I never saw any one who could skate as well."

"No? You shan't be long so. Prepare for a downfall to your pride. I can skate better than any one in the world."

Here they both laugh, and, turning, let their eyes meet. Instinctively they draw closer to each other, and a very kindly feeling springs into being.

"They maligned you," says Lilian, softly raising her lovely face, and gazing at him attentively, with a rather dangerous amount of ingenuousness. "I begin to fancy you are not so very terrific as they said. I dare say we shall be quite good friends after all."

"I wish I was as sure of most things as I am of my own feeling on that point," says Guy, with considerable warmth, holding out his hand.

She slips her cool, slim fingers into his, and smiles frankly. There they lie like little snow-flakes on his broad palm, and as he gazes on them a great and most natural desire to kiss them presents itself to his mind.

"I think we ought to ratify our vow of good-fellowship," says he, artfully, looking at her as though to gain permission for the theft, and seeing no rebuff in her friendly eyes, stoops and steals a little sweetness from the white hand he holds.

They are almost at the house by this time, and presently, gaining the drawing-room, find Lady Chetwoode sitting there awaiting them.

"Ah, Guy, you have returned," cries she, well pleased.

"Yes, I found my guardian straying aimlessly in a great big wood, so I brought him home in triumph," says Lilian's gay voice, who is in high good humor. "Is luncheon ready? Dear Lady Chetwoode, do not say I am late for the second time to-day."

"Not more than five minutes, and you know we do not profess to live by rule. Run away, and take off your hat, child, and come back to me again."

So Lilian does as she is desired, and runs away up the broad stairs in haste, to reduce her rebellious locks to order; yet so pleased is she with her *rencontre* with her guardian, and the want of ferocity he has displayed, and the general desirableness of his face and figure, that she cannot refrain from pausing midway in her career to apostrophize a dark-browed warrior who glowers down upon her from one of the walls.

"By my halidame, and by my troth, and by all the wonderful oaths of your period, Sir Knight," says she, smiling saucily, and dropping him a wicked curtsey, "you have good reason to be proud of your kinsman. For, by Cupid, he is a monstrous handsome man, and vastly agreeable!"

After this astounding sally she continues her flight, and presently finds herself in her bedroom and almost in nurse's arms.

"Lawks-amussy!" says that good old lady, with a gasp, putting her hand to her side, "what a turn you did give me! Will the child never learn to walk?"

"I have seen him!" says Lilian, without preamble, only pausing to give nurse a naughty little poke in the other side with a view to restoring her lost equilibrium.

"Sir Guy?" anxiously.

"Even so. The veritable and awful Sir Guy! And he isn't a bit awful, in spite of all we heard; isn't that good news? and he is very handsome, and quite nice, and apparently can enjoy the world as well as another, and can do a naughty thing at a pinch; and I know he likes me by the expression of his eyes, and he actually unbended so far as to stoop to kiss my hand! There!" All this without stop or comma.

"Kissed your hand, my lamb! So soon! he did not lose much time. How the world does wag nowadays!" says nurse, holding aloft her hands in pious protest. "Only to know you an hour or so, and to have the face to kiss your hand! Eh, but it's dreadful, it's brazen! I do hope this Sir Guy is not a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"It was very good clothing, anyhow. There is consolation in that. I could never like a man whose coat was badly cut. And his hands,—I particularly noticed them,—they are long, and well shaped, and quite brown."

"You seem mightily pleased with him on so short an acquaintance," says nurse, shrewdly. "Brown hand, forsooth,—and a shapely coat! Eh, child, but there's more wanting than that. Maybe it's thinking of being my Lady Guy you'll be, one of these days?"

"Nurse, I never met so brilliant a goose as you! And would you throw away your lovely nursling upon a paltry baronet? Oh! shame! And yet"—teasingly—"one might do worse."

"I'll tell you that, when I see him," says cautious nurse, and having given one last finishing touch to her darling's golden head, dismisses her to her luncheon and the pernicious attentions of the daring wolf.

CHAPTER VI.

"CLAUD: 'In mine eye, she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on.'"—*Much Ado About Nothing*.

It is that most satisfactory hour of all the twenty-four,—dinner-hour. Even yet the busy garish day has not quite vanished, but peeps in upon them curiously through the open windows,—upon Lady Chetwoode mild and gracious, upon the two young men, upon airy Lilian looking her bravest and bonniest in some transparent gown of sombre black, through which her fair young neck and arms gleam delicately.

Her only ornaments are roses,—rich, soft white roses, gathered from the gardens outside: one, sweeter and happier than its fellows, slumbers cozily in her golden hair.

Cyril and she, sitting opposite to each other, smile and jest and converse across the huge bowl of scented flowers that stands in the centre of the table, while Guy, who is a little silent, keeps wondering secretly whether any other woman has skin so dazzlingly fair, or eyes so blue, or hair so richly gilded.

"I have seen the widow," he says at length, rousing himself to a sense of his own taciturnity. "On my way home this morning, before I met you,"—turning to Lilian,—"I thought it my duty to look her up, and say I hoped she was comfortable, and all that."

"And you saw her?" asks Cyril, regarding Guy attentively.

"Yes; she is extremely pretty, and extremely coy,—cold I ought to say, as there didn't seem to be even the smallest spice of coquetry about her."

"That's the safest beginning of all," says Cyril confidentially to his mother, "and no doubt the latest. I dare say she looked as though she thought he would never leave."

"She did," says Guy, laughing, "and, what is more unflattering, I am sure she meant it."

"Clever woman!"

"However, if she intended what you think, she rather defeated her object; as I shan't trouble her again in a hurry. Can't bear feeling myself in the way."

"Is she really pretty?" Cyril asks, curiously, though idly.

"Really; almost lovely."

"Evidently a handsome family," thinks Cyril. "I wonder if he saw my friend the sister, or step-sister, or companion."

"She looks sad, too," goes on Guy, "and as though she had a melancholy story attached to her."

"I do hope not, my dear," interrupts his mother, uneasily. "There is nothing so objectionable as a woman with a story. Later on one is sure to hear something wrong about her."

"I agree with you," Cyril says, promptly. "I can't bear mysterious people. When in their society, I invariably find myself putting a check on my conversation, and blushing whenever I get on the topic of forgeries, burglaries, murders, elopements, and so forth. I never can keep myself from studying their faces when such subjects are mentioned, to see which it was had ruffled the peace of their existence. It is absurd, I know, but I can't help it, and it makes me uncomfortable."

"Does this lady live in the wood, where I met you?" asks Lilian, addressing Guy, and apparently deeply interested.

"Yes, about a mile from that particular spot. She is a new tenant we took to oblige a friend, but we know nothing about her."

"How very romantic!" says Lilian; "it is just like a story."

"Yes; the image of the 'Children of the Abbey,' or 'The Castle of Otranto,'" says Cyril. "Has she any one living with her, Guy?" carelessly.

"Yes, two servants, and a small ill-tempered terrier."

"I mean any friends. It must be dull to be by one's self."

"I don't know. I saw no one. She don't seem ambitious about making acquaintances, as, when I said I hoped she would not find it lonely, and that my mother would have much pleasure in calling on her, she blushed painfully, and

said she was never lonely, and that she would esteem it a kindness if we would try to forget she was at the cottage."

"That was rather rude, my dear, wasn't it?" says Lady Chetwoode mildly.

"It sounds so, but, as she said it, it wasn't rude. She appeared nervous, I thought, and as though she had but lately recovered from a severe illness. When the blush died away, she was as white as death."

"Well, I shan't distress her by calling," says Lady Chetwoode, who is naturally a little offended by the unknown's remark. Unconsciously she has been viewing her coming with distrust, and now this unpleasing message—for as a message directly addressed to herself she regards it—has had the effect of changing a smouldering doubt into an acknowledged dislike.

"I wonder how she means to employ her time down here," says Cyril. "Scenery abounds, but lovely views don't go a long way with most people. After a while they are apt to pall."

"Is there pretty scenery round Truston?" asks Lilian.

"Any amount of it. Like 'Auburn,' it is the 'loveliest village of the plain.' But I can't say we are a very enterprising people. Sometimes it occurs to one of us to give a dinner-party, but no sooner do we issue the invitations than we sit down and repent bitterly; and on rare occasions we may have a ball, which means a drive of fourteen miles on a freezing night, and universal depression and sneezing for a week afterward. Perhaps the widow is wise in declining to have anything to do with our festive gatherings. I begin to think there is method in her madness."

"Miss Chesney doesn't agree with you," says Guy, casting a quick glance at Lilian: "she would go any distance to a ball, and dance from night till morning, and never know depression next day."

"Is that true, Miss Chesney?"

"Sir Guy says it is," replies Lilian, demurely.

"When I was young," says Lady Chetwoode, "I felt just like that. So long as the band played, so long I could dance, and without ever feeling fatigue. And provided he was of a good figure, and could dance well, I never much cared who my partner was, until I met your father. Dear me! how long ago it seems!"

"Not at all," says Cyril; "a mere reminiscence of yesterday. When I am an old gentleman, I shall make a point of never remembering anything that happened long ago, no matter how good it may have been."

"Perhaps you won't have anything good to remember," says Miss Lilian, provokingly.

"Guy, give Miss Chesney another glass of wine," says Cyril, promptly: "she is evidently feeling low."

"Sir Guy," says Miss Chesney, with equal promptitude, and a treacherous display of innocent curiosity, "when you were at Belmont last evening did you hear Miss Bellair say anything of a rather rude attack made upon her yesterday at the station by an ill-bred young man?"

"No," says Sir Guy, rather amazed.

"Did she not speak of it? How strange! Why, I fancied——"

"Miss Chesney," interposes Cyril, "if you have any regard for your personal safety, you will refrain from further speech."

"But why?"—opening her great eyes in affected surprise. "Why may I not tell Sir Guy about it? Poor Miss Bellair! although a stranger to me, I felt most genuine pity for her. Just fancy, Sir Guy, a poor girl alone upon a platform, without a soul to take care of her, what she must have endured, when a young man—*apparently* a gentleman—walked up to her, and taking advantage of her isolated position, bowed to her, simpered impertinently, and was actually on the very point of addressing her, when fortunately her cousin came up and rescued her from her unhappy situation. Was it not shameful? Now, what do you think that rude young man deserved?"

"Extinction," replies Guy, without hesitation.

"I think so too. Don't you, Lady Chetwoode?"

Lady Chetwoode laughs.

"Now, I shall give my version of the story," says Cyril. "I too was present——"

"And didn't fly to her assistance? Oh, fie!" says Lilian.

"There was once an unhappy young man, who was sent to a station to meet a

young woman, without having been told beforehand whether she was like Juno, tall enough to 'snuff the moon,' or whether she was so insignificant as to require a strong binocular to enable you to see her at all."

"I am not insignificant," says Lilian, her indignation getting the better of her judgment.

"Am I speaking of you, Miss Chesney?"

"Well, go on."

"Now, it came to pass that as this wretched young man was glaring wildly round to see where his charge might be, he espied a tall young woman, apparently in the last stage of exhaustion, looking about for some one to assist her, and seeing no one else, for the one he sought had meanly, and with a view to his discomfiture, crept silently behind his back——"

"Oh, Cyril!"

"Yes, I maintain it; she crept silently behind his back, and bribed her maid to keep silence. So this wretched young man walked up to Juno, and pulled his forelock, and made his very best Sunday bow, and generally put his foot in it. Juno was so frightened by the best bow that she gave way to a stifled scream, and instantly sank back unconscious into the arms of her betrothed, who just then ran frantically upon the scene. Upon this the deluded young man——"

"That will do," interrupts Lilian, severely. "I am certain I have read it somewhere before; and—people should always tell the truth."

"By the bye," says Guy, "I believe Miss Bellair did say something last night about an unpleasant adventure at the station,—something about a very low person who had got himself up like a gentleman, but was without doubt one of the swell mob, and who——"

"You needn't go any further. I feel my position keenly. Nevertheless, Miss Bellair made a mistake when she rejected my proffered services. She little knows what a delightful companion I can be. Can't I, Miss Chesney?"

"Can he, Lady Chetwoode? I am not in a position to judge."

"If a perpetual, never-ceasing flow of conversation has anything to do with it, I believe he must be acknowledged the most charming of his sex," says his

mother, laughing, and rising, bears away Lilian with her to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER VII.

"A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay."
—WORDSWORTH.

When seven long uneventful days have passed away, every one at Chetwoode is ready to acknowledge that the coming of Lilian Chesney is an occurrence for which they ought to be devoutly thankful. She is a boon, a blessing, a merry sunbeam, darting hither and thither about the old place, lighting up the shadows, dancing through the dark rooms, casting a little of her own inborn joyousness upon all that comes within her reach.

To Lady Chetwoode, who is fond of young life, she is especially grateful, and creeps into her kind heart in an incredibly short time, finding no impediment to check her progress.

Once a day, armed with huge gloves and a gigantic scissors, Lady Chetwoode makes a tour of her gardens, snipping, and plucking, and giving superfluous orders to the attentive gardeners all the time. After her trots Lilian, supplied with a basket and a restless tongue that seldom wearies, but is always ready to suggest, or help the thought that sometimes comes slowly to her hostess.

"As you were saying last night, my dear Lilian——" says Lady Chetwoode, vaguely, coming to a full stop before the head gardener, and gazing at Lilian for further inspiration; she had evidently remembered only the smallest outline of what she wants to say.

"About the ivy on the north wall? You wanted it thinned. You thought it a degree too straggling."

"Yes,—yes; of course. You hear, Michael, I want it clipped and thinned, and—— There was something else about the ivy, my child, wasn't there?"

"You wished it mixed with the variegated kind, did you not?"

"Ah, of course. I wonder how I ever got on without Lilian," says the old lady, gently pinching the girl's soft peach-like cheek. "Florence, without doubt, is a comfort,—but—she is not fond of gardening. Shall we come and take a peep at the grapes, dear?" And so on.

Occasionally, too,—being fond of living out of doors in the summer, and being a capital farmeress,—Lady Chetwoode takes a quiet walk down to the home farm,

to inspect all the latest arrivals. And here, too, Miss Lilian must needs follow.

There are twelve merry, showy little calves in one field, that run all together in their ungainly, jolting fashion up to the high gate that guards their domain, the moment Lady Chetwoode and her visitor arrive, under the mistaken impression that she and Lilian are a pair of dairy-maids coming to solace them with unlimited pans of milk.

Lilian cries "Shoo!" at the top of her gay young voice, and instantly all the handsome, foolish things scamper away as though destruction were at their heels, leaving Miss Chesney delighted at the success of her own performance.

Then in the paddock there are four mad little colts to be admired, whose chief joy in life seems to consist in kicking their hind legs wildly into space, while their more sedate mothers stand apart and compare notes upon their darlings' merit.

This paddock is Lilian's special delight, and all the way there, and all the way back she chatters unceasingly, making the old lady's heart grow young again, as she listens to, and laughs at, all the merry stories Miss Chesney tells her of her former life.

To-day—although the morning has been threatening—is now quite fine. Tired of sulking, it cleared up half an hour ago, and is now throwing out a double portion of heat, as though to make up for its early deficiencies.

The

> "King of the East, ... girt
> With song and flame and fragrance, slowly lifts
> His golden feet on those empurpled stairs
> That climb into the windy halls of heaven,"

and, casting his million beams abroad, enlivens the whole earth.

It is a day when one might saunter but not walk, when one might dream though wide awake, when one is perforce amiable because argument or contradiction would be too great an exertion.

Sir Guy—who has been making a secret though exhaustive search through the house for Miss Chesney—now turns his steps toward the orchard, where already instinct has taught him she is usually to be found.

He is not looking quite so *insouciant*, or carelessly happy, as when first we saw him, now two weeks ago; there is a little gnawing, dissatisfied feeling at his heart, for which he dare not account even to himself.

He thinks a good deal of his ward, and his ward thinks a good deal of him; but unfortunately their thoughts do not amalgamate harmoniously.

Toward Sir Guy Miss Chesney's actions have not been altogether just. Cyril she treats with affection, and the utmost *bonhommie*, but toward his brother—in spite of her civility on that first day of meeting—she maintains a strict and irritating reserve.

He is her guardian (detestable, thankless office), and she takes good care that neither he or she shall ever forget that fact. Secretly she resents it, and openly gratifies that resentment by denying his authority in all things, and being specially willful and wayward when occasion offers; as though to prove to him that she, for one, does not acknowledge his power over her.

Not that this ill-treated young man has the faintest desire to assert any authority whatever. On the contrary, he is most desirous of being all there is of the most submissive when in her presence; but Miss Chesney declines to see his humility, and chooses instead to imagine him capable of oppressing her with all sorts of tyrannical commands at a moment's notice.

There is a little cloud on his brow as he reaches the garden and walks moodily along its principal path. This cloud, however, lightens and disappears, as upon the southern border he hears voices that tell him his search is at an end.

Miss Chesney's clear notes, rather raised and evidently excited, blend with those of old Michael Ronaldson, whose quavering bass is also uplifted, suggesting unwonted agitation on the part of this easy-going though ancient gentleman.

Lilian is standing on tip-toe, opposite a plum-tree, with the long tail of her black gown caught firmly in one hand, while with the other she points frantically in a direction high above her head.

"Don't you see him?" she says, reproachfully,—"there—in that corner."

"No, that I don't," says Michael, blankly, sheltering his forehead with both hands from the sun's rays, while straining his gaze anxiously toward the spot named.

"Not see him! Why, he is a big one, a *monster*! Michael," says Lilian,

reproachfully, "you are growing either stupid or short-sighted, and I didn't expect it from you. Now follow the tip of my finger; look right along it now—now"—with growing excitement, "don't you see it?"

"I do, I do," says the old man, enthusiastically; "wait till I get 'en—won't I pay him off!"

"Is it a plum you want?" asks Guy, who has come up behind her, and is lost in wonder at what he considers is her excitement about the fruit. "Shall I get it for you?"

"A plum! no, it is a snail I want," says Lilian eagerly, "but I can't get at it. Oh, that I had been born five inches taller! Ronaldson, you are not tall enough; Sir Guy will catch him."

Sir Guy, having brought a huge snail to the ground, presents him gravely to Lilian.

"That is the twenty-third we have caught to-day," says she, "and twenty-nine yesterday,—in all forty-eight. Isn't it, Michael?"

"I think it makes fifty-two," suggests Sir Guy, deferentially.

"Does it? Well, it makes no difference," says Miss Chesney, with a fine disregard of arithmetic; "at all events, either way, it is a tremendous number. I'm sure I don't know where they come from,"—despairingly,—"unless they all walk back again during the night."

"And I wouldn't wonder too," says Michael, *sotto voce*.

"Walk back again!" repeats Guy, amazed. "Don't you kill them?"

"Miss Chesney won't hear of 'en being killed, Sir Guy," says old Ronaldson, sheepishly; "she says as 'ow the cracklin' of 'en do make her feel sick all over."

"Oh, yes," says Lilian, making a little wry face, "I hate to think of it. He used to crunch them under his heel, so," with a shudder, and a small stamp upon the ground, "and it used to make me absolutely faint. So we gave it up, and now we just throw them over the wall, so,"—suiting the action to the word, and flinging the slimy creature she holds with dainty disgust, between her first finger and thumb, over the garden boundary.

Guy laughs, and, thus encouraged, so does old Michael.

"Well, at all events, it must take them a long time to get back," says Lilian, apologetically.

"On your head be it if we have no vegetables or fruit this year," says Chetwoode, who understands as much about gardening as the man in the moon, but thinks it right to say something. "Come for a walk, Lilian, will you? It is a pity to lose this charming day." He speaks with marked diffidence (his lady's moods being uncertain), which so far gains upon Miss Chesney that in return she deigns to be gracious.

"I don't mind if I do," she replies, with much civility. "Good-morning, Michael;" and with a pretty little nod, and a still prettier smile in answer to the old man's low salutation, she walks away beside her guardian.

Far into the woods they roam, the teeming woods all green and bronze and copper-colored, content and happy in that no actual grief disturbs them.

> "The branches cross above their eyes,
> The skies are in a net;"

the fond gay birds are warbling their tenderest strains. "Along the grass sweet airs are blown," and all the myriad flowers, the "little wildings" of the forest, "earth's cultureless buds," are expanding and glowing, and exhaling the perfumed life that their mother, Nature, has given them.

Chetwoode is looking its best and brightest, and Sir Guy might well be proud of his possessions; but no thought of them enters his mind just now, which is filled to overflowing with the image of this petulant, pretty, saucy, lovable ward, that fate has thrown into his path.

"Yes, it is a lovely place!" says Lilian, after a pause spent in admiration. She has been looking around her, and has fallen into honest though silent raptures over all the undulating parks and uplands that stretch before her, far as the eye can see. "Lovely!—So," with a sigh, "was my old home."

"Yes. I think quite as lovely as this."

"What!" turning to him with a start, while the rich, warm, eager flush of youth springs to her cheeks and mantles there, "you have been there? You have seen the Park?"

"Yes, very often, though not for years past. I spent many a day there when I was

younger. I thought you knew it."

"No, indeed. It makes me glad to think some one here can remember its beauties with me. But you cannot know it all as I do: you never saw my own particular bit of wood?"—with earnest questioning, as though seeking to deny the hope that strongly exists. "It lies behind the orchard, and one can get to it by passing through a little gate in the wall, that leads into the very centre of it. There at first, in the heart of the trees one sees a tangled mass with giant branches overhanging it, and straggling blackberry bushes protecting it with their angry arms, and just inside, the coolest, greenest, freshest bit of grass in all the world,—my fairy nook I used to call it. But you—of course you never saw it."

"It has a huge horse-chestnut at its head, and a silver fir at its feet."

"Yes,—yes!"

"I know it well," says Chetwoode, smiling at her eagerness. "It was your mother's favorite spot. You know she and my mother were fast friends, and she was very fond of me. When first she was married, before you were born, I was constantly at the Park, and afterward too. She used to read in the spot you name, and I—I was a delicate little fellow at that time, obliged to lie a good deal, and I used to read there beside her with my head in her lap, by the hour together."

"Why, you know more about my mother than I do," says Lilian, with some faint envy in her tones.

"Yes,"—hastily, having already learned how little a thing can cause an outbreak, when one party is bent on war,—"but you must not blame me for that. I could not help it."

"No,"—regretfully,—"I suppose not. Before I was born, you say. How old that seems to make you!"

"Why?"—laughing. "Because I was able to read eighteen years ago? I was only nine, or perhaps ten, then."

"I never could do my sums," says Lilian: "I only know it sounds as though you were the Ancient Mariner or Methuselah, or anybody in the last stage of decay."

"And yet I am not so very old, Lilian. I am not yet thirty."

"Well, that's old enough. When I am thirty I shall take to caps with borders, and

spectacles, and long black mittens, like nurse. Ha, ha!" laughs Lilian, delighted at the portrait of herself she has drawn, "shan't I look nice then?"

"I dare say you will," says Guy, quite seriously. "But I would advise you to put off the wearing of them for a while longer. I don't think thirty old. I am not quite that."

"A month or two don't signify,"—provokingly; "and as you have had apparently a very good life I don't think it manly of you to fret because you are drawing to the close of it. Some people would call it mean. There, never mind your age: tell me something more about my mother. Did you love her?"

"One could not help loving her, she was so gentle, so thoroughly kind-hearted."

"Ah! what a pity it is I don't resemble her!" says Lilian, with a suspiciously deep sigh, accepting the reproach, and shaking her head mournfully. "Was she like that picture at home in the drawing-room? I hope not. It is very lovely, but it lacks expression, and has no tenderness about it."

"Then the artist must have done her great injustice. She was all tenderness both in face and disposition as I remember her, and children are very correct in their impressions. She was extremely beautiful. You are very like her."

"Am I, Sir Guy? Oh, thank you. I didn't hope for so much praise. Then in one thing at least I do resemble my mother. Am I more beautiful or less so?"

"That is quite a matter of opinion."

"And what is yours?" saucily.

"What can it matter to you?" he says, quickly, almost angrily. "Besides, I dare say you know it."

"I don't, indeed. Never mind, I shall find out for myself. I am so glad"—amiably—"you knew my mother, and the dear Park! It sounds horrible, does it not, but the Park is even more dear to me than—than her memory."

"You can scarcely call it a 'memory'; she died when you were so young,—hardly old enough to have an idea. I recollect you so well, a little toddling thing of two."

"The plot thickens. You knew *me* also? And pray, Sir Guardian, what was I like?"

"You had blue eyes, and a fair skin, a very imperious will, and the yellowest hair I ever saw."

"A graphic description! It would be madness on the part of any one to steal me, as I should infallibly be discovered by it. Well, I have not altered much. I have still my eyes and my hair, and my will, only perhaps rather more of the latter. Go on: you are very unusually interesting to-day: I had no idea you possessed such a fund of information. Were you very fond of me?"

"Very," says Chetwoode, laughing in spite of himself. "I was your slave, as long as I was with you. Your lightest wish was my law. I used even——"

A pause.

"Yes, do go on: I am all attention. 'I used even——'"

"I was going to say I used to carry you about in my arms, and kiss you into good humor when you were angry, which was pretty often," replies Guy, with a rather forced laugh, and a decided accession of color; "but I feared such a very grown-up young lady as you might be offended."

"Not in the least,"—with a gay, perfectly unembarrassed enjoyment at his confusion. "I never heard anything so amusing. Fancy you being my nurse once on a time. I feel immensely flattered when I think such an austere individual actually condescended to hold me in his arms and kiss me into good humor. It is more than I have any right to expect. I am positively overwhelmed. By the bye, had your remedy the desired effect? Did I subdue my naughty passion under your treatment?"

"As far as I can recollect, yes," rather stiffly. Nobody likes being laughed at.

"How odd!" says Miss Chesney.

"Not very," retorts he: "at that time *you* were very fond of *me*."

"That is even odder," says Miss Chesney, who takes an insane delight in teasing him. "What a pity it is you cannot invent some plan for reducing me to order now!"

"There are some tasks too great for a mere mortal to undertake," replies Sir Guy, calmly.

Miss Chesney, not being just then prepared with a crushing retort, wisely refrains

from speech altogether, although it is by a superhuman effort she does so. Presently, however, lest he should think her overpowered by the irony of his remark, she says, quite pleasantly:

"Did Cyril ever see me before I came here?"

"No." Then abruptly, "Do you like Cyril?"

"Oh, immensely! He suits me wonderfully, he is so utterly devoid of dignity, and all that. One need not mind what one says to Cyril; in his worst mood he could not terrify. Whereas his brother——" with a little malicious gleam from under her long, heavy lashes.

"Well, what of his brother?"

"Nay, Sir Guy, the month we agreed on has not yet expired," says Lilian. "I cannot tell you what I think of you yet. Still, you cannot imagine how dreadfully afraid I am of you at times."

"If I believed you, it would cause me great regret," says her guardian, rather hurt. "I am afraid, Lilian, your father acted unwisely when he chose Chetwoode as a home for you."

"What! are you tired of me already?" asks she hastily, with a little tremor in her voice, that might be anger, and that might be pain.

"Tired of you? No! But I cannot help seeing that the fact of my being your guardian makes me abhorrent to you."

"Not quite that," says Miss Chesney, in a little soft, repentant tone. "What a curious idea to get into your head? dismiss it; there is really no reason why it should remain."

"You are sure?" with rather more earnestness than the occasion demands.

"Quite sure. And now tell me how it was I never saw you until now, since I was two years old."

"Well, for one thing, your mother died; then I went to Eton, to Cambridge, got a commission in the Dragoons, tired of it, sold out, and am now as you see me."

"What an eventful history!" says Lilian, laughing.

At this moment, who should come toward them, beneath the trees, but Cyril,

walking as though for a wager.

"'Whither awa?'" asks Miss Lilian, gayly stopping him with outstretched hands.

"You have spoiled my quotation," says Cyril, reproachfully, "and it was on the very tip of my tongue. I call it disgraceful. I was going to say with fine effect, 'Where are you going, my pretty maid?' but I fear it would fall rather flat if I said it now."

"Rather. Nevertheless, I accept the compliment. Are you in training? or where are you going in such a hurry?"

"A mere constitutional," says Cyril, lightly,—which is a base and ready lie. "Good-bye, I won't detain you longer. Long ago I learned the useful lesson that where 'two is company, three is trumpery.' Don't look as though you would like to devour me, Guy: I meant no harm."

Lilian laughs, so does Guy, and Cyril continues his hurried walk.

"Where does that path lead to?" asks Lilian, looking after him as he disappeared rapidly in the distance.

"To The Cottage first, and then to the gamekeeper's lodge, and farther on to another entrance-gate that opens on the road."

"Perhaps he will see your pretty tenant on his way?"

"I hardly think so. It seems she never goes beyond her own garden."

"Poor thing! I feel the greatest curiosity about her, indeed I might say an interest in her. Perhaps she is unhappy."

"Perhaps so; though her manner is more frozen than melancholy. She is almost forbidding, she is so cold."

"She may be in ill health."

"She may be," unsympathetically.

"You do not seem very prepossessed in her favor," says Lilian, impatiently.

"Well, I confess I am not," carelessly. "Experience has taught me that when a woman withdraws persistently from the society of her own sex, and eschews the companionship of her fellow-creatures, there is sure to be something radically

wrong with her."

"But you forget there are exceptions to every rule. I confess I would give anything to see her," says Lilian, warmly.

"I don't believe you would be the gainer by that bargain," replies he, with conviction, being oddly, unaccountably prejudiced against this silent, undemonstrative widow.

* * * * * * *

Meantime, Cyril pursues his way along the path, that every day of late he has traveled with unexampled perseverance. Seven times he has passed along it full of hope, and only twice has been rewarded, with a bare glimpse of the fair unknown, whose face has obstinately haunted him since his first meeting with it.

On these two momentous occasions, she has appeared to him so pale and wan that he is fain to believe the color he saw in her cheeks on that first day arose from vexation and excitement, rather than health,—a conclusion that fills him with alarm.

Now, as he nears the house between the interstices of the hedge he catches the gleam of a white gown moving to and fro, that surely covers his divinity.

Time proves his surmise right. It is the admired incognita, who almost as he reaches the gate that leads to her bower, comes up to one of the huge rose-bushes that decorate either side of it, and—unconscious of criticism—commences to gather from it such flowers as shall add beauty to the bouquet already growing large within her hands.

Presently the restless feeling that makes us all know when some unexpected presence is near, compels her to raise her head. Thereupon her eyes and those of Cyril Chetwoode meet. She pauses in her occupation as though irresolute; Cyril pauses too; and then gravely, unsmilingly, she bows in cold recognition. Certainly her reception is not encouraging; but Cyril is not to be daunted.

"I hope," he says, deferentially, "your little dog has been conducting himself with due propriety since last I had the pleasure of restoring him to your arms?"

This Grandisonian speech surely calls for a reply.

"Yes," says Incognita, graciously. "I think it was only the worry caused by

change of scene made him behave so very badly that—last day."

So saying, she turns from him, as though anxious to give him a gentle *congé*. But Cyril, driven to desperation, makes one last effort at detaining her.

"I hope your friend is better," he says, leaning his arms upon the top of the gate, and looking full of anxiety about the absent widow. "My brother—Sir Guy—called the other day, and said she appeared extremely delicate."

"My friend?" staring at him in marked surprise, while a faint deep rose flush illumines her cheek, making one forget how white and fragile she appeared a moment since.

"Yes. I mean Mrs. Arlington, our tenant. I am Cyril Chetwoode," raising his hat. "I hope the air here will do her good."

He is talking against time, but she is too much occupied to notice it.

"I hope it will," she replies, calmly, studying her roses attentively, while the faintest suspicion of a smile grows and trembles at the corner of her mobile lips.

"You are her sister, perhaps?" asks Cyril, the extreme deference of his whole manner taking from the rudeness of his questioning.

"No—not her sister."

"Her friend?"

"Yes. Her dearest friend," replies Incognita, slowly, after a pause, and a closer, more prolonged examination of her roses; while again the curious half-suppressed smile lights up her face. There are few things prettier on a pretty face than an irrepressible smile.

"She is fortunate in possessing such a friend," says Cyril, softly; then with some haste, as though anxious to cover his last remark, "My brother did not see you when he called?"

"Did he say so?"

"No. He merely mentioned having seen only Mrs. Arlington. I do not think he is aware of your existence."

"I think he is. I have had the pleasure of speaking with Sir Guy."

"Indeed!" says Cyril, and instantly tells himself he would not have suspected Guy of so much slyness. "Probably it was some day since—you met him——"

"No, it was on that one occasion when he called here."

"I dare say I misunderstood," says Cyril, "but I certainly thought he said he had seen only Mrs. Arlington."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"*I* am Mrs. Arlington!"

"What!" says Cyril, with exaggerated surprise,—and a moment later is shocked at the vehemence of his own manner. "I beg your pardon, I am sure," he says, contritely; "there is no reason why it should not be so, but you seem so—I had no idea you wore a—that is—I mean I did not think you were married."

"You had no idea I was a widow," corrects Mrs. Arlington, coldly. "I do not see why you need apologize. On the contrary, I consider you have paid me a compliment. I am glad I do not look the character. Good-morning, sir; I have detained you too long already."

"It is I who have detained you, madam," says Cyril, speaking coldly also, being a little vexed at the tone she has employed toward him, feeling it to be undeserved. "I fear I have been unhappy enough to err twice this morning,—though I trust you will see—unwittingly." He accompanies this speech with a glance so full of entreaty and a mute desire for friendship as must go straight to the heart of any true woman; after which, being a wise young man, he attempts no further remonstrance, but lifts his hat, and walks away gloomily toward his home.

Mrs. Arlington, who is not proof against so much reproachful humility, lifts her head, sees the dejected manner of his departure, and is greatly struck by it. She makes one step forward; checks herself; opens her lips as though to speak; checks herself again; and finally, with a little impatient sigh, turns and walks off gloomily toward her home.

CHAPTER VIII.

"And sang, with much simplicity,—a merit
Not the less precious, that we seldom hear it."
—*Don Juan*.

The rain is beating regularly, persistently, against the window-panes; there is no hope of wandering afield this evening. A sullen summer shower, without a smile in it, is deluging gardens and lawns, tender flowers and graveled walks, and is blotting out angrily all the glories of the landscape.

It is half-past four o'clock. Lady Chetwoode is sitting in the library reclining in the coziest arm-chair the room contains, with her knitting as usual in her hands. She disdains all newer, lighter modes of passing the time, and knits diligently all day long for her poor.

Lilian is standing at the melancholy window, counting the diminutive lakes and toy pools forming in the walk outside. As she looks, a laurel leaf, blown from the nearest shrubbery, falls into a fairy river, and floats along in its current like a sedate and sturdy boat, with a small snail for cargo, that clings to it bravely for dear life.

Presently a stick, that to Lilian's idle fancy resolves itself into an iron-clad, runs down the poor little skiff, causing it to founder with all hands on board.

At this heart-rending moment John enters with a tea-tray, and, drawing a small table before Lady Chetwoode, lays it thereon. Her ladyship, with a sigh, prepares to put away her beloved knitting, hesitates, and then is lost in so far that she elects to finish that most mysterious of all things, the rounding of the heel of her socks, before pouring out the tea. Old James Murland will be expecting these good gray socks by the end of the week, and old James Murland must not be disappointed.

"Lady Chetwoode," says Lilian, with soft hesitation, "I want to ask you a question."

"Do you, dear? Then ask it."

"But it is a very odd question, and perhaps you will be angry."

"I don't think I shall," says Lady Chetwoode ("One, two, three, four," etc.)

"Well, then, I like you so much—I love you so much," corrects Lilian, earnestly, "that, if you don't mind, I should like to call you some name a little less formal than Lady Chetwoode. Do you mind?"

Her ladyship lays down her knitting and looks amused.

"It seems no one cares to give me my title," she says. "Mabel, my late ward, was hardly here three days when she made a request similar to yours. She always called me 'Auntie.' Florence calls me, of course, 'Aunt Anne;' but Mabel always called me 'Auntie.'"

"Ah! that was prettier. May I call you 'Auntie' too? 'Auntie Nannie,'—I think that a dear little name, and just suited to you."

"Call me anything you like, darling," says Lady Chetwoode, kissing the girl's soft, flushed cheek.

Here the door opens to admit Sir Guy and Cyril, who are driven to desperation and afternoon tea by the incivility of the weather.

"The mother and Lilian spooning," says Cyril. "I verily believe women, when alone, kiss each other for want of something better."

"I have been laughing at Lilian," says Lady Chetwoode: "she, like Mabel, cannot be happy unless she finds for me a pet name. So I am to be 'Auntie' to her too."

"I am glad it is not to be 'Aunt Anne,' like Florence," says Cyril, with a distasteful shrug; "that way of addressing you always grates upon my ear."

"By the bye, that reminds me," says Lady Chetwoode, struggling vainly in her pocket to bring to light something that isn't there, "Florence is coming home next week. I had a letter from her this morning telling me so, but I forgot all about it till now."

"You don't say so!" says Cyril, in a tone of unaffected dismay.

Now, when one hears an unknown name mentioned frequently in conversation, one eventually grows desirous of knowing something about the owner of that name.

Lilian therefore gives away to curiosity.

"And who is Florence?" she asks.

"'Who is Florence?'" repeats Cyril; "have you really asked the question? Not to know Florence argues yourself unknown. She is an institution. But I forgot, you are one of those unhappy ones outside the pale of Florence's acquaintance. How I envy—I mean pity you!"

"Florence is my niece," says Lady Chetwoode: "she is at present staying with some friends in Shropshire, but she lives with me. She has been here ever since she was seventeen."

"Is that very long ago?" asks Lilian, and her manner is so *naïve* that they all smile.

"She came here——" begins Lady Chetwoode.

"She came here," interrupts Cyril, impressively, "precisely five years ago. Have you mastered that date? If so, cling to it, get it by heart, never lose sight of it. Once, about a month ago, before she left us to go to those good-natured people in Shropshire, I told her, quite accidentally, I thought she came here *nine* years ago. She was very angry, and I then learned that Florence angry wasn't nice, and that a little of her in that state went a long way. I also learned that she came here five years ago."

"Am I to understand," asks Lilian, laughing, "that she is twenty-six?"

"My dear Lilian, I do hope you are not 'obtoose.' Has all my valuable information been thrown away? I have all this time been trying to impress upon you the fact that Florence is only twenty-two, but it is evidently 'love's labor lost.' Now do try to comprehend. She was twenty-two last year, she is twenty-two this year, and I am almost positive that this time next year she will be twenty-two again!"

"Cyril, don't be severe," says his mother.

"Dearest mother, how can you accuse me of such a thing? Is it severe to say Florence is still young and lovely?"

"Do you and Florence like each other?" asks Lilian.

"Not too much. I am not staid enough for Florence. She says she likes earnest

people,—like Guy."

"Ah!" says Lilian.

"What?" Guy hearing his name mentioned looks up dreamily from the *Times*, in the folds of which he has been buried. "What about me?"

"Nothing. I was only telling Lilian in what high esteem you are held by our dear Florence."

"Is that all?" says Guy, indifferently, going back to the thrilling account of the divorce case he has been studying.

"What a very ungallant speech!" says Miss Chesney, with a view to provocation, regarding him curiously.

"Was it?" says Guy, meeting her eyes, and letting the interesting paper slip to the floor beside him. "It was scarcely news, you see, and there is nothing to be wondered at. If I lived with people for years, I am certain I should end by being attached to them, were they good or bad."

"She doesn't waste much of her liking upon me," says Cyril.

"Nor you on her. She is just the one pretty woman I ever knew to whom you didn't succumb."

"You didn't tell me she was pretty," says Lilian, hastily, looking at Cyril with keen reproach.

"'Handsome is as handsome does,' and the charming Florence makes a point of treating me very unhandsomely. You won't like her, Lilian; make up your mind to it."

"Nonsense! don't let yourself be prejudiced by Cyril's folly," says Guy.

"I am not easily prejudiced," replies Lilian, somewhat coldly, and instantly forms an undying dislike to the unknown Florence. "But she really is pretty?" she asks, again, rather persistently addressing Cyril.

"Lovely!" superciliously. "But ask Guy all about her: he knows."

"Do you?" says Lilian, turning her large eyes upon Guy.

"Not more than other people," replies he, calmly, though there is a perceptible

note of irritation in his voice, and a rather vexed gleam in his blue eyes as he lets them fall upon his unconscious brother. "She is certainly not lovely."

"Then she is very pretty?"

"Not even *very* pretty in my eyes," replies Sir Guy, who is inwardly annoyed at the examination. Without exactly knowing why, he feels he is behaving shabbily to the absent Florence. "Still, I have heard many men call her so."

"She is decidedly pretty," says Lady Chetwoode, with decision, "but rather pale."

"Would you call it pale?" says Cyril, with suspicious earnestness. "Well, of course that may be the new name for it, but I always called it sallow."

"Cyril, you are incorrigible. At all events, I miss her in a great many ways," says Lady Chetwoode, and they who listen fully understand the tone of self-reproach that runs beneath her words in that she cannot bring herself to miss Florence in all her ways. "She used to pour out the tea for me, for one thing."

"Let me do it for you, auntie," says Lilian, springing to her feet with alacrity, while the new name trips melodiously and naturally from her tongue. "I never poured out tea for any one, and I should like to immensely."

"Thank you, my dear. I shall be much obliged; I can't bear to leave off this sock now I have got so far. And who, then, used to pour out tea for you at your own home?"

"Nurse, always. And for the last six months, ever since"—with a gentle sigh—"poor papa's death, Aunt Priscilla."

"That is Miss Chesney?"

"Yes. But tea was never nice with Aunt Priscilla; she liked it weak, because of her nerves, she said (though I don't think she had many), and she always would use the biggest cups in the house, even in the evening. There never," says Lilian, solemnly, "was any one so odd as my Aunt Priscilla. Though we had several of the loveliest sets of china in the world, she never would use them, and always preferred a horrid glaring set of blue and gold that was my detestation. Taffy and I were going to smash them all one day right off, but then we thought it would be shabby, she had placed her affections so firmly on them. Is your tea quite right, Lady Chetwoode—auntie, I mean,"—with a bright smile,—"or do you want any more sugar?"

"It is quite right, thank you, dear."

"Mine is without exception the most delicious cup of tea I ever tasted," says Cyril, with intense conviction. Whereat Lilian laughs and promises him as many more as he can drink.

"Will you not give me one?" says Guy, who has risen and is standing beside her, looking down upon her lovely face with a strange expression in his eyes.

How pretty she looks pouring out the tea, with that little assumption of importance about her! How deftly her slender fingers move among the cups, how firmly they close around the handle of the quaint old teapot!

A lump of sugar falls with a small crash into the tray. It is a refractory lump, and runs in and out among the china and the silver jugs, refusing to be captured by the tongs. Lilian, losing patience (her stock of it is small), lays down the useless tongs, and taking up the lump between a dainty finger and thumb, transfers it triumphantly to her own cup.

"Well caught," says Cyril, laughing, while it suddenly occurs to Guy that Florence would have died before she would have done such a thing. The sugar-tongs was made to pick up the sugar, therefore it would be a flagrant breach of system to use anything else, and of all other things one's fingers. Oh, horrible thought!

Methodical Florence. Unalterable, admirable, tiresome Florence!

As Sir Guy speaks, Lilian being in one of her capricious moods, which seem reserved alone for her guardian, half turns her head toward him, looking at him out of two great unfriendly eyes, says:

"Is not that yours?" pointing to a cup that she has purposely placed at a considerable distance from her, so that she may have a decent excuse for not offering it to him with her own hands.

"Thank you," Chetwoode says, calmly, taking it without betraying the chagrin he is foolish enough to feel, but he is very careful not to trouble her a second time. It is evident to him that, for some reason or reasons unknown, he is in high disgrace with his ward; though long ago he has given up trying to discover just cause for her constant displays of temper.

Lady Chetwoode is knitting industriously. Already the heel is turned, and she is

on the fair road to make a most successful and rapid finish. Humanly speaking, there is no possible doubt about old James Murland being in possession of the socks to-morrow evening. As she knits she speaks in the low dreamy tone that always seems to me to accompany the click of the needles.

"Florence sings very nicely," she says; "in the evening it was pleasant to hear her voice. Dear me, how it does rain, to be sure! one would think it never meant to cease. Yes, I am very fond of singing."

"I have rather a nice little voice," says Miss Chesney, composedly,—"at least"—with a sudden and most unlooked-for accession of modesty—"they used to say so at home. Shall I sing something for you, auntie? I should like to very much, if it would give you any pleasure."

"Indeed it would, my dear. I had no idea you were musical."

"I don't suppose I can sing as well as Florence,"—apologetically,—"but I will try the 'Banks of Allan Water,' and then you will be able to judge for yourself."

She sits down, and sings from memory that very sweet and dear old song,—sings it with all the girlish tenderness of which she is capable, in a soft, sweet voice, that saddens as fully as it charms,—a voice that would certainly never raise storms of applause, but is perfect in its truthfulness and exquisite in its youth and freshness.

"My dear child, you sing rarely well," says Lady Chetwoode, while Guy has drawn near, unconsciously to himself, and is standing at a little distance behind her. How many more witcheries has this little tormenting siren laid up in store for his undoing? "It reminds me of long ago," says auntie, with a sigh for the gay hours gone: "once I sang that song myself. Do you know any Scotch airs, Lilian? I am so fond of them."

Whereupon Lilian sings "Comin' thro' the Rye" and "Caller Herrin'," which latter brings tears into Lady Chetwoode's eyes. Altogether, by the time the first dressing-bell rings, she feels she has made a decided success, and is so far elated by the thought that she actually condescends to forego her ill-temper for this occasion only, and bestows so gracious a smile and speech upon her hapless guardian as sends that ill-used young man to his room in radiant spirits.

CHAPTER IX.

"So young, and so untender."—*King Lear.*

"I wonder why on earth it is some people cannot choose proper hours in which to travel," says Cyril, testily. "The idea of electing—(not any more, thank you)—to arrive at ten o'clock at night at any respectable house is barely decent."

"Yes, I wish she had named any other hour," says Lady Chetwoode. "It is rather a nuisance Guy having to go to the station so late."

"Dear Florence is so romantic," remarks Cyril: "let us hope for her sake there will be a moon."

It is half-past eight o'clock, and dinner is nearly over. There has been some haste this evening on account of Miss Beauchamp's expected arrival; the very men who are handing round the jellies and sweetmeats seem as inclined to hurry as their pomposity will allow: hence Cyril's mild ill-humor. No man but feels aggrieved when compelled to hasten at his meals.

Miss Chesney has arrayed herself with great care for the new-comer's delectation, and has been preparing herself all day to dislike her cordially. Sir Guy is rather silent; Cyril is not; Lady Chetwoode's usual good spirits seem to have forsaken her.

"Are you really going to Truston after dinner?" asks Lilian, in a tone of surprise, addressing Sir Guy.

"Yes, really; I do not mind it in the least," answering his mother's remark even more than hers. "It can scarcely be called a hardship, taking a short drive on such a lovely night."

"Of course not, with the prospect before him of so soon meeting this delightful cousin," thinks Lilian. "How glad he seems to welcome her home! No fear he would let Cyril meet *her* at the station!"

"Yes, it certainly is a lovely evening," she says, aloud. Then, "Was there no other train for her to come by?"

"Plenty," answers Cyril; "any number of them. But she thought she would like Guy to 'meet her by moonlight alone.'"

It is an old and favorite joke of Cyril's, Miss Beauchamp's admiration for Guy.

He has no idea he is encouraging in any one's mind the impression that Guy has an admiration for Miss Beauchamp.

"I wonder you never tire of that subject," Guy says, turning upon his brother with sudden and most unusual temper. "I don't fancy Florence would care to hear you forever making free with her name as you do."

"I beg your pardon a thousand times. I had no idea it was a touchy subject with you."

"Nor is it," shortly.

"She will have her wish," says Lilian, alluding to Cyril's unfortunate quotation, and ignoring the remark that followed. "I am sure it will be moonlight by ten,"—making a critical examination of the sky through the window, near which she is sitting. "How charming moonlight is! If I had a lover,"—laughing,—"I should never go for a drive or walk with him except beneath its cool white rays. I think Miss Beauchamp very wise in choosing the hour she has chosen for her return home."

This is intolerable. The inference is quite distinct. Guy flushes crimson and opens his mouth to give way to some of the thoughts that are oppressing him, but his mother's voice breaking in checks him.

"Don't have any lovers for a long time, child," she says: "you are too young for such unsatisfactory toys. The longer you are without them, the happier you will be. They are more trouble than gratification."

"I don't mean to have one," says Lilian, with a wise shake of her blonde head, "for years and years. I was merely admiring Miss Beauchamp's taste."

"Wise child!" says Cyril, admiringly. "Why didn't you arrive by moonlight, Lilian? I'm never in luck."

"It didn't occur to me: in future I shall be more considerate. Are you fretting because you can't go to-night to meet your cousin? You see how insignificant you are: you would not be trusted on so important a mission. It is only bad little wards you are sent to welcome."

She laughs gayly as she says this; but Guy, who is listening, feels it is meant as a reproach to him.

"There are worse things than bad little wards," says Cyril, "if you are a specimen."

"Do you think so? It's a pity every one doesn't agree with you. No, Martin," to the elderly servitor behind her chair, who she knows has a decided weakness for her: "don't take away the ice pudding yet: I am very fond of it."

"So is Florence. You and she, I foresee, will have a stand-up fight for it at least once a week. Poor cook! I suppose she will have to make two ice puddings instead of one for the future."

"If there is anything on earth I love, it is an ice pudding."

"Not better than me, I trust."

"Far, far better."

"Take it away instantly, Martin; Miss Chesney mustn't have any more: it don't agree with her."

At this Martin smiles demurely and deferentially, and presents the coveted pudding to Miss Chesney; whereat Miss Chesney makes a little triumphant grimace at Cyril and helps herself as she loves herself.

Dinner is over. The servants,—oh, joy!—have withdrawn: everybody has eaten as much fruit as they feel is good for them. Lady Chetwoode looks at Lilian and half rises from her seat.

"It is hardly worth while your leaving us this evening, mother," Guy says, hastily: "I must so soon be running away if I wish to catch the train coming in."

"Very well,"—re-seating herself: "we shall break through rules, and stay with you for this one night. You won't have your coffee until your return?"

"No, thank you." He is a little *distrait*, and is following Lilian's movements with his eyes, who has risen, thrown up the window, and is now standing upon the balcony outside, gazing upon the slumbering flowers, and upon the rippling, singing brooks in the distance, the only things in all creation that never seem to sleep.

After a while, tiring of inanimate nature, she turns her face inward and leans against the window-frame, and being in an idle mood, begins to pluck to pieces the flower that has rested during dinner upon her bosom.

Standing thus in the half light, she looks particularly fair, and slight, and childish,—

> "A lovely being, scarcely formed or moulded,
> A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded."

Some thought crossing Lady Chetwoode's mind, born of the long and loving glance she has been bestowing upon Lilian, she says:

"How I detest fat people. They make me feel positively ill. Mrs. Boileau, when she called to-day, raised within me the keenest pity."

"She is a very distressing woman," says Guy, absently. "One feels thankful she has no daughter."

"Yes, indeed; the same thought occurred to me. Though perhaps not fat now, she would undoubtedly show fatal symptoms of a tendency toward it later on. Now you, my dear Lilian, have happily escaped such a fate: you will never be fat."

"I'm sure I hope not, if you dislike the idea so much," says Lilian, amused, letting the ghastly remains of her ill-treated flower fall to the ground.

"If you only knew the misery I felt on hearing you were coming to us," goes on Lady Chetwoode, "dreading lest you might be inclined that way; not of course but that I was very pleased to have you, my dear child, but I fancied you large and healthy-looking, with a country air, red cheeks, black hair, and unbounded *gaucherie*. Imagine my delight, therefore, when I beheld you slim and self-possessed, and with your pretty yellow hair!"

"You make me blush, you cover me with confusion," says Miss Chesney, hiding her face in her hands.

"Yes, yellow hair is my admiration," goes on Lady Chetwoode, modestly: "I had golden hair myself in my youth."

"My dearest mother, we all know you were, and are, the loveliest lady in creation," says Guy, whose tenderness toward his mother is at times a thing to be admired.

"My dear Guy, how you flatter!" says she, blushing a faint, sweet old blush that shows how mightily pleased she is.

"Do you know," says Lilian, "in spite of being thought horrid, I like comfortable-looking people? I wish I had more flesh upon my poor bones. I think," going deliberately up to a glass and surveying herself with a distasteful shrug,—"I think thin people have a meagre, gawky, hard look about them, eminently unbecoming. I rather admire Mrs. Mount-George, for instance."

"Hateful woman!" says Lady Chetwoode, who cherishes for her an old spite.

"I rather admire her, too," says Sir Guy, unwisely,—though he only gives way to this opinion through a wild desire to help out Lilian's judgment.

"Do you?" says that young lady, with exaggerated emphasis. "I shouldn't have thought she was a man's beauty. She is a little too—too—demonstrative, too *prononcée*."

"Oh, Guy adores fat women," says Cyril, the incorrigible; "wait till you see Florence: there is nothing of the 'meagre, gawky, hard' sort about her. She has a decided leaning toward *embonpoint*."

"And I imagined her quite slight," says Lilian.

"You must begin then and imagine her all over again. The only flesh there isn't about Florence is fool's flesh. It is hardly worth while, however, your creating a fresh portrait, as the original," glancing at his watch, "will so soon be before you. Guy, my friend, you should hurry."

Lilian returns to the balcony, whither Chetwoode's eyes follow her longingly. He rises reluctantly to his feet, and says to Cyril, with some hesitation:

"You would not care to go to meet Florence?"

"I thank you kindly,—no," says Cyril, with an expressive shrug; "not for Joe! I shall infinitely prefer a cigar at home, and Miss Chesney's society,—if she will graciously accord it to me." This with a smile at Lilian, who has again come in and up to the table, where she is now eating daintily a showy peach, that has been lying neglected on its dish since dinner, crying vainly, "Who'll eat me? who'll eat me?"

She nods and smiles sweetly at Cyril as he speaks.

"I am always glad to be with those who want me," she says, carefully removing the skin from her fruit; "specially you, because you always amuse me. Come out

and smoke your cigar, and I will talk to you all the time. Won't that be a treat for you?" with a little low, soft laugh, and a swift glance at him from under her curling lashes that, to say the truth, is rather coquettish.

"There, Guy, don't you envy me, with such a charming time before me?" says Cyril, returning her glance with interest.

"No, indeed," says Lilian, raising her head and gazing full at Chetwoode, who returns her glance steadily, although he is enduring grinding torments all this time, and almost—*almost* begins to hate his brother. "The last thing Sir Guy would dream of would be to envy you my graceless society. Fancy a guardian finding pleasure in the frivolous conversation of his ward! How could you suspect him of such a weakness?"

Here she lets her small white teeth meet in her fruit with all the airs of a little *gourmande*, and a most evident enjoyment of its flavor.

There is a pause.

Cyril has left the room in search of his cigar-case. Lady Chetwoode has disappeared to explore the library for her everlasting knitting. Sir Guy and Lilian are alone.

"I cannot remember having ever accused you of being frivolous, either in conversation or manner," says Chetwoode, presently, in a low, rather angry tone.

"No?" says naughty Lilian, with a shrug: "I quite thought you had. But your manner is so expressive at times, it leaves no occasion for mere words. This morning when I made some harmless remark to Cyril, you looked as though I had committed murder, or something worthy of transportation for life at the very least."

"I cannot remember that either. I think you purposely misunderstand me."

"What a rude speech! Oh, if I had said that! But see how late it is," looking at the clock: "you are wasting all these precious minutes here that might be spent so much more—profitably with your cousin."

"You mean you are in a hurry to be rid of me," disdaining to notice her innuendo; "go,—don't let me detain you from Cyril and his cigar."

He turns away abruptly, and gives the bell a rather sharp pull. He is so openly

offended that Lilian's heart smites her.

"Who is misunderstanding now?" she says, with a decided change of tone. "Shall you be long away, Sir Guy?"

"Not very," icily. "Truston, as you know, is but a short drive from this."

"True." Then with charmingly innocent concern, "Don't you like going out so late?—you seem a little cross."

"Do I?"

"Yes. But perhaps I mistake; I am always making mistakes," says Miss Lilian, humbly; "I am very unfortunate. And you know what Ouida says, that 'one is so often thought to be sullen when one is only sad.' Are *you* sad?"

"No," says Guy, goaded past endurance; "I am not. But I should like to know what I have done that you should make a point at all times of treating me with incivility."

"Are you speaking of me?"—with a fine show of surprise, and widely-opened eyes; "what can you mean? Why, I shouldn't dare be uncivil to my guardian. I should be afraid. I should positively die of fright," says Miss Chesney, feeling strongly inclined to laugh, and darting a little wicked gleam at him from her eyes as she speaks.

"Your manner"—bitterly—"fully bears out your words. Still I think—— Why doesn't Granger bring round the carriage? Am I to give the same order half a dozen times?"—this to a petrified attendant who has answered the bell, and now vanishes, as though shot, to give it as his opinion down-stairs that Sir Guy is in "a h'orful wax!"

"Poor man, how you have frightened him!" says Lilian, softly. "I am sorry if I have vexed you." Holding out a small hand of amity,—"Shall we make friends before you go?"

"It would be mere waste of time," replies he, ignoring the hand; "and, besides, why should you force yourself to be on friendly terms with me?"

"You forget——" begins Lilian, somewhat haughtily, made very indignant by his refusal of her overture; but, Cyril and Lady Chetwoode entering at this moment simultaneously, the conversation dies.

"Now I am ready," Cyril says, cheerfully. "I took some of your cigars, Guy; they are rather better than mine; but the occasion is so felicitous I thought it demanded it. Do you mind?"

"You can have the box," replies Guy, curtly.

To have a suspected rival in full possession of the field, smoking one's choicest weeds, is not a thing calculated to soothe a ruffled breast.

"Eh, you're not ill, old fellow, are you?" says Cyril, in his laziest, most good-natured tones. "The whole box! Come, my dear Lilian, I pine to begin them."

Miss Chesney finishes her peach in a hurry and prepares to follow him.

"Lilian, you are like a baby with a sweet tooth," says Lady Chetwoode. "Take some of those peaches out on the balcony with you, child: you seem to enjoy them. And come to me to the drawing-room when you tire of Cyril."

So the last thing Guy sees as he leaves the room is Lilian and his brother armed with peaches and cigars on their way to the balcony; the last thing he hears is a clear, sweet, ringing laugh that echoes through the house and falls like molten lead upon his heart.

He bangs the hall-door with much unnecessary violence, steps into the carriage, and goes to meet his cousin in about the worst temper he has given way to for years.

* * * * * * *

Half-past ten has struck. The drawing-room is ablaze with light. Lady Chetwoode, contrary to custom, is wide awake, the gray sock lying almost completed upon her lap. Lilian has been singing, but is now sitting silent with her idle little hands before her, while Cyril reads aloud to them decent extracts from the celebrated divorce case, now drawing to its unpleasant close.

"They ought to be here now," says Lady Chetwoode, suddenly, alluding not so much to the plaintiff, or the defendant, or the co-respondents, as to her eldest son and Miss Beauchamp. "The time is up."

Almost as she says the words the sound of carriage-wheels strikes upon the ear, and a few minutes later the door is thrown wide open and Miss Beauchamp enters.

Lilian stares at her with a good deal of pardonable curiosity. Yes, in spite of all that Cyril said, she is very nearly handsome. She is tall, *posée*, large and somewhat full, with rather prominent eyes. Her mouth is a little thin, but well shaped; her nose is perfect; her figure faultless. She is quite twenty-six (in spite of artificial aid), a fact that Lilian perceives with secret gratification.

She walks slowly up the room, a small Maltese terrier clasped in her arms, and presents a cool cheek to Lady Chetwoode, as though she had parted from her but a few hours ago. All the worry and fatigue of travel have not told upon her: perhaps her maid and that mysterious closely-locked little morocco bag in the hall could tell upon her; but she looks as undisturbed in appearance and dress as though she had but just descended from her room, ready for a morning's walk.

"My dear Florence, I am glad to welcome you home," says Lady Chetwoode, affectionately, returning her chaste salute.

"Thank you, Aunt Anne," says Miss Beauchamp, in carefully modulated tones. "I, too, am glad to get home. It was quite delightful to find Guy waiting for me at the station!"

She smiles a pretty lady-like smile upon Sir Guy as she speaks, he having followed her into the room. "How d'ye do, Cyril?"

Cyril returns her greeting with due propriety, but expresses no hilarious joy at her return.

"This is Lilian Chesney whom I wrote to you about," Lady Chetwoode says, putting out one hand to Lilian. "Lilian, my dear, this is Florence."

The girls shake hands. Miss Beauchamp treats Lilian to a cold though perfectly polite stare, and then turns back to her aunt.

"It was a long journey, dear," sympathetically says "Aunt Anne."

"Very. I felt quite exhausted when I reached Truston, and so did Fanchette; did you not, *ma bibiche*, my treasure?"—this is to the little white stuffy ball of wool in her arms, which instantly opens two pink-lidded eyes, and puts out a crimson tongue, by way of answer. "If you don't mind, aunt, I think I should like to go to my room."

"Certainly, dear. And what shall I send you up?"

"A cup of tea, please, and—er—anything else there is. Elise will know what I fancy; I dined before I left. Good-night, Miss Chesney. Good-night, Guy; and thank you again very much for meeting me"—this very sweetly.

And then Lady Chetwoode accompanies her up-stairs, and the first wonderful interview is at an end.

"Well?" says Cyril.

"I think her quite handsome," says Lilian, enthusiastically, for Guy's special benefit, who is sitting at a little distance, glowering upon space. "Cyril, you are wanting in taste."

"Not when I admire you," replies Cyril, promptly. "Will you pardon me, Lilian, if I go to see they send a comfortable and substantial supper to my cousin? Her appetite is all that her best friend could wish."

So saying, he quits the room, bent on some business of his own, that has very little to do, I think, with the refreshment of Miss Beauchamp's body.

When he has gone, Lilian takes up Lady Chetwoode's knitting and examines it critically. For the first time in her life she regrets not having given up some of her early years to the mastering of fancy work; then she lays it down again, and sighs heavily. The sigh says quite distinctly how tedious a thing it is being alone in the room with a man who will not speak to one. Better, far better, be with a dummy, from whom nothing could be expected.

Sir Guy, roused to activity by this dolorous sound, crosses the room and stands directly before her, a contrite expression upon his face.

"I have behaved badly," he says. "I confess my fault. Will you not speak to me, Lilian?" His tone is half laughing, half penitent.

"Not"—smiling—"until you assure me you have left all your ill-temper behind you at Truston."

"I have. I swear it."

"You are sure?"

"Positive."

"I do hope you did not bestow it upon poor Miss Beauchamp?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I hope not," says Guy, lightly; and there is something both in his tone and words that restores Miss Chesney to amiability. She looks at him steadily for a moment, and then she smiles.

"I am forgiven?" asks Guy, eagerly, taking courage from her smile.

"Yes."

"Shake hands with me, then," says he, holding out his own.

"You expect too much," returns Lilian, recoiling. "Only an hour ago, you refused to take my hand: how then can I now accept yours?"

"I was a brute, nothing less!" declares he, emphatically. "Yet do accept it, I implore you."

There is a good deal more meaning in his tone than even he himself is quite aware of. Miss Chesney either does not or will not see it. Raising her head, she laughs out loud, a low but thoroughly amused laugh.

"Any one listening would say you were proposing to me," she says, mischievously; whereupon he laughs too, and seats himself upon the low ottoman beside her.

"I shouldn't mind," he says; "should you?"

"Not much. I suppose one must go through it some time or other."

"Have you ever had a—proposal?"

"Why do you compel me to give you an answer that must be humiliating? No; I have never had a proposal. But I dare say I shall have one or two before I die."

"I dare say. Unless you will now accept mine"—jestingly—"and make me the happiest of men."

"No, thank you. You make me such an admirable guardian that I could not bear to depose you. You are now in a proud position (considering the ward you have); do not rashly seek to better it."

"Your words are golden. But all this time you are keeping me in terrible suspense. You have not yet quite made friends with me."

Then Lilian places her hand in his.

"Though you don't deserve it," she says, severely, "still——"

"Still you do accept me—it, I mean," interrupts Guy, purposely, closing his fingers warmly over hers. "I shall never forget that fact. Dear little hand!" softly caressing it, "did I really scorn it an hour ago? I beg its pardon very humbly."

"It is granted," answers Lilian, gayly. But to herself she says, "I wonder how often has he gone through all this before?"

Nevertheless, in spite of doubts on both sides, the truce is signed for the present.

CHAPTER X.

"How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat.
To the dry grass, and the drier grain,
How welcome is the rain!"—LONGFELLOW.

Miss Chesney, who, had she been born a man and a gardener, could have commanded any wages, is on her knees beside some green plants, busily hunting for slugs. These ravishers of baby flowers and innocent seedlings are Miss Chesney's especial abhorrence. It is in vain to tell her that they must be fed,—that they, as well as the leviathan, must have their daily food; she declines to look upon their frequent depredations in any other light than as wanton mischief.

Upon their destruction she wastes so much of her valuable time that, could there be a thought in their small, slimy, gelatinous bodies, they must look upon her as the fell destroyer of their race,—a sort of natural enemy.

She is guiltless of gloves, and, being heated in the chase, has flung her hat upon the velvet sward beside her. Whereupon the ardent sun, availing of the chance, is making desperate love to her, and is kissing with all his might her priceless complexion. It is a sight to make a town-bred damsel weep aloud!

Miss Beauchamp, sailing majestically toward this foolish maiden, with her diaphanous skirts trailing behind her, a huge hat upon her carefully arranged braids, and an enormous garden umbrella over all, looks with surprise, largely mingled with contempt, upon the kneeling figure. She marks the soft beauty of the skin, the exquisite penciling of the eyebrows, the rich color on the laughing lips, and, marking, feels some faint anger at the reckless extravagance of the owner of these unpurchasable charms.

To one long aware of the many advantages to be derived from such precious unguents as creme d'Ispahan, velvetine, and Chinese rouge, is known also all the fear of detection arising from the daily use of them. And to see another richly and freely endowed by Nature with all the most coveted tints, making light of the gift, seems to such a one a gross impertinence, a miserable want of gratitude, too deep for comprehension.

Pausing near Lilian, with the over-fed Maltese panting and puffing beside her, Miss Beauchamp looks down upon her curiously, upon the rose-leaf face, the little soiled hands, the ruffled golden head, and calculates to a fraction the exact amount of mischief that may be done by the possession of so much youth and beauty.

The girl is far too pretty. There is really no knowing what irremediable harm she may not have done already.

"What a mess you are making of yourself!" says Florence, in a tone replete with lady-like disgust.

"I am, rather," says Lilian, holding aloft the small hand, on which five dusty fingers disport themselves, while she regards them contemplatively; "but I love it, gardening I mean. I would have made a small fortune at flower-shows, had I given my mind to it earlier: not a prize would have escaped me."

"Every one with an acre of garden thinks that," says Miss Beauchamp.

"Do they?" smiling up at the white goddess beside her. "Well, perhaps so. 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast,' and a good thing, too."

"Don't you think you will be likely to get a sunstroke?" remarks Florence, with indifferent concern.

"No; I am accustomed to go about without my hat," answers Lilian: "of course, as a rule, I wear it, but it always gives me a feeling of suffocation; and as for a veil, I simply couldn't bear one."

Miss Beauchamp, glancing curiously at the peach-like complexion beneath her, wonders enviously how she does it, and then reflects with a certain sense of satisfaction that a very little more of this mad tampering with Nature's gifts will create such havoc as must call for the immediate aid of the inestimable Rimmel and his fellows.

The small terrier, awaking from the tuneful snooze that always accompanies her moments of inactivity, whether she be standing or lying, now rolls over to Lilian and makes a fat effort to lick her dear little Grecian nose. At which let no one wonder, as a prettier little nose was never seen. But Lilian is so far unsympathetic that she strongly objects to the caress.

"Poor Fanchette!" she says, kindly, recoiling a little, "you must forgive me, but

the fact is I can't bear having my face licked. It is bad taste on my part, I know, and I hope you will grant me pardon. No, I cannot pet you either, because I think my earthy fingers would not improve your snowy coat."

"Come away, Fanchette; come away, *petite*, directly; do you hear?" cries Miss Beauchamp, in an agony lest the scented fleece of her "curled darling" should be defiled. "Come to its own mistress, then. Don't you see you are disturbing Lilian?" this last as a mild apology for the unaffected horror of her former tone.

So saying, she gathers up Fanchette, and retires into the shaded shrubberies beyond.

Almost as she disappears from view, Guy comes upon the scene.

"Why, what are you doing?" he calls out while yet a few yards from her.

"I have been shocking your cousin," returns Lilian, laughing. "I doubt she thinks me a horrible unlady-like young woman. But I can't help that. See how I have soiled my hands!" holding up for his inspection her ten little grimy fingers.

"And done your utmost to ruin your complexion, all for the sake of a few poor slugs. What a blood-thirsty little thing you are!"

"I don't believe there is any blood in them," says Lilian.

"Do come away. One would think there wasn't a gardener about the place. You will make yourself ill, kneeling there in the sun; and look how warm you are; it is a positive shame."

"But I have preserved the lives, and the beauty of all these little plants."

"Never mind the plants. Think of your own beauty. I came here to ask you if you will come for a walk in the woods. I have just been there, and it is absolutely cool."

"I should like to immensely," springing to her feet; "but my hands,"—hesitating, —"what am I to do with them? Shall I run in and wash them? I shan't be one minute."

"Oh, no!"—hastily, having a wholesome horror of women's minutes, "come down to the stream, and we will wash them there."

This suggestion, savoring of unconventionality, finds favor in Miss Chesney's

eyes, and they start, going through the lawn, for the tiny rivulet that runs between it and the longed-for woods.

Kneeling beside it, Lilian lets the fresh gurgling water trail through her fingers, until all the dust falls from them and floats away on its bosom; then reluctantly she withdraws her hands and, rising, looks at them somewhat ruefully.

"Now, how shall I dry them?" asks she, glancing at the drops of water that fall from her fingers and glint and glisten like diamonds in the sun's rays.

"In your handkerchief," suggests Guy.

"But then it would be wet, and I should hate that. Give me yours," says Miss Chesney, with calm selfishness.

Guy laughs, and produces an unopened handkerchief in which he carefully, and, it must be confessed, very tardily dries her fingers, one by one.

"Do you always take as long as that to dry your own hands?" asks Lilian, gravely, when he has arrived at the third finger of the second hand.

"Always!" without a blush.

"Your dressing, altogether, must take a long time?"

"Not so long as you imagine. It is only on my hands I expend so much care."

"And on mine," suggestively.

"Exactly so. Do you never wear rings?"

"Never. And for the very best reason."

"And that?"

"Is because I haven't any to wear. I have a few of my mother's, but they are old-fashioned and heavy, and look very silly on my hands. I must get them reset."

"I like rings on pretty hands, such as yours."

"And Florence's. Yes, she has pretty hands, and pretty rings also."

"Has she?"

"What! Would you have me believe you never noticed them? Oh, Sir Guy, how

deceitful you can be!"

"Now, that is just the very one vice of which I am entirely innocent. You wrong me. I couldn't be deceitful to save my life. I always think it must be so fatiguing. Most young ladies have pretty hands, I suppose; but I never noticed those of Miss Beauchamp, or her rings either, in particular. Are you fond of rings?"

"Passionately fond," laughing. "I should like to have every finger and both of my thumbs covered with them up to the first knuckle."

"And nobody ever gave you one?"

"Nobody," shaking her head emphatically. "Wasn't it unkind of them?"

With this remark Sir Guy does not coincide: so he keeps silence, and they walk on some yards without speaking. Presently Lilian, whose thoughts are rapid, finding the stillness irksome, breaks it.

"Sir Guy——"

"Miss Chesney."

As they all call her "Lilian," she glances up at him in some surprise at the strangeness of his address.

"Well, and why not," says he, answering the unmistakable question in her eyes, "when you call me 'Sir Guy' I wish you would not."

"Why? Is it not your name?"

"Yes, but it is so formal. You call Cyril by his name, and even with my mother you have dropped all formality. Why are you so different with me? Can you not call me 'Guy'?"

"Guy! Oh, I *couldn't*. Every time the name passed my lips I should faint with horror at my own temerity. What! call my guardian by his Christian name? How can you even suggest the idea? Consider your age and bearing."

"One would think I was ninety," says he, rather piqued.

"Well, you are not far from it," teasingly. "However, I don't object to a compromise. I will call you Uncle Guy, if you wish it."

"Nonsense!" indignantly. "I don't want to be your uncle."

"No? Then Brother Guy."

"That would be equally foolish."

"You won't, then, claim relationship with me?" in a surprised tone. "I fear you look upon me as a *mauvais sujet*. Well, then,"—with sudden inspiration,—"I know what I shall do. Like Esther Summerson, in 'Bleak House,' I shall call you 'Guardian.' There!" clapping her hands, "is not that the very thing? Guardian you shall be, and it will remind me of my duty to you every time I mention your name. Or, perhaps,"—hesitating—"'Guardy' will be prettier."

"I wish I wasn't your guardian," Guy says, somewhat sadly.

"Don't be unkinder than you can help," reproachfully. "You won't be my uncle, or my brother, or my guardian? What is it, then, that you would be?"

To this question he could give a very concise answer, but does not dare do so. He therefore maintains a discreet silence, and relieves his feelings by taking the heads off three dandelions that chance to come in his path.

"Does it give you so very much trouble, the guardianship of poor little me," she asks, with a mischievous though charming smile, "that you so much regret it?"

"It isn't that," he answers, slowly, "but I fear you look coldly on me in consequence of it. You do not make me your friend, and that is unjust, because it was not my fault. I did not ask to be your guardian; it was your father's wish entirely. You should not blame me for what he insisted on."

"I don't,"—gayly,—"and I forgive you for having acceded to poor papa's proposal: so don't fret about it. After all,"—naughtily,—"I dare say I might have got worse; you aren't half bad so far, which is wise of you, because I warn you I am an *enfant gaté*; and should you dare to thwart me I should lead you such a life as would make you rue the day you were born."

"You speak as though it were my desire to thwart you."

"Well, perhaps it is. At all events," with a relieved sigh,—"I have warned you, and now it is off my mind. By the bye, I was going to say something to you a few minutes ago when you interrupted me."

"What was it?"

"I want you"—coaxingly—"to take me round by The Cottage, so that I may get a

glimpse at this wonderful widow."

"It would be no use; you would not see her."

"But I might."

"And if so, what would you gain by it? She is very much like other women: she has only one nose, and not more than two eyes."

"Nevertheless she rouses my curiosity. Why have you such a dislike to the poor woman?"

"Oh, no dislike," says Guy, the more hastily in that he feels there is some truth in the accusation. "I don't quite trust her: that is all."

"Still, take me near The Cottage; *do*, now, Guardy," says Miss Chesney, softly, turning two exquisite appealing blue eyes upon him, which of course settles the question. They instantly turn and take the direction that leads to The Cottage.

But their effort to see the mysterious widow is not crowned with success. To Miss Chesney's sorrow and Sir Guy's secret joy, the house appears as silent and devoid of life as though, indeed, it had never been inhabited. With many a backward glance and many a wistful look, Lilian goes by, while Guy carefully suppresses all expressions of satisfaction and trudges on silently beside her.

"She must be out," says Lilian, after a lengthened pause.

"She must be always out," says Guy, "because she is never to be seen."

"You must have come here a great many times to find that out," says Miss Chesney, captiously, which remark puts a stop to all conversation for some time.

And indeed luck is dead against Lilian, for no sooner has she passed out of sight than Mrs. Arlington steps from her door, and, armed with a book and a parasol, makes for the small and shady arbor situated at the end of the garden.

But if Lilian's luck has deserted her, Cyril's has not. He has walked down here this evening in a rather desponding mood, having made the same journey vainly for the last three days, and now—just as he has reached despair—finds himself in Mrs. Arlington's presence.

"Good-evening," he says, gayly, feeling rather elated at his good fortune, raising his hat.

"Good-evening," returns she, with a faint blush born of a vivid recollection of all that passed at their last meeting.

"I had no idea I should see you to-day," says Cyril; which is the exact truth,—for a wonder.

"Why? You always see me when you come round here, don't you?" says Mrs. Arlington; which is not the truth, she having been the secret witness of his coming many times, when she has purposely abstained from being seen.

"I hope," says Cyril, gently, "you have forgiven me for having inadvertently offended you last—month."

"Last week, you mean!" in a surprised tone.

"Is it really only a week? How long it seems!" says Cyril. "Are you sure it was only last week?"

"Quite sure," with a slight smile. "Yes, you are forgiven. Although I do not quite know that I have anything to forgive."

"Well, I had my own doubts about it at the time," says Cyril; "but I have been carefully tutoring myself ever since into the belief that I was wrong. I think my principal fault lay in my expressing a hope that the air here was doing you good; and that—to say the least of it—was mild. By the bye, *is* it doing you good?"

"Yes, thank you."

"I am glad of it, as it may persuade you to stay with us. What lovely roses you have! Is that one over there a 'Gloire de Dijon'? I can scarcely see it from this, and I'm so fond of roses."

"This, do you mean?" plucking one. "No, it is a Marshal Neil."

"Ah, so it is. How stupid of me to make the mistake!" says Cyril, who in reality knows as much about roses as about the man in the Iron Mask.

As he speaks, two or three drops of rain fall heavily upon his face,—one upon his nose, two into his earnest eyes, a large one finds its way cleverly between his parted lips. This latter has more effect upon him than the other three combined.

"It is raining," he says, naturally but superfluously, glancing at his coat-sleeve for confirmation of his words.

Heavier and heavier fall the drops. A regular shower comes pattering from the heavens right upon their devoted heads. The skies grow black with rain.

"You will get awfully wet. Do go into the house," Cyril says, anxiously glancing at her bare head.

"So will you," with hesitation, gazing with longing upon the distant arbor, toward which she is evidently bent on rushing.

"I dare say,"—laughing,—"but I don't much mind even if I do catch it before I get home."

"Perhaps"—unwillingly, and somewhat coldly—"you would like to stand in the arbor until the shower is over?"

"I should," replies Mr. Chetwoode, with alacrity, "if you think there will be room for two."

There *is* room for two, but undoubtedly not for three.

The little green bower is pretty but small, and there is only one seat.

"It is extremely kind of you to give me standing-room," says Cyril, politely.

"I am very sorry I cannot give you sitting-room," replies Mrs. Arlington, quite as politely, after which conversation languishes.

Cyril looks at Mrs. Arlington; Mrs. Arlington looks at Marshal Neil, and apparently finds something singularly attractive in his appearance. She even raises him to her lips once or twice in a fit of abstraction: whereupon Cyril thinks that, were he a marshal ten times over, too much honor has been done him.

Presently Mrs. Arlington breaks the silence.

"A little while ago," she says, "I saw your brother and a young lady pass my gate. She seemed very pretty."

"She is very pretty," says Cyril, with a singular want of judgment in so wise a young man. "It must have been Lilian Chesney, my brother's ward."

"He is rather young to have a ward."

"He is, rather."

"He is older than you?"

"Unfortunately, yes, a little."

"You, then, are very young?"

"Well, I'm not exactly an infant,"—rather piqued at the cool superiority of her tone: "I am twenty-six."

"So I should have thought," says Mrs. Arlington, quietly, which assertion is as balm to his wounded spirit.

"Are your brother and his ward much attached to each other?" asks she, idly, with a very palpable endeavor to make conversation.

"Not very much,"—laughing, as he remembers certain warlike passages that have occurred between Guy and Lilian, in which the former has always had the worst of it.

"No? She prefers you, perhaps?"

"I really don't know: we are very good friends, and she is a dear little thing."

"No doubt. Fair women are always to be admired. You admire her very much?"

"I think her pretty; but"—with an indescribable glance at the "nut-brown locks" before him, that says all manner of charming things—"her hair, to please me, is far too golden."

"Oh, do you think so?" says Mrs. Arlington, surprised. "I saw her distinctly from my window, and I thought her hair very lovely, and she herself one of the prettiest creatures I have ever seen."

"That is strong praise. I confess I have seen others I thought better worthy of admiration."

"You have been lucky, then,"—indifferently. "When one travels, one of course sees a great deal, and becomes a judge on such matters."

"I didn't travel far to find that out."

"To find what out?"

"A prettier woman than Miss Chesney."

"No?" with cold unconcern and an evident want of interest on the subject. "How lovely the flowers look with those little drops of rain in their hearts!—like a touch of sorrow in the very centre of their joy."

"You like the country?"

"Yes, I love it. There is a rest, a calm about it that to some seems monotony, but to me is peace."

A rather troubled shade falls across her face. An intense pity for her fills Cyril's breast together with a growing conviction (which is not a pleasing one) that the dead and gone Arlington must have been a king among his fellows.

"I like the country well enough myself," he says, "but I hardly hold it in such esteem as you do. It is slow,—at times unbearable. Indeed, a careful study of my feelings has convinced me that I prefer the strains of Albani or Nilsson to those of the sweetest nightingale that ever 'warbled at eve,' and the sound of the noisiest cab to the bleating of the melancholy lamb; while the most exquisite sunrise that could be worked into poetry could not tempt me from my bed. Have I disgusted you?"

"I wonder you are not ashamed to give way to such sentiments,"—with a short but lovely smile.

"One should never be ashamed of telling the truth, no matter how unpleasant it may be."

"True!" with another smile, more prolonged, and therefore lovelier, that lights up all her face and restores to it the sweetness and freshness of a child's.

Cyril, looking at her, forgets the thread of his discourse, and says impulsively, as though speaking to himself, "It seems impossible."

"What does?" somewhat startled.

"Forgive me; I was again going to say something that would undoubtedly have brought down your heaviest displeasure on my head."

"Then don't say it," says Mrs. Arlington, coloring deeply.

"I won't. To return to our subject: the country is just now new to you, perhaps. After a while you will again pine for society."

"I do not think so. I have seen a good deal of the world in my time, but never gained anything from it except—sorrow."

She sighs heavily; again the shadow darkens her face and dims the beauty of her eyes.

"It must have caused you great grief losing your husband so young," says Cyril, gently, hardly knowing what to say.

"No, his death had nothing to do with the trouble of which I am thinking," replies Mrs. Arlington, with curious haste, a quick frown overshadowing her brow. Her fingers meet and clasp each other closely.

Cyril is silent, being oppressed with another growing conviction which completely routs the first and leads him to believe the dead and gone Arlington a miserable brute, deserving of hanging at the very least. This conviction, unlike the first, carries consolation with it. "I am sorry you would not let my mother call on you," he says, presently.

"Did Sir Guy say I would not see her?" asks she, with some anxiety. "I hope he did not represent me as having received her kind message with ingratitude."

"No, he merely said you wished to see no one."

"He said the truth. But then there are ways of saying things, and I should not like to appear rude. I certainly do not wish to see any one, but for all that I should not like to offend your mother."

There is not the very smallest emphasis on the word "your," yet somehow Cyril feels flattered.

"She is not offended," he says, against his conscience, and is glad to see his words please her. After a slight pause he goes on: "Although I am only a stranger to you, I cannot help feeling how bad it is for you to be so much alone. You are too young to be so isolated."

"I am happier so."

"What! you would care to see no one?"

"I would care to see no one," emphatically, but with a sigh.

"How dreadfully in the way you must have found me!" says Cyril, straightening

himself preparatory to departure. "The rain, I see, is over." (It has been for the last ten minutes.) "I shall therefore restore you to happiness by taking myself away."

Mrs. Arlington smiles faintly.

"I don't seem to mind you much," she says, kindly, but with a certain amount of coldness. "Pray do not think I have wished you away."

"This is the first kind thing you have ever said to me," says Cyril, earnestly.

"Is it? I think I have forgotten how to make pretty speeches," replies she, calmly. "See, the sun is coming out again. I do not think, Mr. Chetwoode, you need be afraid any longer of getting wet."

"I'm afraid—I mean—I am sure not," says Cyril, absently. "Thank you very much for the shelter you have afforded me. Would you think me very *exigeant* if I asked you to give me that rose you have been ill-treating for the last half hour?"

"Certainly not," says Mrs. Arlington, hospitably; "you shall have it if you care for it; but this one is damaged; let me get you a few others, fresher and sweeter."

"No, thank you. I do not think you *could* give me one either fresher or sweeter. Good-evening."

"Good-bye," returns she, extending her hand; and, with the gallant Marshal firmly clasped in his hand, Cyril makes a triumphant exit.

He has hardly gone three yards beyond the gate that guards the widow's bower when he finds himself face to face with Florence Beauchamp, rather wet, and decidedly out of temper. She glances at him curiously, but makes no remark, so that Cyril hopes devoutly she may not have noticed where he has just come from.

"What a shower we have had!" he says, with a great assumption of geniality and much politeness.

"You do not seem to have got much of it," replies she, with lady-like irritability, looking with open disfavor upon the astonishing dryness of his clothes.

"No,"—amiably,—"I have escaped pretty well. I never knew any cloth to resist rain like this,—doesn't even show a mark of it. I am sorry I cannot say the same for you. Your gown has lost a good deal of its pristine freshness; while as for

your feather, it is, to say the least of it, dejected."

No one likes to feel one's self looking a guy. Cyril's tender solicitude for her clothes has the effect of rendering Miss Beauchamp angrier than she was before.

"Oh, pray don't try to make me more uncomfortable than I am," she says, sharply. "I can imagine how unlovely I am looking. I detest the country: it means simply destruction to one's clothes and manners," pointedly. "It has been raining ever since I came back from Shropshire."

"What a pity you did come back just yet!" says Cyril, with quite sufficient pause to throw an unpleasant meaning into his words. "As to the country, I entirely agree with you; give me the town: it never rains in the town."

"If it does, one has a carriage at hand. How did you manage to keep yourself so dry, Cyril?"

"There is plenty of good shelter round here, if one chooses to look for it."

"Evidently; very good shelter, I should say. One would almost think you had taken refuge in a house."

"Then one would think wrong. Appearances, you know, are often deceitful."

"They are indeed. What a beautiful rose that is!"

"Was, you mean. It has seen its best days. By the bye, when you were so near The Cottage, why didn't you go in and stay there until the rain was over?"

"I shouldn't dream of asking hospitality from such a very suspicious sort of person as this Mrs. Arlington seems to be," Miss Beauchamp replies, with much affectation and more spitefulness.

"You are right,—you always *are*," says Cyril, calmly. "One should shun the very idea of evil. Extreme youth can never be too careful. Good-bye for the present, Florence; I fear I must tear myself away from you, as duty calls me in this direction." So saying, he turns into another path, preferring a long round to his home to a further *tête-à-tête* with the charming Florence.

But Florence has not yet quite done with him. His supercilious manner and that last harmless remark about "extreme youth" rankles in her breast; so that she carries back to Chetwoode with her a small stone carefully hidden in her sleeve wherewith to slay him at a convenient opportunity.

* * * * * * *

The same shower that reduces Miss Beauchamp to sullen discontent behaves with equal severity to Lilian, who reaches home, flushed and laughing, drenched and out of breath, with the tail of her gown over her shoulders and a handkerchief round her neck. Guy is with her; and it seems to Lady Chetwoode (who is much concerned about them) as though they had rather enjoyed than otherwise their enforced run.

Florence, who arrives some time after them, retires to her room, where she spends the two hours that must elapse before dinner in repairing all dilapidations in face and figure. At seven o'clock precisely she descends and gains the drawing-room as admirably dressed as usual, but with her good humor still conspicuous by its absence.

She inveighs mildly against the evening's rain, as though it had been specially sent for the ruin of her clothes and complexion, and says a good deal about the advantages to be derived from a town life, which is decidedly gracious, considering how glad she has been all these past years to make her home at Chetwoode.

When dinner is almost over she turns to Cyril and says, with deliberate distinctness:

"Until to-day I had no idea you were acquainted with—the widow."

There is no mistaking whom she means. The shot is well fired, and goes straight home. Cyril changes color perceptibly and does not reply instantly. Lady Chetwoode looks at him with marked surprise. So does Lilian. So does Sir Guy. They all await his answer. Miss Beauchamp's petty triumph is complete.

"Had you not?" says Cyril. "I wonder so amazing a fact escaped your knowledge."

"Have you met Mrs. Arlington? You never mentioned it, Cyril," says Lady Chetwoode.

"Oh, yes," says Miss Beauchamp, "he is quite intimate there: aren't you, Cyril? As I was passing The Cottage to-day in a desperate plight, I met Cyril coming out of the house."

"Not out of the house," corrects Cyril, calmly, having quite recovered his self-

possession; "out of the garden."

"Was it? You were so enviably dry, in spite of the rain, I quite thought you had been in the house."

"For once your usually faultless judgment led you astray. I was in an arbor, where Mrs. Arlington kindly gave me shelter until the rain was over."

"Was Mrs. Arlington in the arbor too?"

"Yes."

"How very romantic! I suppose it was she gave you the lovely yellow rose you were regarding so affectionately?" says Miss Beauchamp, with a low laugh.

"I always think, Florence, what a fortune you would have made at the bar," says Cyril, thoughtfully; "your cross-examinations would have had the effect of turning your witnesses gray. I am utterly convinced you would have ended your days on the woolsack. It is a pity to see so much native talent absolutely wasted."

"Not altogether wasted," sweetly: "it has at least enabled me to discover how it was you eluded the rain this evening."

"You met Mrs. Arlington before to-day?" asks Guy, who is half amused and half relieved, as he remembers how needlessly jealous he has been about his brother's attentions to Lilian. He feels also some vague doubts as to the propriety of Cyril's losing his heart to a woman of whom they know nothing; and his singular silence on the subject of having made her acquaintance is (to say the least of it) suspicious. But, as Cyril has been in a chronic state of love-making ever since he got into his first tall hat, this doubt causes him but little uneasiness.

"Yes," says Cyril, in answer to his question.

"Is she as pretty as Sir Guy says?" asks Lilian, smiling.

"Quite as pretty, if not more so. One may always depend upon Guy's taste."

"What a good thing it was you knew her! It saved you from that dreadful shower," says Lilian, good-naturedly, seeing intuitively he is vexed. "We were not so fortunate: we had to run for our lives all the way home. It is a pity, Florence, you didn't know her also, as, being so near the house, you might have thrown yourself upon her hospitality for a little while."

"I hardly think I see it in that light," drawls Florence, affectedly. "I confess I don't feel exactly ambitious about making the acquaintance of this Mrs.—er ——"

"Arlington is her name," suggests Cyril, quietly. "Have you forgotten it? My dear Florence, you really should see some one about your memory: it is failing every day."

"I can still remember *some* things," retorts Miss Beauchamp, blandly.

By this time it has occurred to Lady Chetwoode that matters are not going exactly smoothly; whereupon she glances at Miss Beauchamp, then at Lilian, and finally carries them both off with her to the drawing-room.

"If there is one thing I detest," says Cyril, throwing himself back in his chair, with an impatient movement, when he has closed the door upon them, "it is a vindictive woman. I pity the man who marries Florence Beauchamp."

"You are rather hard upon her, are you not?" says Guy. "I have known her very good-natured."

"Lucky you! I cannot recall many past acts of kindness on her part."

"So you met Mrs. Arlington?" says Guy, carelessly.

"Yes; one day I restored to her her dog; and to-day she offered me shelter from the rain, simply because she couldn't help it. There our acquaintance rests."

"Where is the rose she gave you?" asks Guy, with a laugh, in which, after a moment's struggle, Cyril joins.

"Don't lose your heart to her, old boy," Guy says, lightly; but Cyril well knows he has meaning in what he says.

* * * * * * *

CHAPTER XI.

"There were two cousins almost like to twins;
And so they grew together, like two flowers
Upon one stem."—SHELLEY.

"It was a babe, beautiful from its birth."—SHELLEY.

The next day awakes calm and fair, and full of the rich ripeness that belongs to August. Lilian, opening her blue eyes upon the world at half-past seven, calls her nurse, and being dressed rushes forth into the garden to drink in all the first sweet freshness of the day.

The dew still lingers upon lawn and blossom; the spiders' webs glisten like jeweled nets in the dancing sunbeams; the exquisite opal flush of the morning sky has grown and spread and deepened, until all the heavens are tinged with warmest carmine.

There is "splendor in the grass," and "glory in the flower," and Lilian, flitting from bush to bush, enjoys everything to its utmost; she plucks two pale roses for her own bosom, and one, deep red and richly perfumed, to lay beside Lady Chetwoode's plate. This is a usual morning offering not to be neglected.

Just as she has made a careful choice, the breakfast bell rings loudly, and, running at her quickest—most reckless—speed through the hall, she barely succeeds in stopping herself as she comes up to Sir Guy at the door of the morning-room.

"Oh," cries she, with a little gasp, "another moment and I should have been in your arms. I never saw you. Good-morning, Guardy," gayly.

"Good-morning, my ward. I beg you to understand I could have welcomed that other moment. Why, what an early little bird you are! How long have you been abroad?"

"For hours and hours, half a day, while you—lazy man—were sound asleep. See what spoil I have gathered:" pointing to the heavy roses at her breast.

"Lovely, indeed," says Guy, who is secretly of opinion that the wild-rose

complexion she has snatched from the amorous wind is by far the loveliest spoil of the two.

"And is not this sweet?" she says, holding up to his face the "red, red rose," with a movement full of grace.

"Very," replies he, and stooping presses his lips lightly to her white hand.

"I meant the rose, not the hand," says she, with a laugh and a faint blush.

"Did you? I thought the hand very much the sweeter of the two. Is it for me?"

"No!" says Miss Chesney, with much emphasis; and, telling him he is quite too foolish to be listened to any longer, she opens the door of the breakfast-room, and they both enter it together, to find all the others assembled before them, and the post lying in the centre of the table. All, that is, that remains of it,—namely, one letter for Lilian and two or three for Guy.

These latter, being tinged with indigo, are of an uninteresting description and soon read. Miss Chesney's, on the contrary, is evidently full of information. It consists of two whole sheets closely covered by a scrawling handwriting that resembles nothing so much as the struggles of a dying fly.

When she has read it twice over carefully—and with considerable difficulty—she lays it down and looks anxiously at Lady Chetwoode.

"Auntie," she begins, with a bright blush and a rather confused air.

"Yes, dear?"

"This letter"—touching it—"is from my cousin."

"Yes,—from your cousin? The lad who grew up with you at the Park?" says Lady Chetwoode, with a kindly nod of comprehension.

Then ensues a pause. Somehow every one has stopped talking, and Lady Chetwoode has set down the teapot and turned to Lilian with an air full of expectancy. They all feel that something yet remains to be said.

Possessed with this idea, and seeing Lilian's hesitation, Lady Chetwoode says, in her gentlest tones:

"Well, dear?"

"He is unhappy," says Lilian, running one of her fingers up and down the table-cloth and growing more and more embarrassed: "every year he used to come to the Park for his holidays, and now——"

"And now he cannot go to the Park: is that it?"

"Yes. A little while ago he joined his regiment, and now he has leave of absence, and he has nowhere to spend it except at Colonel Graham's, who is his guardian and his uncle, and he *hates* Colonel Graham," says Lilian, impressively, looking at Lady Chetwoode with appealing eyes.

"Poor boy," says that kindest of women, "I do not like to hear of his being unhappy. Perhaps, Lilian, you would wish——"

"I want you to ask him here," says Lilian, quickly and boldly, coloring furiously, and fixing her great honest eyes on Lady Chetwoode. "He said nothing about it, but I know he would like to be where I am."

"My dear, of course," says Lady Chetwoode, with most unusual briskness for her, "ask him instantly to come here as *soon* as you like, to stay as *long* as you like."

"Auntie Nannie," says Lilian, rising tumultuously from her chair, "you are the dearest, kindest, best of women!" She presses her lips gently, although rapturously, to her auntie's cheek, after which she returns to her seat. "Now I am thoroughly content," she says naively: "I could not bear to picture Taffy wretched, and that old Colonel Graham is a downright Tartar!"

"'Taffy'! what an extraordinary name!" says Florence. "Is it a fancy name?"

"No; it is, I am ashamed to say, a nickname. I believe he was christened James, but one day when we were both almost babies he stole from me my best doll and squeezed the eyes out of it to see what lay behind, and I was very angry, and said he was a regular 'Taffy' to do such a thing. You know the old rhyme?" turning to Lady Chetwoode with a blush and a light laugh:

> "Taffy was a Welshman,
> Taffy was a thief,
> Taffy came to my house
> And stole a piece of beef.

There is a good deal more of it, quite as interesting, but of course you know it.

Nurse laughed when I so christened him, and after that he was always called 'Master Taffy' by the servants, and nothing else."

"How nicknames do cling to one!"

"I don't believe I should know him by any other now. It suits him much better than his own, as he doesn't look the least in the world like a James."

"How old is your cousin?" asks Florence, with an eye to business.

"A year older than I am."

"And that is——"

"Nineteen."

"Indeed! I should have thought you older than that."

"He is very like me, and he is a dragoon!" says Lilian, proudly. "But I have never seen him since he was gazetted."

"Then you have not seen him in his uniform?" says Guy.

"No. But he tells me," glancing at her letter, "he looks 'uncommonly jolly' in it."

They all laugh. Even Florence condescends to be amused.

"When may we expect this hero?" asks Guy, kindly.

"His leave begins next week," answers Lilian, looking at Lady Chetwoode. "If he might come then, it would be such a comfort to him."

"Of course he must come then," says Lady Chetwoode. "Do not let him lose a day of his precious leave. I remember when Guy was in the army how stingy they were about granting him a few days now and then."

"The Mater's 'few days' always meant eight months out of the twelve," says Cyril, laughing, "and anything like the abuse she used to shower upon the colonel because he didn't see it in the light that she did, was never heard. It is unfit for publication."

"Archibald Chesney is coming here the twenty-ninth," says Guy. "So you will be able to make choice between your two cousins."

"Is Archibald coming?" surprised. "But my choice is already made. No one shall

ever get inside Taffy in my affections."

"Thrice blessed Taffy," says Cyril. "See what it is to be a young and gallant plunger!"

"That wouldn't weigh with me," says Lilian, indignantly.

"Would it not?" asks Guy. "I was hoping otherwise. I was a plunger once. What is the renowned Taffy's other name?"

"Musgrave," says Lilian.

"A very pretty name," remarks Miss Beauchamp, who has received an unexpected check by the morning's post, and is consequently in high good humor.

"I think so too," returns Lilian.

"Five distinct blushes, and all about Taffy," says Cyril, meditatively. "Happy Taffy! I have counted them religiously. Are you very much in love with him, Lilian?"

"'In love'! nonsense!" laughing. "If you only saw Taffy! (But," with a glad smile, "you soon will.) He never remembers anything half an hour after he has said it, and besides," scornfully, "he is only a boy."

"'Only a boy'! Was there ever such willful waste! Such reckless, extravagant, woful waste! To throw away five priceless, divine blushes upon 'only a boy'! Oh, that I were a boy! Perhaps, Lilian, when you come to know me longer I shall be happy enough to have one whole blush all to myself."

"Be consoled," says Miss Chesney, saucily: "I feel assured the longer I know you, the more reason I shall have to blush for you!"

* * * * * * *

All through the day Miss Chesney's joy makes itself felt. She is thoroughly happy, and takes very good care every one shall know it. She sings through the house, "up-stairs, down-stairs, and in my lady's chamber," gay as any lark, and inundates her nurse with vain conjectures and interrogations; as for example, whether she thinks Taffy will be much changed,—and whether twelve months could possibly produce a respectable moustache,—and if she really believes the fact of his being a full-blown dragoon will have a demoralizing effect upon him.

"An' no doubt it will, ninny," says nurse, shaking her beribboned head very solemnly, "I have no opinion of those soldiering ways myself. I fear me he will be growing wilder an' wilder every day."

"Oh! if that's all!" says Miss Lilian, with a relieved sigh. "I am only afraid he will be growing steadier and steadier; and Taffy would be ruined if he gave himself airs. I can't endure dignified young men."

"I don't think you need fret about that, my dear," says nurse, with conviction. "I never yet saw much signs of it about him."

Having used up all nurse's powers of conversation, Lilian goes on to Lady Chetwoode's boudoir, and finds out from her the room Taffy will be likely to occupy. Having inspected it, and brought up half the servants to change every article of furniture in the room into a different position, and given as much trouble as possible, and decided in her own mind the precise flowers she will place upon his dressing-table the morning of his arrival, she goes back to her auntie to tell her all she has done.

In fact, any one so busy as Miss Chesney during all this day can scarcely be imagined. Her activity is surprising, and draws from Cyril the remark that she ought to go as hospital nurse to the wounded Turks, as she seems eminently fitted for an energetic life.

After luncheon she disappears for a while, so that at last—though not for long—something like repose falls upon the house, which sinks into a state of quietude only to be equaled by that of Verne's "Van Tricasse."

Miss Beauchamp is in her room, studying art; Cyril is walking with a heart full of hope toward The Cottage; Lilian is absent; Guy is up-stairs with his mother, relating to her a new grievance anent poachers.

The lad now in trouble is an old offender, and Guy is puzzled what to do with him. As a rule all scamps have something interesting about them, and this Heskett is an unacknowledged favorite of Sir Guy's.

"Still I know I ought to dismiss him," he says, with a rather troubled air, and an angry, disappointed expression upon his face.

"He is young, poor lad," says Lady Chetwoode.

"So he is, and his mother is so respectable. One hardly knows what to do. But

this last is such a flagrant act, and I swore I would pack him about his business if it occurred again. The fact is, I rather fancy the boy, and his wild ways, and don't like driving him to destruction. What shall I do, mother?"

"Don't do anything, my dear," replies she, easily.

"I wish I could follow your advice,"—smiling,—"but, unfortunately, if I let him off again I fear it will be a bad example to the others. I almost think——"

But what he thinks on this particular subject is never known.

There is a step outside the door,—a step well known to one at least of those within,—the "soft frou-frou and rustle" of a woman's gown,—and then the door is pushed very gently open, and Lilian enters, with a curious little bundle in her arms.

"See what I've got!" she cries, triumphantly, going over to Lady Chetwoode, and kneeling down beside her. "It's a baby, a real live baby! look at it, auntie; did you ever see such a beauty?"

"A baby," says Lady Chetwoode, fearfully, putting up her glasses, and staring cautiously down upon the rosy little fellow who in Lilian's encircling arms is making a desperate effort to assert his dignity, by sitting up and glaring defiantly around him.

"Yes, indeed; I carried him away when I found him, and have been playing with him for the last ten minutes in my own room. Then I began to think that you might like to see him, too."

"That was very nice of you, my dear," with some hesitation. "It is certainly a very clean baby, but its dress is coarse. Whose baby is it?"

"He belongs to the laundress, I think," says Lilian, "but I'm not quite sure. I was running through the kitchen when I saw him; isn't he a rogue?" as baby puts up a chubby hand to seize the golden locks so near him: "look at his eyes, as big as saucers."

She laughs delightedly, and baby laughs back at her again, and makes another violent jump at her yellow hair. Sir Guy, gazing intently at the pretty picture, at Lilian's flushed and lovely face, thinks he has never before seen her look half so sweet. Gay, merry, fascinating she always is, but with this new and womanly tenderness within her eyes, her beauty seems trebled. "See, he wants my hair: is

he not a darling?" she says, turning her face, rose-red with pleasure, up to Sir Guy.

"The laundress's child,—Lilian, my *dear*!" says Lady Chetwoode, in a faint tone of expostulation.

"Well, Jane was holding it in her arms, but it can't be hers, decidedly, because she hasn't got one."

"Proof positive," says Guy.

"Nor can it be cook's, because hers is grown up: so it must be the laundress's. Besides, she was standing by, and she looked so glad about it and so pleased when I took it that I am sure she must be his mother. And of course she is proud of you, you bonny boy: so should I be, with your lovely face. Oh, look at his little fists! he is doubling them up just as though he were going to fight the world. And so he shall fight it, if he likes, a darling! Come; your mammy is pining for you."

As she speaks she rises, but baby is loath to go yet awhile. He crows so successfully at Lady Chetwoode that he makes another conquest of her, and receives several gentle pats and a kiss from her, to Lilian's great gratification.

"But he is too heavy for you," says her ladyship, addressing Lilian. "Guy, ring the bell for one of the servants to take him down."

"And offend his mother mortally. No indeed, auntie. We should get no clothes fit to wear next week if we committed such a *betise*. As I brought him up, so I shall carry him down, though, to do him justice, he *is* heavy. No servant shall touch him, the sweet boy,"—this to baby in a fond aside.

"I will carry him down for you," says Guy, advancing slowly from the window where he has been standing.

"You! Oh, Sir Guy, fancy you condescending to touch a baby. Though I forgot," with a quick, mischievous look at him from her azure eyes, "I believe there once was a baby you even professed to be fond of; but that was long ago. By the bye, what were you looking so stern about just as I came in? Were you passing sentence of death on any one?"

"Not quite so bad as that," says Lady Chetwoode. "It is another of those tiresome poachers. And this Heskett, is certainly a very naughty boy. He was caught in the

act last night, and Guy doesn't know what to do with him."

"Let him off, forgive him," says Lilian, lightly, speaking to her guardian. "You can't think how much pleasanter you will feel if you do."

"I believe you are right," says Guy, laughing, "and I dare say I should give him a last chance, but that I have passed my word. Give me that great heavy child: he looks as though he were weighing you down to the ground."

"I think she holds him very prettily," says Lady Chetwoode: "I should like to have a picture of her just so."

"Perhaps some day she will gratify you," returns Guy, encouragingly. "Are you going to give me that *enfant terrible,* Miss Chesney, before you expire?"

"I am stronger than you think. And are you quite sure you can hold a baby? that you won't let it fall? Take care, now, and don't look as though you thought he would break. That will do. Auntie, don't you think he would make a capital nurse?"

"I hope that child will reach its mother alive," says auntie, in a tone suggestive of doubt, after which Guy, escorted by Lilian, leaves the room.

Half-way down the stairs this brilliant procession meets Florence coming up.

"What is that?" she asks, stopping short in utter amazement, and staring blankly at the baby, who is blinking his great eyes in a most uncompromising fashion and is evidently deriving much refreshment from his little fat, red thumb.

"A baby," says Guy, gravely.

"A real live baby," says Lilian, "a real small duck," giving the child's plump cheek a soft pinch over Guy's shoulder. "Don't be frightened, Florence; he don't bite; you may give him a kiss in all safety."

"Thanks," says Florence, drawing her skirts closer round her, as though the very idea has soiled her garments. "I don't care about kissing promiscuous babies. Really, Guy, if you only knew how ridiculous you look, you would spare yourself the humiliation of being so seen by your servants."

"Blame Lilian for it all," returns Guy. "I know I shall blush myself to death if I meet any of the women."

"I think Sir Guy never before looked so interesting," says Miss Chesney, who is making frantic play all this time with the baby; but its mood has changed, and now her most energetic efforts are received—not with smiles—but with stolid indifference and unblinking contempt by the young gentleman in arms.

"I cannot say I agree with you," Miss Beauchamp says, with much subdued scorn, "and I do not think it is kind to place any one in a false position."

She lets a little disdainful angry glance fall upon Lilian,—who unfortunately does not profit by it, as she does not see it,—and sweeps up the stairs to her aunt's apartments, while Guy (who is not to be sneered out of his undertaking) stalks on majestically to the kitchen, followed by Lilian, and never pauses until he places the chubby little rogue he carries in its mother's arms,—who eventually turns out to be the laundress.

"I am not a judge," he says to this young woman, who is curtsying profusely and is actually consumed with pride, "but Miss Chesney has declared your son to be the loveliest child in the world, and I always agree with Miss Chesney,—for reasons of my own."

"Oh, thank you, Sir Guy; I'm sure I'm much obliged to you, Miss Chesney," says the laundress, turning the color of a full-blown peony, through excitement.

"What is his name?" asks Lilian, giving the boy a last fond poke with her pretty slender finger.

"Abiram, miss," replies the mother, which name much displeases Lilian, who would have liked to hear he was called Alaric, or Lancelot, or any other poetical appellation suitable for the most beautiful child in the world.

"A very charming name," says Guy, gravely; and, having squeezed a half-sovereign into the little fellow's fat hand, he and Lilian go through the passages into the open air.

"Guardy," says Lilian, "what is a 'promiscuous baby'?"

"I wish I knew," replies he: "I confess it has been puzzling me ever since. We must ask Florence when we go in."

Here they both laugh a little, and stroll on for a time in silence. At length, being prompted thereto by her evil genius, Lilian says:

"Tell me, who is the Heskett you and auntie were talking about just now?"

"A boy who lives down in the hollow beneath Leigh's farm,—a dark boy we met one day at the end of the lawn; you remember him?"

"A lad with great black eyes and a handsome face with just a little *soupçon* of wickedness about him? of course I do. Oh! I like that boy. You must forgive him, Sir Guy, or I shall be unhappy forever."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, well. And his mother, too: she is a dear old thing, and but that she has an undeniable penchant for tobacco, would be perfection. Guardy, you *must* forgive him."

"My dear child, I can't."

"Not when I ask you?" in a tone of purest astonishment.

"Not even then. Ask me something else,—in fact, anything,—and I will grant it, but not this."

"I want nothing else," coldly. "I have set my heart on freeing this poor boy and you refuse me: and it is my first request."

"It is always your first request, is it not?" he says, smiling a rather troubled smile. "Yesterday——"

"Oh, don't remind me of what I may have said yesterday," interrupts Miss Chesney, impatiently: "think of to-day! I ask you to forgive Heskett—for my sake."

"You should try to understand all that would entail," speaking the more sternly in that it makes him positively wretched to say her nay: "if I were to forgive Heskett this time, I should have every second man on my estate a poacher."

"On the contrary, I believe you would make them all your devoted slaves.

> 'The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
> It droppeth, as the gentle dew from heaven,
> Upon the place beneath; it is twice bless'd.'"

"I have said I would not, and even you can hardly think it right that I should

break my word."

"No, you would rather break his mother's heart!" By this time the spoiled Lilian has quite made up her mind to have her own way, and is ready to try any means to gain it. "Your word!" she says disdainfully: "if you are going to emulate the Medes and Persians, of course there is no use of my arguing with you. You ought to be an ancient Roman; even that detestable Brutus might be considered soft-hearted when compared with you."

"Sneering, Lilian, is a habit that should be confined to those old in sorrow or worldly wisdom: it sits badly on such lips as yours."

"Then why compel me to indulge in it? Give me my way in this one instance, and I will be good, and will probably never sneer again."

"I cannot."

"Then don't!" naughtily, made exceeding wroth by (what she is pleased to term) his obstinacy. "I was foolish in thinking I could influence you in any way. Had Florence asked you, you would have said yes instantly."

"Florence would never have asked me to do anything so unreasonable."

"Of course not! Florence never does wrong in your eyes. It is a pity every one else does not regard her as favorably as you do."

"I think every one thinks very highly of her," angrily.

"Do you? It probably pleases you to think so. I, for one, do not."

"There is a certain class of people whose likes and dislikes cannot possibly be accounted for," says Guy, somewhat bitterly. "I think you would find a difficulty in explaining to me your vehement antipathy toward Miss Beauchamp. You should remember 'unfounded prejudices bear no weight.'"

"That sounds like one of Miss Beauchamp's own trite remarks," says Lilian, with a disagreeable laugh. "Did you learn it from her?"

To this Chetwoode makes no reply, and Lilian, carried away by resentment at his open support of Florence, and by his determination not to accede to her request about young Heskett, says, passionately:

"Why should you lose your temper about it?" (it is her own temper that has gone

astray). "It is all not worth a quarrel. Any one may plainly see how hateful I am to you. In a thousand ways you show me how badly you think of me. You are a petty tyrant. If I could leave your house, where I feel myself unwelcome,—at least as far as *you* are concerned,—I would gladly do so."

Here she stops, more from want of breath than eloquence.

"Be silent," says Guy, turning to confront her, and thereby showing a face as pale as hers is flushed with childish rage and bafflement. "How dare you speak like that!" Then, changing his tone, he says quietly, "You are wrong; you altogether mistake. I am no tyrant; I do what is just according to my own conscience. No man can do more. As to what else you may have said, it is *impossible* you can feel yourself unwelcome in my house. I do not believe you feel it."

"Thank you," still defiant, though in truth she is a little frightened by his manner: "that is as much as to say I am telling a lie, but I do believe it all the same. Every day you thwart and disappoint me in one way or another, and you know it."

"I do not, indeed. It distresses me much that you should say so. So much, that against my better judgment I give in to you in this matter of Heskett, if only to prove to you how you wrong me when you say I wish to thwart you. Heskett is pardoned."

So saying, he turns from her abruptly and half contemptuously, and, striking across the grass, makes for a path that leads indirectly to the stables.

When he has gone some yards it occurs to Miss Chesney that she feels decidedly small. She has gained her point, it is true, but in a sorry fashion, and one that leaves her discontented with her success. She feels that had he done rightly he would have refused to bandy words with her at all upon the subject, and he would not have pardoned the reprehensible Heskett; something in his manner, too, which she chooses to think domineering, renders her angry still, together with a vague, uneasy consciousness that he has treated her throughout as a child and given in to her merely because it is a simpler matter to surrender one's judgment than to argue with foolish youth.

This last thought is intolerable. A child, indeed! She will teach him she is no child, and that women may have sense although they have not reached the admirable age of six-and-twenty.

Without further thought she runs after him, and, overtaking him just as he turns

the corner, says, very imperiously, with a view to sustaining her dignity:

"Sir Guy, wait: I want to speak to you."

"Well," he says, stopping dead short, and answering her in his iciest tones. He barely looks at her; his eyes, having once met hers, wander away again without an instant's lingering, as though they had seen nothing worthy of attention. This plain ignoring of her charms is bitter to Miss Chesney.

"I do not want you to forgive that boy against your will," she says, haughtily. "Take back your promise."

"Impossible! You have made me break my word to myself; nothing shall induce me to break my word to you. Besides, it would be unfair to Heskett. If I were to dismiss him now I should feel as though I had wronged him."

"But I will not have his pardon so."

"What!"—scornfully,—"after having expended ten minutes in hurling at me some of the severest eloquence it has ever been my fate to listen to, all to gain this Heskett's pardon, you would now have it rescinded! Am I to understand so much?"

"No; but I hate ungraciousness."

"So do I,"—meaningly,—"even more than I hate abuse."

"Did I abuse you?"

"I leave you to answer that question."

"I certainly," with some hesitation, "said you were a tyrant."

"You did," calmly.

"And that——"

"Do not let us go over such distasteful ground again," interrupts he, impatiently: "you said all you could say,—and you gained your object. Does not even that satisfy you?"

"I wish I had never interested myself in the matter," she says, angrily, vexed with herself, and with him, and with everything.

"Perhaps your wisdom would have lain in that direction," returns he, coolly. "But as you did interest yourself, and as victory lies with you, you should be the one to rejoice."

"Well, I don't," she says impulsively. And then she looks at him in a half-defiant, half-penitent, wholly charming way, letting her large soft eyes speak for her, as they rest full upon his face. There is something in her fresh young beauty almost irresistible. Guy, with an angry sigh, acknowledges its power, and going nearer to her, takes both her clasped hands in his.

"What a bad-tempered little girl you are!" he says, in a jesting tone, that is still full of the keenest reproach. "Am I as bad as Brutus and all those terrible Medes and Persians? I confess you made me tremble when you showered upon me all those awful comparisons."

"No, no, I was wrong," she says, hastily, twining her small fingers closely round his; then very softly, "You are always forgiving me, are you not? But yet—tell me, Guardy—are you not really glad you have pardoned that poor Heskett? I cannot be pleased about it myself so long as I think I have only wrung your promise from you against your will. Say you are glad, if only to make me happy."

"I would do anything to make you happy,—anything," he says, in a strange tone, reading anxiously her lovely *riante* face, that shows no faintest trace of such tenderness as he would fain see there; then, altering his voice with an effort, "Yes, I believe I am glad," he says, with a short laugh: "your intercession has removed a hateful duty from my shoulders."

"Where is the boy? Is he locked up, or confined anywhere?"

"Nowhere. I never incarcerate my victims," with a slight trace of bitterness still in his manner. "He is free as air, in all human probability poaching at this present moment."

"But if he knows there is punishment in store for him, why doesn't he make his escape?"

"You must ask him that, because I cannot answer the question. Perhaps he does not consider me altogether such a fiend as you do, and may think it likely I will show mercy at the last moment."

"Or perhaps," says Lilian, "he has made his escape long ago."

"I don't think so. Indeed, I am almost sure, if you look straight along that field"—pointing in a certain direction—"you will see the young gentleman in question calmly smoking the pipe of peace upon a distant wall."

"It is he," says Lilian, in a low tone, after a careful examination of the youthful smoker. "How little he seems to fear his fate!"

"Yes, just fancy how lightly he views the thought of falling into the clutches of a monster!" remarks Chetwoode, with a mocking smile.

"I think you are a little hard on me," says Lilian, reproachfully.

"Am I?" carelessly preparing to leave her. "If you see that promising *protégé* of yours, Lilian, you can tell him from me that he is quite at liberty to carry on his nightly games as soon as he pleases. You have no idea what a solace that news will be to him; only, if you have any regard for him, advise him not to be caught again."

So saying, he leaves her and continues his interrupted march to the stables.

When Miss Chesney has spent a moment or two inveighing silently against the hardness and uncharitableness of men in general and Sir Guy Chetwoode in particular, she accepts the situation, and presently starts boldly for the hollow in which lies the modest homestead of the venerable Mrs. Heskett.

The unconscious cause of the battle royal that has just taken place has evidently finished his pipe and lounged away through the woods, as he is nowhere to be seen. And Miss Chesney makes up her mind, with a view to killing the time that must elapse before dinner, to go straight to his mother's cottage, and, by proclaiming Sir Guy's leniency, restore peace to the bosom of that ancient dame.

And as she walks she muses on all that has passed between herself and her guardian during the last half-hour. After all, what did she say that was so very bad?

She had certainly compared him to Brutus, but what of that? Brutus in his day was evidently a shining light among his people, and, according to the immortal Pinnock, an ornament to his sex. Suppose he did condemn his only son to death, what did that signify in a land where the deed was looked upon as meritorious? Weak-minded people of the present day might call him an old brute for so doing, but there are two sides to every question, and no doubt the young man was a regular nuisance at home, and much better out of the way.

Then again she had likened him to the Medes and Persians; and why not? Who should say the Medes and Persians were not thoroughly respectable gentlemen, polished and refined? and though in this case again there might be some who would prefer the manners of a decent English gentleman to those of the present Shah, that is no reason why the latter should be regarded so ignominiously.

She has reached this highly satisfactory point in her argument when a body dropping from a tree near her, almost at her feet, startles her rudely from her meditations.

"Dear me!" says Lilian, with much emphasis, and then knows she is face to face with Heskett.

He is a tall lad, brown-skinned as an Italian, with eyes and hair of gypsy dye. As he stands before Lilian now, in spite of his daring nature, he appears thoroughly abashed, and with his eyes lowered, twirls uneasily between his hands the rather greasy article that usually adorns his brow.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he says, slowly, "but might I say a word to you?"

"I am sorry to hear such bad accounts of you, Heskett," says Miss Chesney, in return, with all the airs of a dean and chapter.

"Sir Guy has been telling you, miss?" says the lad, eagerly; "and it is about my trouble I wanted to see you. They say you have great weight with the baronet, miss, and once or twice you spoke kindly to me, and I thought maybe you would say a word for me."

"You are mistaken: I have no influence," says Lilian, coloring faintly. "And besides, Heskett, there would be little use in speaking for you, as you are not to be trusted."

"I am, Miss Chesney, I am indeed, if Sir Guy would only try me again. I don't know what tempted me last night, but I got my lesson then, and never again, I swear, Miss——"

Here a glance at Lilian's face checks further protestations. She is not looking at him; her gaze is concentrated upon the left pocket of his coat, though, indeed, there is little worthy of admiration in the cut of that garment. Following the direction of her eyes, Heskett's fall slowly, until at length they fasten upon the object that has so attracted her.

Sticking up in that luckless left pocket, so as plainly to be seen, is a limp and rather draggled brown wing, the undeniable wing of a young grouse.

"Heskett," says Lilian, severely, "what have you been doing?"

"Nothing, miss," desperately.

"Heskett," still more severely, and with just a touch of scorn in her tone, "speak the truth: what have you got in your pocket?"

"It's just a grouse, then," says the boy, defiantly, producing the bonny brown bird in question.

"And a fat one," supplements Lilian. "Oh, Heskett, when you know the consequences of poaching, how can you do it?"

"'Tis because I do know it,"—recklessly: "it's all up with me this time because the baronet swore he'd punish me next time I was caught, and he never breaks his word. So I thought, miss, I'd have a last fling, whatever came of it."

"But it isn't 'all up' with you," says Lilian. "I have spoken to Sir Guy, and he has promised to give you one more chance. But I cannot speak again, Heskett, and if you still persist in your evil ways I shall have spoken in vain."

"You spoke for me?" exclaims he, incredulously.

"Yes. But I fear I have done no good."

The boy's eyes seek the ground.

"I didn't think the likes of you would care to say a kind word for such as me,—and without the asking," he says, huskily. "Look here, Miss Chesney, if it will please you, I swear I will never again snare a bird."

"Oh, Heskett, will you promise really?" returns Lilian, charmed at her success, "and can I trust you? You know you gave your word before to Sir Guy."

"But not to you, miss. Yes, I will be honest to please you. And indeed, Miss Chesney, when I left home this morning I never meant to kill a thing. I started with a short oak stick in my hand, quite innocent like, and up by the bit of heather yonder this young one ran across my path; I didn't seek it, and may bad luck go with the oak stick, for, before I knew what I meant, it flew from me, and a second later the bird lay dead as mutton. Not a stir in it. I was always a fine

shot, miss, with a stick or a stone," says the accomplished Heskett, regarding his grouse with much pride. "Will you have it, miss?" he says then, holding it out to her.

"No, thank you," loftily: "I am not a receiver of stolen goods; and it is stolen, remember that."

"I suppose so, miss. Well, as I said before, I will be honest now to please you, you have been so good to me."

"You should try to please some One higher," says Lilian, with a solemnity that in her is sweeter than it is comical.

"Nay, then, miss,—to please you first, if I may."

"Tell me," says Lilian, shifting ground as she finds it untenable, "why do you never come to church?"

"It's so mighty dull, miss."

"You shouldn't find it so. Come and say your prayers, and afterward you may find it easier to be good. You should not call church dull," with a little reproving shake of the head.

"Do *you* never find it stupid, Miss Chesney?" asks Heskett, with all diffidence.

Lilian pauses. This is a home-thrust, and her innate honesty prevents the reply that trembles on her lips. She *does* find it very stupid now and then.

"Sometimes," she says, with hesitation, "when Mr. Austen is preaching I cannot think it quite as interesting as it might be: still——"

"Oh, as for him," says Heskett, with a grin, "he ought to be shot, miss, begging your pardon, that's what he ought. I never see him I don't wish he was a rabbit snug in one o' my snares as was never known to fail. Wouldn't I wring his neck when I caught him! maybe not! comin' around with his canting talk, as though he was the archbishop hisself."

"How dare you speak of your clergyman in such a way?" says Lilian, shocked; "you are a bad, bad boy, and I am very angry with you."

"Don't then, Miss Chesney," piteously; "I ask your pardon humbly, and I'll never again speak of Mr. Austen if you don't like. But he do aggravate awful, miss, and

frightens the life out o' mother, because she do smoke a bit of an evenin', and it's all the comfort she have, poor soul. There's the Methody parson below, even he's a better sort, though he do snivel horrid. But I'll do anything to please you, miss, an' I'll come to church next Sunday."

"Well, mind you do," says Lilian, dismissing him with a gracious nod.

So Heskett departs, much exercised in mind, and in the lowest spirits, being full of vague doubts, yet with a keen consciousness that by his promise to Miss Chesney he has forfeited his dearest joy, and that from him the glory of life has departed. No more poaching, no more snaring, no more midnight excursions fraught with delicious danger: how is he to get on in future, with nothing to murder but time?

Meanwhile Miss Chesney, coming home flushed with victory, encounters Florence in the garden wandering gracefully among the flowers, armed as usual with the huge umbrella, the guardian of her dear complexion.

"You have been for a walk?" she asks Lilian, with astonishing *bonhommie*. "I hope it was a pleasant one."

"Very, thank you."

"Then you were not alone. Solitary walks are never pleasant."

"Nevertheless, mine was solitary."

"Then, Guy did not go with you?" somewhat hastily.

"No. He found he had something to do in the stables," Lilian answers, shortly.

Miss Beauchamp laughs a low, soft, irritative laugh.

"How stupid Guy is!" she says. "I wonder it never occurs to him to invent a new excuse: whenever he wants to avoid doing anything unpleasant to him, he has always some pressing business connected with the stables to take him away. Have you noticed it?"

"I cannot say I have. But then I have not made a point of studying his eccentricities. Now you have told me this one, I dare say I shall remark it in future. You see," with a slight smile, "I hold myself in such good esteem that it never occurred to me others might find my company disagreeable."

"Nor do they, I am sure,"—politely,—"but Guy is so peculiar, at times positively odd."

"You amaze me more and more every moment. I have always considered him quite a rational being,—not in the least madder than the rest of us. I do hope the new moon will have no effect upon him."

"Ah! you jest," languidly. "But Guy does hold strange opinions, especially about women. No one, I think, quite understands him but me. We have always been so —fond of each other, he and I."

"Yes? Quite like brother and sister, I suppose? It is only natural."

"Oh, *no*" emphatically, her voice taking a soft intonation full of sentimental meaning, "not in the very *least* like brother and sister."

"Like what then?" asks Lilian, somewhat sharply for her.

"How downright you are!" with a little forced laugh, and a modest drooping of her white lids; "I mean, I think a brother and sister are hardly so necessary to each other's happiness as—as we are to each other, and have been for years. To me, Chetwoode would not be Chetwoode without Guy, and I fancy—I am sure—it would scarcely be home to Guy without me." This with a quiet conviction not to be shaken. "Perhaps you can see what I mean? though, indeed," with a smile, "I hardly know myself what it is I *do* mean."

"Ah!" says Lilian, a world of meaning in her tone.

"The only fault I find with him," goes on Florence, in the low, prettily modulated tone she always adopts, "is, that he is rather a flirt. I believe he cannot help it; it is second nature to him now. He adores pretty women, and at times his manner to them is rather—er—caressing. I tell him it is dangerous. Not perhaps that it makes much difference nowadays, does it? when women have learned to value attentions exactly at what they are worth. For my own part, I have little sympathy with those foolish Ariadnes who spend their lives bemoaning the loss of their false lovers. Don't you agree with me?"

"Entirely. Utterly," says Lilian, in a curious tone that might be translated any way. "But I cannot help thinking Fortune very hard on the poor Ariadnes. Is that the dressing-bell? How late it has grown! I am afraid we must go in if we wish to be in time for dinner."

Miss Beauchamp being possessed with the same fear, they enter the house together, apparently in perfect amity with each other, and part in peace at their chamber doors. Lilian even bestows a little smile upon her companion as she closes hers, but it quickly changes into an unmistakable little frown as the lock is turned. A shade falls across her face, an impatient pucker settles comfortably upon her forehead, as though it means to spend some time there.

"What a hateful girl that is!" Lilian says to herself, flinging her hat with a good deal of vehemence on to the bed (where it makes one desperate effort to range itself and then rolls over to the floor at the other side), and turning two lovely wrathful eyes toward the door, as though the object of her anger were still in sight. "Downright detestable! and quite an old maid; not a doubt of it. Women close on thirty are always so spiteful!"

Here she picks up the unoffending hat, and almost unconsciously straightens a damaged bow while her thought still runs on passionately.

So Sir Guy "adores pretty women." By the bye, it was a marvelous concession on Miss Beauchamp's part to acknowledge her as such, for without doubt all that kindly warning was meant for her.

Going up to her glass, Lilian runs her fingers through the rippling masses of her fair hair, and pinches her soft cheeks cruelly until the red blood rushes upward to defend them, after which, she tells herself, even Florence could scarcely have said otherwise.

And does Miss Beauchamp think *herself* a "pretty woman?" and does Sir Guy "adore *her*?" She said he was a flirt. But is he? Cyril is decidedly given that way, and some faults run in families. Now she remembers certain lingering glances, tender tones, and soft innuendoes meant for her alone, that might be placed to the account of her guardian. She smiles somewhat contemptuously as she recalls them. Were all these but parts of his "caressing" manner? Pah! what a sickening word it is.

She blushes hotly, until for a full minute she resembles the heart of a red, red rose. And for that minute she positively hates her guardian. Does he imagine that she—*she*—is such a baby as to be flattered by the attentions of any man, especially by one who is the lover of another woman? for has not Florence both in words and manner almost claimed him as her own? Oh, it is too abominable! And——

But never mind, wait, and when she has the opportunity, won't she show him, that's all?

What she is to show him, or how, does not transpire. But this awful threat, this carefully disguised and therefore sinister menace, is evidently one of weight, because it adds yet a deeper crimson to Miss Chesney's cheeks, and brings to life a fire within her eyes, that gleams and sparkles there unrebuked.

Then it quietly dies, and nurse entering finds her little mistress again calm, but unusually taciturn, and strangely forgetful of her teasing powers.

CHAPTER XII.

"Sae sweet his voice, sae smooth his tongue
   His breath's like caller air;
His very fit has music in't,
   As he comes up the stair.

And will I see his face again?
   And will I hear him speak?
I'm downright dizzy with the thought,
   In troth I'm like to greet."—W. J. MICKLE.

It is the most important day of all the three hundred and sixty-five, at least to Lilian, because it will bring her Taffy. Just before dinner he will arrive, not sooner, and it is now only half-past four.

All at Chetwoode are met in the library. The perfume of tea is on the air; the click of Lady Chetwoode's needles keeps time to the conversation that is buzzing all round.

Miss Beauchamp, serene and immovable as ever, is presiding over the silver and china, while Lilian, wild with spirits, and half mad with excitement and expectation, is chattering with Cyril upon a distant sofa.

Sir Guy, upon the hearthrug, is expressing his contempt for the views entertained by a certain periodical on the subject of a famous military scandal, in real parliamentary language, and Florence is meekly agreeing with him straight through. Never was any one (seemingly) so thoroughly *en rapport* with another as Florence with Sir Guy. Her amiable and rather palpable determination to second his ideas on all matters, her "nods and becks and wreathed smiles," when in his company, would, if recited, fill a volume in themselves. But I don't deny it would be a very stupid volume, from the same to the same: so I suppress it.

"Sir Guy," says Lilian, suddenly, "don't look so stern and don't stand with one hand in your breast, and one foot advanced, as though you were going to address the House."

"Well, but he is going to address the House," says Cyril, reprovingly: "we are all here, aren't we?"

"It is perfectly preposterous," says Guy, who is heated with his argument, and scarcely hears what is going on around him, so great is his righteous indignation.

"If being of high birth is a reason why one must be dragged into notoriety, one would almost wish one was born a——"

"Sir Guy," interrupts Lilian again, throwing at him a paper pellet she has been preparing for the last two minutes, with sure and certain aim, "didn't you hear me desire you not to look like that?"

Sir Guy laughs, and subsides into a chair. Miss Beauchamp shrugs her shapely shoulders and indulges in a smile suggestive of pity.

"I begin to feel outrageously jealous of this unknown Taffy," says Cyril. "I never knew you in such good spirits before. Do you always laugh when you are happy?"

"'Much laughter covers many tears,'" returns Lilian, gayly. "Yes, I am very happy,—so happy that I think a little would make me cry."

"Oh, don't," says Cyril, entreatingly; "if you begin I'm safe to follow suit, and weeping violently always makes me ill."

"I can readily believe it," says Miss Chesney. "Your expression is unmistakably doleful, O knight of the rueful countenance!"

"And his manner is so dejected," remarks his mother, smiling. "Have you not noticed how silent he always is? One might easily imagine him the victim of an unhappy love tale."

"If you say much more," says Mr. Chetwoode, "like Keats, I shall 'die of a review.' I feel much offended. It has been the dream of my life up to this that society in general regarded me as a gay and brilliant personage, one fitted to shine in any sphere, concentrating (as I hoped I did) rank, beauty, and fashion in my own body."

"*Did* you hope all that?" asks Lilian, with soft impertinence.

"'A modest hope, but modesty's my forte,'" returns he, mildly. "No, Miss Chesney, I won't be told I am conceited. This is a case in which we 'all do it;' every one in this life thinks himself better than he is."

"I am glad you so scrupulously exonerate the women," says Lilian, maliciously.

At this moment a step is heard in the hall outside. Lilian starts, and rises impulsively to her feet; her face lights; a delicate pink flush dawns upon it

slowly, and then deepens into a rich carnation. Instinctively her eyes turn to Lady Chetwoode, and the breath comes a little quicker from her parted lips.

"But," she murmurs, raising one hand, and speaking in the low tone one adopts when intently listening,—"but that I know he can't be here for another hour, I should say that was—Taffy!"

The door has opened. A tall, very young man, with a bright boyish face, fair brown hair, and a daring attempt at a moustache, stands upon the threshold. Lilian, with a little soft glad cry, runs to him and throws herself into his arms.

"Oh, dear, dear boy, you have come!" she says, whereupon the tall young man laughs delightedly, and bestows upon her an honest and most palpable hug.

"Hug," quotha! and what is a "hug"? asks the fastidious reader: and yet, dear ignorance, I think there is no word in all the English language, or in any other language, that so efficiently describes the enthusiasm of a warm embrace as the small one of three letters.

Be it vulgar or not, however, I cannot help it: the fact remains. Taffy openly and boldly hugged Miss Chesney before her guardian's eyes, and Miss Chesney does not resent it; on the contrary, she kisses him with considerable *empressement*, and then turns to Lady Chetwoode, who is an admiring spectator of the scene. Cyril is visibly amused; Sir Guy a trifle envious; Miss Beauchamp thinks the new-comer far too grown for the reception of such a public demonstration of affection on the part of a well-conducted young woman, but is rather glad than otherwise that Lilian has so far committed herself before her guardian.

"It is Taffy," says Lilian, with much pride. "I knew it was. Do you know," turning her sweet, flushed, excited face to her cousin, "the moment I heard your step outside, I said, 'That is Taffy,' and it *was*," with a charming laugh.

Meanwhile Mr. Musgrave is being kindly received by Lady Chetwoode and her sons.

"It was so awfully good of you to ask me here!" he is saying, gratefully, and with all a boy's delightful frankness of tone and manner. "If you hadn't, I shouldn't have known what to do, because I hate going to my guardian's, one puts in such a bad time there, the old man is so grumpy. When I got your invitation I said to myself, 'Well, I *am* in luck!'"

Here he is introduced to Miss Beauchamp, and presses the hand she extends to

him with much friendliness, being in radiant spirits with himself and the world generally.

"Why, Taffy, you aren't a bit altered, though I do think you have grown half an inch or so," says Lilian, critically, "and I am so glad of it. When I heard you had really joined and become an undeniable 'heavy,' I began to fear you would change, and grow grand, and perhaps think yourself a man, and put on a great deal of 'side;' isn't that the word, Sir Guy?" saucily, peeping at him from behind Taffy's back. "You mustn't correct me, because I heard you use that word this morning; and I am sure you would not give way to a naughty expression."

"We are all very glad to have you, Mr. Musgrave," says Lady Chetwoode, graciously, who has taken an instantaneous fancy to him. "I hope your visit will be a happy one."

"Thank you, I know it will; but my name is Taffy," says young Musgrave. "I hope you will call me by it. I hardly know myself by any other name now." He says this with a laugh so exactly like Lilian's that they all notice it, and comment upon it afterward. Indeed, both in feature and manner he strongly resembles his cousin. Lady Chetwoode smiles, and promises to forget the more formal address for the future.

"I have so many things to show you," exclaims Lilian, fondly. "The stables here are even better than at the Park, and I have a brown mare all my own, and I am sure I could beat you at tennis now, and there are six lovely new fat little puppies; will you come and see them? but perhaps"—doubtfully—"of course you are tired."

"He must be tired, I think, and hungry too," says Guy, coming up to him and laying his hand upon his shoulder, "If you can spare him for a moment or two, Lilian, I will show Taffy his room." Here Guy smiles at his new guest, and when Guy smiles he is charming. Mr. Musgrave likes him on the spot.

"I will go with you," says Lilian promptly, who is never troubled with the pangs of etiquette, and who cannot as yet bear to lose sight of her boy. "Such a pretty room as it is! It is near mine, and has an exquisite view from it,—the lake, and the swans, and part of the garden. Oh, Taffy, I am so *glad* you are come!"

They are half-way up the stairs by this time, and Lilian, putting her hand through her cousin's arm, beams upon him so sweetly that Guy, who is the looker-on, feels he would give a small fortune for permission to kiss her without further

delay. Taffy does kiss her on the instant without having to waste any fortune or ask any permission; and Chetwoode, seeing how graciously the caress is received and returned, feels a strange trouble at his heart. How fond she is of this boy! Surely he is more to her than any cousin ever yet was to another.

At the head of the stairs another interruption occurs. Advancing toward them, arrayed in her roomiest, most amazing cap, and clad in her Sunday gown, appears Mrs. Tipping, shining with joy and expectation. Seeing Taffy, she opens wide her capacious arms, into which Mr. Musgrave precipitates himself and is for the moment lost.

When he comes to light again, he embraces her warmly, and placing his hands upon her shoulders, regards her smilingly.

"Bless the boy, how he has grown, to be sure!" says nurse, with tears in her eyes; taking out her spectacles with much deliberation, she carefully adjusts them on her substantial nose, and again subjects him to a loving examination.

"Yes; hasn't he, nurse? I said so," remarks Lilian, in raptures, while Sir Guy stands behind, much edified.

"So have you, nurse," says Master Taffy,—"*young*. I protest it is a shame the way you go on deceiving the public. Every year only sees you fresher and lovelier. Why, you are ten years younger than when last I saw you. It's uncommonly mean of you not to give us a hint as to how you manage it."

"Tut," says nurse, giving him a scornful poke with her first finger, though she is tremendously flattered; "be off with you; you are worse than ever. Eh, but I always knew how it would be if you took to soldiering. All the millingtary has soft tongues, and the gift o' the gab."

"How do you know, nurse?" demands Mr. Musgrave: "I always understood the fortunate Tipping was a retired mason. I am afraid at some period of your life you must have lost your heart to a bold dragoon. Never mind: my soldiering shan't bring me to grief, if only for your sake."

"Eh, darling, I hope not," says nurse, surveying with fond admiration his handsome boyish face: "such bonnie looks as yours should aye sit upon a high head."

"I decline to listen to any more flattery. It is downright demoralizing," says Mr. Musgrave, virtuously, and presently finds himself in his pretty room, that is

sweet with the blossoms of Lilian's gathering.

* * * * * * *

Mr. Musgrave on acquaintance proves as great a success as his cousin: indeed, to like one is to like the other, as no twins could be more similar. He takes very kindly to the house and all its inmates, and is, after one day's association, as much at home with them as though they had been his chosen intimates all his life.

His disposition is certainly sweeter than Lilian's,—bad temper of any sort being quite unknown to him; whereas Miss Chesney possesses a will of her own, and a very quick temper indeed. He is bright, sunny, lovable in disposition, and almost "without guile." So irresistible is he that even Miss Beauchamp smiles upon him, and is singularly gracious to him, considering he is not only a youngster but—far worse—a detrimental.

He has one very principal charm. Unlike all the youthful soldiers it has been my misfortune to meet, he does not spend his days wearying his friends with a vivid description of his rooms, his daily duties when on parade, his colonel, and his brother officers. For this grace alone his familiars should love him and be grateful to him.

Nevertheless, he is so far human that, the evening after his arrival, he whispers to Lilian how he has brought his uniform with him, for her inspection only. Whereupon Lilian, delighted, desires him to go up that instant and put it on, that she may pass judgment upon him without delay. No, she will not wait another second; she cannot know peace or happiness until she beholds him in all his grandeur.

After a faint demur, and the suggestion that as it is late he could scarcely get it on and have time afterward to dress for dinner, he gives in, and, binding her to secrecy, runs up-stairs, having named a certain time for her to follow him.

Half an hour later, Miss Beauchamp, sweeping slowly along the corridor up-stairs, hears the sound of merriment coming from young Musgrave's room, and stops short.

Is that Lilian's voice? surely it is; and in her cousin's room! The door is almost closed,—not quite; and, overcome by curiosity, she lays her hand against it, and, pushing it gently open, glances in.

Before the dressing-table, clothed in military garments of the most *recherché* description, is Taffy, while opposite to him, full of open admiration, stands Miss Chesney. Taffy is struggling with some part of his dress that declines to fall into a right position, and Lilian is flouting him merrily for the evident inexperience he betrays.

Florence, astonished—nay, electrified—by this scene, stands motionless. A young woman in a young man's bedroom! Oh, shocking! To her carefully educated mind, the whole thing borders on the improper, while to have it occur in such a well-regulated household as Chetwoode fills her with genuine horror.

So struck is she by the criminality of it all that she might have stayed there until now, but that a well-known step coming up the stairs warns her that eavesdropping is not the most honorable position to be caught in. She moves away, and presently finds herself face to face with Guy. He is coming lazily along the corridor, but stops as he sees her.

"What is it, Florence? You look frightened," he says, half jestingly.

"No, not frightened," Florence answers, coldly, "though I confess I am a good deal amazed,"—her tone says "disgusted," and Guy knows the tone. "Really, that girl seems absolutely ignorant of the common decencies of society!"

"Of whom are you speaking?" asks Guy, coloring.

"Of whom can I say such things but Lilian? She is the only one of my acquaintance deserving of such a remark, and it is not my fault that we are acquainted. I think it is clearly Aunt Anne's duty to speak to her, or yours. There are moments when one positively blushes for her."

"Why, what has she been doing?" asks Guy, overcome with astonishment at this outburst on the part of the usually calm Florence.

"Doing! Do you not hear her in her cousin's room? Is that the proper place for a young lady?"

At this instant a sound of laughter coming from Mr. Musgrave's apartment gives truth to her accusations, and with a slight but expressive shrug of her white shoulders, Florence sails majestically down the stairs, while Sir Guy instinctively moves on toward Taffy's quarters.

Miss Beauchamp's touch has left the door quite open, so that, standing on the

threshold, he can see clearly all that is within.

By this time Taffy is quite arrayed, having finally resorted to his cousin's help.

"There!" says Lilian, triumphantly, "now you are ready. Oh! I say, Taffy, how nice you do look!"

"No; do I?" returns Mr. Musgrave, with admirable modesty, regarding himself bashfully though complacently in a full-length mirror. His tall young figure is well drawn up, his head erect; unconsciously he has assumed all the full-blown, starchy airs of a military swell. "Does the coat fit well, do you think?" he asks, turning to await her answer with doubtful anxiety.

"It is simply perfection," returns she reassuringly, "not a wrinkle in it. Certainly you owe your tailor something for turning you out so well."

"I do," says Taffy, feelingly.

"I had no idea it would make such a difference in you," goes on Lilian; "you look quite grown up."

"Grown up,—nonsense," somewhat indignantly; "I should think I was indeed. Just twenty, and six feet one. There are very few fellows in the service as good a height as I am. 'Grown up,' indeed!"

"I beg your pardon," Lilian says, meekly. "Remember I am only a little rustic, hardly aware of what a man really means. Talking of fitting, however, do you know," thoughtfully, and turning her head to one side, the better to mark the effect, "I think—I fancy—there is just a little pucker in your trousers, just at the knee."

"No; is there?" says Taffy, immediately sinking into the deepest melancholy as he again refers to the glass.

Here Sir Guy comes forward and creates a diversion. He is immensely amused, but still sore and angry at Florence's remarks, while wishing Lilian would not place herself in such positions as to lay her open to unkind criticism.

"Oh, here is Sir Guy," says that young lady, quite unembarrassed; "he will decide. Sir Guy, do you think his trousers fit very well? Look here, now, is there not the faintest pucker here?"

"I think they fit uncommonly well," says Guy, gravely. Taffy has turned a warm

crimson and is silent; but his confusion arises not from Miss Chesney's presence in his room, but because Chetwoode has discovered him trying on his new clothes like a school-boy.

"Lilian wanted so much to see me in my uniform," he says, meanly, considering how anxious he himself has been to show himself to her in it.

"Yes, and doesn't he look well in it?" asks Lilian, proudly; "I had no idea he could look so handsome. Most men appear perfect fools in uniform, but it suits Taffy. Don't you think so?"

"I do; and I think something else, too; your auntie is coming up-stairs, and if she catches you in Taffy's room she will give you a small lecture on the proprieties."

This is the mildest rebuke he can think of. Not that he thinks her at all worthy of rebuke, but because he is afraid of Florence's tongue for her sake.

"Why?" asks Lilian, opening large eyes of utter amazement, after which the truth dawns upon her, and as it dawns amuses her intensely. "Do you mean to say," blushing slightly, but evidently struck with the comicality of the thought,—"what would auntie say, then, if she knew Taffy had been in mine? Yes; he was,—this afternoon,—just before lunch," nodding defiantly at Sir Guy, "actually in mine; and he stole my eau de Cologne, which I thought mean of him. When I found it was all gone, I was very near running across to your room to replenish my bottle. Was it not well I didn't? Had I done so I should of course have earned two lectures, one from auntie and one from—you!" provokingly. "Why, Guardy, how stupid you are! Taffy is just the same as my brother."

"But he is not your brother," says Guy, beginning to feel bewildered.

"Yes, he is, and better than most brothers: aren't you, Taffy?"

"Are you angry with Lil for being in my room?" asks Mr. Musgrave, surprised; "she thinks nothing of it: and why should she? Bless you, all last year, when we were at home—at the Park—she used to come in and settle my ties when we were going out anywhere to dinner, or that."

"Sir Guy never had a sister, so of course he doesn't understand," says Lilian, disdainfully, whereupon Guy gives up the point. "I wish you would come down and show yourself to auntie. Do now, Taffy,"—coaxingly: "you can't think how well you look. Come, if only to please me."

"Oh, I couldn't," says Taffy. "I really couldn't, you know. She would think me such an awful fool, and Miss Beauchamp would laugh at me, and altogether it wouldn't be form. I only meant to show myself to you, but——"

"Guy, my dear," says Lady Chetwoode from the doorway, "why, what is going on here?" advancing and smiling gently.

"Oh, auntie, I am so glad you have come!" says Lilian, going forward to welcome her: "he would not go down-stairs to you, though I did my best to persuade him. Is he not charming in uniform?"

"He is, indeed. Quite charming! He reminds me very much of what Guy was when first he joined his regiment." Not for a moment does Lady Chetwoode—dear soul—think of improprieties, or wrong-doing, or the "decencies of society." And, watching her, Guy grows gradually ashamed of himself. "It was really selfish of you, my dear Taffy, to deny me a glimpse of you."

"Well, I didn't think you'd care, you know," says Mr. Musgrave, who is positively consumed with pride, and who is blushing like a demoiselle.

"I couldn't resist coming in when I saw you from the doorway. All my people were in the army: so I have quite an affection for it. But Lilian, darling, dinner is almost ready, and you have not yet changed your dress."

"I shan't be a minute," says Lilian; and Guy, lighting a candle, escorts her to her own room, while Lady Chetwoode goes down-stairs.

"Shall I get you the eau de Cologne now?" he asks, pausing on her threshold for a moment.

"If," says Miss Chesney, lowering her eyes with affected shyness, "you are *quite* sure there would be nothing reprehensible in my accepting it, I should like it very much, thank you. By the bye, that reminds me," glancing at him with a mocking smile, "Lady Chetwoode quite forgot to deliver that small lecture. You, Sir Guy, as my guardian, should have reminded her."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Sweets to the sweet."—*Hamlet.*

"I am going to London in the morning. Can I do anything for anybody?" asks Sir Guy, at exactly twenty minutes past ten on Wednesday night. "Madre, what of you?"

"Nothing, dear, thank you," says the Madre, lazily enough, her eyes comfortably closed. "But to-morrow, my dear boy! why to-morrow? You know we expect Archibald."

"I shall be home long before he arrives, if I don't meet him and bring him with me."

"Some people make a point of being from home when their guests are expected," says Miss Lilian, pointedly, raising demure eyes to his.

"Some other people make a point of being ungenerous," retorts he. "Florence, can I bring you anything?"

"I want some wools matched: I cannot finish the parrot's tail in my crewel-work until I get them, and you will be some hours earlier than the post."

"What! you expect me to enter a fancy shop—is that what you call it?—and sort wools, while the young woman behind the counter makes love to me? I should die of shame."

"Nonsense! you need only hand in the envelope I will prepare for you, and wait until you receive an answer to it."

"Very good. I dare say I shall survive so much. And you, my ward? How can I serve you?"

"In a thousand ways, but modesty forbids my mentioning them. *Au reste,* I want bonbons, a new book or two, and—the portrait of the handsomest young man in London."

"I thoroughly understand, and am immensely flattered. I shall have myself taken the moment I get there. Would you prefer me sitting or standing, with my hat on

or off? A small size or a cabinet?"

Miss Chesney makes a little grimace eminently becoming, but disdains direct reply. "I said a *young* man," she remarks, severely.

"I heard you. Am not I in the flower of my youth and beauty?"

"Lilian evidently does not think so," says Florence, with a would-be air of intense surprise.

"Why should I, when it suits me to think differently?" returns Lilian, calmly. Florence rather amuses her than otherwise. "Sir Guy and I are quite good friends at present. He has been civil to me for two whole days together, and has not once told me I have a horrid temper, or held me up to scorn in any way. Such conduct deserves reward. Therefore I liken him to an elderly gentleman, because I adore old men. You see, Guardy?" with an indescribably fascinating air, that has a suspicion of sauciness only calculated to heighten its charm.

"I should think he is old in reality to you," says Florence: "you are such a child."

"I am," says Lilian, agreeably, though secretly annoyed at the other's slighting tone. "I like it. There is nothing so good as youth. I should like to be eighteen always. But for my babyish ways and utter hopelessness, I feel positive Sir Guy would have beaten me long ago. But who could chastise an infant?"

"In long robes," puts in Cyril, who is deep in the intricacies of chess with Mr. Musgrave.

"Besides, I am 'Esther Summerson,' and he is 'Mr. Jarndyce,' and Esther's 'Guardy' very rightly was in perfect subjection to his ward."

"Esther's guardian, if I remember correctly, fell in love with her; and she let him see"—dreamily but spitefully—"that she preferred another."

"Ah, Sir Guy, think of that. See what lies before you," says Lilian, coloring warmly, but braving it out to the end.

"I am sure you are going to ask me what I should like, Guy," breaks in Cyril, languidly, who is not so engrossed by his game but that he can heed Lilian's embarrassment. "Those cigars of yours are excellent. I shall feel obliged by your bringing me (as a free gift, mind) half a dozen boxes. If you do, it will be a saving, as for the future I shall leave yours in peace."

"Thank you: I shall make a note of it," says Guy, laughing.

"Do you go early, Sir Guy?" asks Lilian, presently. She is leaning back in a huge lounging-chair of blue satin that almost conceals from view her tiny figure. In her hands is an ebony fan, and as she asks the question she closes and uncloses it indolently.

"Very early. I must start at seven to catch the train, if I wish to get my business done and be back by five."

"What an unearthly hour for a poor old gentleman like you to rise! You won't recover it in a hurry. You will breakfast before you go?"

"Yes."

"What a lunch you will eat when you get to town! But don't overdo it, Guardy. You will be starving, no doubt; but remember the horrors of gout. And who will give you your breakfast at seven?"

She raises her large soft eyes to his and, unfurling her fan, lays it thoughtfully against her pretty lips. Sir Guy is about to make an eager reply, when Miss Beauchamp interposes.

"I always give Guy his breakfast when he goes to London," she says, calmly yet hastily.

"Check!" says Cyril, at this instant, with his eyes on the board. "My dear Musgrave, what a false move!—a fatal delay. Don't you know bold play generally wins?"

"Sometimes it loses," retorts Taffy, innocently; which reply, to his surprise, appears to cause Mr. Chetwoode infinite amusement.

"Whenever you do go," says Lilian to Sir Guy, "don't forget my sweetmeats: I shall be dreaming of them until I see you again. Have you a pocket-book? Yes. Well, put down in it what I most particularly love. I like chocolate creams and burnt almonds better than anything in the world."

Cyril, with dreamy sentiment, "How I wish I was a burnt almond!"

Miss Chesney, viciously, "If you were, what a bite I would give you!"

Taffy, to Sir Guy, "Lilian's tastes and mine are one. If you are really going to

bring lollypops, please make the supply large. When I think of burnt almonds I feel no end hungry."

Lilian, vigorously, "You shan't have any of mine, Taffy. Don't imagine it! Yesterday you ate every one Cyril brought me from Fenston. I crossed the room for one instant, and when I came back the box was literally cleared. Wasn't it a shame? I shan't go into partnership with you over Sir Guy's confections."

Taffy, *sotto voce*, "Greedy little thing!" Then suddenly addressing Sir Guy, "I think I saw your old colonel—Trant—about the neighborhood to-day."

Cyril draws himself up with a start and looks hard at the lad, who is utterly unconscious of the private bombshell he has discharged.

"Trant!" says Guy, surprised; "impossible. Unless, indeed," with a light laugh, "he came to look after his *protégée*, the widow."

"Mrs. Arlington? I saw her yesterday," says Taffy, with animation. "She was in her garden, and she is lovely. I never saw anything so perfect as her smile."

"I hope you are not *épris* with her. We warn everybody against our tenant," Guy says, smiling, though there is evident meaning in his tone. "We took her to oblige Trant,—who begged we would not be inquisitive about her; and literally we are in ignorance of who she is, or where she came from. Widows, like cousins, are dangerous," with a slight glance at his brother, who is leaning back in his chair, a knight between his fingers, taking an exhaustive though nonchalant survey of the painted ceiling, where all the little loves and graces are playing at a very pronounced game of hide-and-seek among the roses.

"I hope," says Florence, slowly, looking up from the *rara avis* whose tail she is elaborately embroidering,—the original of which was never yet (most assuredly) seen by land or sea,—"I hope Colonel Trant, in this instance, has not played you false. I cannot say I admire Mrs. Arlington's appearance. Though no doubt she is pretty,—in a certain style," concludes Miss Beauchamp, who is an adept at uttering the faint praise that damns.

"Trant is a gentleman," returns Guy, somewhat coldly. Yet as he says it a doubt enters his mind.

"He has the name of being rather fast in town," says young Musgrave, vaguely; "there is some story about his being madly in love with some mysterious woman whom nobody knows. I don't remember exactly how it is,—but they say she is

hidden away somewhere."

"How delightfully definite Taffy always is!" Lilian says, admiringly; "it is so easy to grasp his meaning. Got any more stories, Taffy? I quite begin to fancy this Colonel Trant. Is he as captivating as he is wicked?"

"Not quite. I am almost sure I saw him to-day in the lane that runs down between the wood and Brown's farm. But I may be mistaken; I was certainly one or two fields off, yet I have a sure eye, and I have seen him often in London."

"Perhaps Mrs. Arlington is the mysterious lady of his affections," says Guy, laughing, and, the moment the words have passed his lips, regrets their utterance. Cyril's eyes descend rapidly from the ceiling and meet his. On the instant a suspicion unnamed and unacknowledged fills both their hearts.

"Do you really think Trant came down to see your tenant?" asks Cyril, almost defiantly.

"Certainly not," returning the other's somewhat fiery glance calmly. "I do not believe he would be in the neighborhood without coming to see my mother."

At the last word, so dear to her, Lady Chetwoode wakes gently, opens her still beautiful eyes, and smiles benignly on all around, as though defying them to say she has slumbered for half a second.

"Yes, my dear Guy, I quite agree with you," she says, affably, *apropos* of nothing unless it be a dream, and then, being fully roused, suggests going to bed. Whereupon Florence says, with gentle thoughtfulness, "Indeed yes. If Guy is to be up early in the morning he ought to go to bed now," and, rising as her aunt rises, makes a general move.

When the women have disappeared and resigned themselves to the tender mercies of their maids, and the men have sought that best beloved of all apartments, the Tabagie, a sudden resolution to say something that lies heavy on his mind takes possession of Guy. Of all things on earth he hates most a "scene," but some power within him compels him to speak just now. The intense love he bears his only brother, his fear lest harm should befall him, urges him on, sorely against his will, to give some faint utterance to all that is puzzling and distressing him.

Taffy, seduced by the sweetness of the night, has stepped out into the garden, where he is enjoying his weed alone. Within, the lamp is almost quenched by the

great pale rays of the moon that rush through the open window. Without, the whole world is steeped in one white, glorious splendor.

The stars on high are twinkling, burning, like distant lamps. Anon, one darts madly across the dark blue amphitheatre overhead, and is lost in space, while the others laugh on, unheeding its swift destruction. The flowers are sleeping, emitting in their dreams faint, delicate perfumed sighs; the cattle have ceased to low in the far fields: there is no sound through all the busy land save the sweet soughing of the wind and the light tread of Musgrave's footsteps up and down outside.

"Cyril," says Guy, removing the meerschaum from between his lips, and regarding its elaborate silver bands with some nervousness, "I wish you would not go to The Cottage so often as you do."

"No? And why not, *très cher*?" asks Cyril, calmly, knowing well what is coming.

"For one thing, we do not know who this Mrs. Arlington is, or anything of her. That in itself is a drawback. I am sorry I ever agreed to Trant's proposal, but it is too late for regret in that quarter. Do not double my regret by making me feel I have done you harm."

"You shall never feel that. How you do torture yourself over shadows, Guy! I always think it must be the greatest bore on earth to be conscientious,—that is, over-scrupulous, like you. It is a mistake, dear boy, take my word for it,—will wear you out before your time."

"I am thinking of you, Cyril. Forgive me if I seem impertinent. Mrs. Arlington is lovely, graceful, everything of the most desirable in appearance, but——" A pause.

"*Après?*" murmurs Cyril, lazily.

"But," earnestly, "I should not like you to lose your heart to her, as you force me to say it. Musgrave says he saw Trant in the lane to-day. Of course he may have been mistaken; but was he? I have my own doubts, Cyril," rising in some agitation,—"doubts that may be unjust, but I cannot conquer them. If you allow yourself to love that woman, she will bring you misfortune. Why is she so secret about her former life? Why does she shun society? Cyril, be warned in time; she may be a——, she may be anything," checking himself slowly.

"She may," says Cyril, rising with a passionate irrepressible movement to his

feet, under pretense of lighting the cigar that has died out between his fingers. Then, with a sudden change of tone and a soft laugh, "The skies may fall, of course, but we scarcely anticipate it. My good Guy, what a visionary you are! Do be rational, if you can. As for Mrs. Arlington, why should she create dissension between you and me?"

"Why, indeed?" returns Guy, gravely. "I have to ask your pardon for my interference. But you know I only speak when I feel compelled, and always for your good."

"You are about the best fellow going, I know that," replies Cyril, deliberately, knocking the ash off his cigar; "but at times you are wont to lose your head,—to wander,—like the best of us. I am safe enough, trust me. 'What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba?' Come, don't let us spoil this glorious night by a dissertation on what we neither of us know anything about. What a starlight!" standing at the open casement, and regarding with quick admiration the glistening dome above him. "I wonder how any one looking on it can disbelieve in a heaven beyond!"

Here Musgrave's fair head makes a blot in the perfect calm of the night scene.

"Is that you, Taffy? Where have you been all this time?—mooning?—you have had ample opportunity. But you are too young for Melancholy to mark you as her own. It is only old folk like Guy," with a laughing though affectionate glance backward to where his brother stands, somewhat perplexed, beside the lamp, "should fall victims to the blues."

"A fig for melancholy!" says Taffy, vaulting lightly into the room, and by his presence putting an end to all private conversation between the brothers.

* * * * * * *

The next morning Lilian (to whom early rising is a pure delight), running down the broad stone stairs two steps at a time, finds Guy on the eve of starting, with Florence beside him, looking positively handsome in the most thrilling of morning gowns. She has forsaken her virtuous couch, and slighted the balmy slumber she so much loves, to give him his breakfast, and is still unremitting in her attentions, and untiring with regard to her smiles.

"Not gone!" says Lilian, wickedly: "how disappointed I am, to be sure! I fancied my bonbons an hour nearer to me than they really are. Bad Guardy, why don't you hurry?" She says this with the prettiest affectation of infantile grace,

accompanied by a coquettish glance from under her sweeping lashes that creates in Florence a mad desire to box her ears.

"You forget it will not hasten the train five seconds, Guy's leaving this sooner than he does," she says, snubbingly. "To picture him sitting in a draughty station could not—I should think—give satisfaction to any one."

"It could"—willfully—"to me. It would show a proper anxiety to obey my behests. Guardy," with touching concern, "are you sure you are warm enough? Now do promise me one thing,—that you will beware of the crossings; they say any number of old men come to grief in that way yearly, and are run over through deafness, or short sight, or stupidity in general. Think how horrid it would be if they sent us home your mangled remains."

"Go in, you naughty child, and learn to speak to your elders with respect," says Guy, laughing, and putting her bodily inside the hall-door, from whence she trips out again to wave him a last adieu, and kiss her hand warmly to him as he disappears round the corner of the laurustinus bush.

And Sir Guy drives away full of his ward's fresh girlish loveliness, her slender lissome figure, her laughing face, the thousand tantalizing graces that go to make her what she is; forgetful of Miss Beauchamp's more matured charms,—her white gown,—her honeyed words,—everything.

All day long Lilian's image follows him. It is beside him in the crowded street, enters his club with him, haunts him in his business, laughs at him in his most serious moods; while she, at home, scarce thinks of him at all, or at the most vaguely, though when at five he does return she is the first to greet him.

"He has come home! he is here!" she cries, dancing into the hall. "Have you escaped the crossings? and rheumatism? and your old enemy, lumbago? Good old Guardy, let me help you off with your coat. So. Positively, he is all here,—not a bit of him gone,—and none the worse for wear!"

"Tired, Guy?" asks Florence, coming gracefully forward,—slowly, lest by unseemly haste she should disturb the perfect fold of her train, that sets off her figure to such advantage. She speaks warmly, appropriatingly, as one's wife might, after a long journey.

"Tired! not he," returns Lilian irreverently: "he is quite a gay old gentleman. Nor hungry either. No doubt he has lunched profusely in town, 'not wisely, but too

well,' as somebody says. Where are my sweeties, Sir Ancient?"

"My dear Lilian,"—rebukingly,—"if you reflect, you will see he must be both tired and hungry."

"So am I for my creams: I quite pine for them. Sir Guy, where *are* my sweeties?"

"Here, little cormorant," says Guy, as fondly as he dares, handing her a gigantic *bonbonnière* in which chocolates and French sweetmeats fight for mastery: "have I got you what you wanted?"

"Yes, indeed; *best* of Guardys, I only wish I might kiss my thanks."

"You may."

"Better not. Such a condescension on my part might turn your old head. Oh, Taffy," with an exclamation, "you bad greedy boy; you have taken half my almonds! Well, you shan't have any of the others, for punishment. Auntie and Florence and I will eat the rest."

"Thanks," drawls Florence, languidly, "but I am always so terrified about toothache."

"What a pity!" says Miss Chesney. "If I had toothache, I should have all my teeth drawn instantly, and false ones put in their place."

To this Miss Beauchamp, being undecided in her own mind as to whether it is or is not an impertinence, deigns no reply. Cyril, with a gravity that belies his innermost feelings, gazes hard at Lilian, only to acknowledge her innocent of desire to offend.

"You did not meet Archibald?" asks Lady Chetwoode of Guy.

"No: I suppose he will be down by next train. Chesney is always up to time."

"Lilian, my dear, where is my fourth knitting-needle?" asks auntie, mildly. "I lent it to you this morning for some purpose."

"It is up-stairs; you shall have it in one moment," returns Lilian, moving toward the door; and Sir Guy, muttering something about getting rid of the dust of travel, follows her out of the room.

At the foot of the stairs he says:

"Lilian."

"Yes?"

"I have brought you yet another bonbon. Will you accept it?"

As he speaks he holds out to her an open case, in which lies a pretty ring composed of pearls and diamonds.

"For me? Oh, Sir Guy!" says Lilian, flushing with pleasure, "what a lovely present to bring me!" Then her expression changes, and her face falls somewhat. She has lived long enough to know that young men do not, as a rule, go about giving costly rings to young women without a motive. Perhaps she ought to refuse it. Perhaps auntie would think it wrong of her to take it. And if there is really anything between him and Florence—— Yet what a pretty ring it is, and how the diamonds glitter! And what woman can resign diamonds without a struggle?

"Will auntie be vexed if I take it?" she asks, honestly, after a pause, raising her clear eyes to his, thereby betraying the fear that is tormenting her.

"Why should she? Surely," with a smile, "an elderly guardian may make a present to his youthful ward without being brought to task for it."

"And Florence?" asks Lilian, speaking impulsively, but half jestingly.

"Does it signify what she thinks?" returns he, a little stiffly. "It is a mere bauble, and scarcely worth so much thought. You remember that day down by the stream, when you said you were so fond of rings?"

"No."

"Well, I do, as I remember most things you say, be they kind or cruel," softly. "To-day, though I cannot explain why, this ring reminded me of you, so I bought it, thinking you might fancy it."

"So I do: it is quite too lovely," says Lilian, feeling as though she had been ungracious, and, what is worse, prudish. "Thank you very much. I shall wear it this evening with my new dress, and it will help me to make an impression on my unknown cousin."

She holds out her hand to him; it is the right one, and Guy slips the ring upon the third finger of it, while she, forgetting it is the engaged finger, makes no

objection.

Sir Guy, still holding the little cool slim hand, looks at her fixedly, and, looking, decides regretfully that she is quite ignorant of his meaning.

"How it sparkles!" she says, moving her hand gently to and fro so that the light falls upon it from different directions. "Thank you again, Guardy; you are always better to me than I deserve." She says this warmly, being desirous of removing all traces of her late hesitation, and quite oblivious of her former scruples. But the moment she leaves him she remembers them again, and, coming down-stairs with Lady Chetwoode's needle, and finding her alone, says, with a heightened color, "See what a charming present Sir Guy has brought me."

"Very pretty indeed," Lady Chetwoode says, examining the ring with interest. "Dear Guy has such taste, and he is always so thoughtful, ever thinking how to please some one. I am glad it has been you this time, pussy," kissing the girl's smiling lips as she bends over her. So that Miss Chesney, reassured by her auntie's kind words, goes up to dress for the reception of her cousin Archibald, with a clear and therefore happy conscience. Not for all the diamonds in Christendom would she have concealed even so small a secret as the acceptance of this ring from one whom she professes to love, and who she knows trusts in her.

CHAPTER XIV.

"*Kate*. I never saw a better fashioned gown,
More quaint, more pleasing, nor more commendable."
—Taming of the Shrew.

This dressing of Lilian for the undoing of her cousin is a wonderful affair, and occupies a considerable time. Not that she spends any of it in a dainty hesitation over the choice of the gown fated to work his overthrow; all that has been decided on long ago, and the fruit of many days' deep thought now lies upon her bed, bearing in its every fold—in each soft fall of lace—all the distinguishing marks that stamp the work of the inimitable Worth.

At length—nurse having admired and praised her to her heart's content, and given the last fond finishing touches to her toilet—Miss Chesney stands arrayed for conquest. She is dressed in a marvelous robe of black velvet—cut *à la Princesse*, simply fashioned, fitting *à merveille*,—being yet in mourning for her father. It is a little open at the throat, so that her neck—soft and fair as a child's—may be partly seen (looking all the whiter for the blackness that frames it in), and has the sleeves very tight and ending at the elbow, from which rich folds of Mechlin lace hang downward. Around her throat are a narrow band of black velvet and three little strings of pearls that once had been her mother's. In her amber hair a single white rose nestles sleepily.

Standing erect before her glass, she contemplates herself in silence,—marks the snowy loveliness of her neck and arms, her slender hands (on one of which Guy's ring is sparkling brilliantly), her rippling yellow hair in all its unstudied sleekness, the tender, exquisite face, rose-flushed, and, looking gladly upon it all,—for very love of it,—stoops forward and presses a kiss upon the delicate beauty that smiles back upon her from the mirror.

"How do I look, nurse?" she asks, turning with a whimsical grace to the woman who is regarding her with loving admiration. "Shall we captivate our cousin?"

"Ay, so I think, my dear," replies nurse, quietly. "Were you willing, my beauty, I'm nigh sure you could coax the birds off the bushes."

"You are an old dear," says Miss Chesney, tenderly, pressing her own cheek, soft with youth's down, against the wrinkled one near her. "But I must go and show myself to Taffy."

So saying, she opens the door, and trips away from Mrs. Tipping's adoring eyes,

down the corridor, until she stops at Taffy's door.

"Taffy!"

"Yes." The answer comes in muffled tones.

"May I come in?"

"Yes," still more muffled.

Turning the handle of the door, Lilian enters, to find Mr. Musgrave in his shirt-sleeves before a long mirror, struggling with his hair, which is combed straight over his forehead.

"It won't come right," he says, casting a heart-rending glance at Lilian, who laughs with most reprehensible cruelty, considering the situation.

"I am glad to find you are not suffocated," she says. "From your tone, I prepared myself—outside—for the worst. Here, bend your head, you helpless boy, and I will do it for you."

Taffy kneeling before her submissively, she performs her task deftly, successfully, and thereby restores peace once more to the bosom of the dejected dragoon.

"You should hire me as your valet," she says, lightly; "when you are away from me, I am afraid to think of all the sufferings you must undergo. Are you easier in your mind now, Taffy?"

"Oh, I say! what a swell you are!" says that young man, when he is sufficiently recovered to glance round. "I call that rig-out downright fetching. Where did you get that from?"

"Straight from Monsieur Worth," returns Lilian, with pardonable pride, when one remembers what a success she is, drawing up her slim young figure to its fullest height, and letting her white hands fall clasped before her, as she poses for well-earned admiration. "Is not it pretty? And doesn't it fit like a glove?"

"It does. It gives you really a tolerably good figure," with all a brother's calm impertinence, while examining her critically. "You have got yourself up regardless, so I suppose you mean mischief."

"Well, if this doesn't soften his heart, nothing will," replies Miss Chesney, vainly

regarding her velvet, and alluding, as Musgrave well knows, to her cousin Archibald. "You really think I look nice, Taffy? You think I am *chic*?"

"I do, indeed. I am not a judge of women's clothing, but I like black velvet, and when I have a wife she shall wear nothing else. I would say more in your favor, but that I fear over-much praise might have a bad effect upon you, and cause you to die of your 'own dear loveliness.'"

"*Méchant!*" says Lilian, with a charming pout. "Never mind, I know you admire me intensely."

"Have I not said so in the plainest Queen's English? But that time has fatally revealed to me the real character of the person standing in those costly garments, I feel I should fall madly in love with you to-night."

"Silly child!"—turning up her small nose with immeasurable disdain,—"do you think I would deign to accept your boyish homage? No; I like *men*! Indeed!"—with disgraceful affectation,—"I think it my duty to warn you not to waste time burning your foolish fingers at *my* shrine."

She moves him aside with one small finger, the better to see how charming she is in another glass. This one reveals to her all the sweetness she has seen before—and something more. Scarcely has she glanced into it, when her complexion, that a moment since was a soft and lovely pink, changes suddenly, and flames into a deep crimson. There, at the farthest end of the long room reflected in the glass, —staring back at her,—coatless, motionless, with a brush suspended from each hand, stands a man, lost in wonder and most flattering astonishment.

Miss Chesney, turning round with a start, finds that this vision is not belonging to the other world, but is a real *bona fide* creature of flesh and blood,—a young man, tall, broad-shouldered, and very dark.

For a full minute they stare silently at each other, oppressed with thoughts widely different in character, while Taffy remains blissfully ignorant of the situation, being now engaged in a desperate conflict with a refractory tie. Then one of the brushes falls from the stranger's hand, and the spell is broken. Miss Chesney, turning impetuously, proceeds to pour out the vials of her wrath upon Taffy.

"I think you might have told me," she says, in clear, angry tones, casting upon him a glance meant to wither. But Mr. Musgrave distinctly refuses to be

withered.

"Eh? What? *By Jove!*" he says, vaguely, as the awful truth dawns upon him. Meanwhile Lilian sweeps majestically to the door, her velvets trailing behind her. All her merry kittenish ways have disappeared; she walks as a young queen might who has been grossly affronted in open court.

"Give you my honor I quite forgot him," murmurs Taffy, from the spot where he is rooted through sheer dismay. His tones are dismal in the extreme, but Miss Chesney disdains to hear or argue, and, going out, closes the door with much determination behind her. The stranger, suppressing a smile, stoops to pick up the fallen brush, and the scene is at an end.

Down the stairs, full of vehement indignation, goes Lilian, thoughts crowding upon her thick and heavy. Could anything be more unfortunate? Just when she had got herself up in the most effective style,—just when she had hoped, with the aid of this velvet gown, to make a pleasing and dignified *entrée* into his presence in the drawing-room below,—she has been led into making his acquaintance in Taffy's bedroom! Oh! horror! She has been face to face with him in his shirt-sleeves, with his odious brushes in his hands, and a stare of undeniable surprise upon his hateful face! Oh! it is insupportable!

And what was it she said to Taffy? What did she do? Hastily her mind travels backward to the conversation that has just taken place.

First, *she combed Taffy's hair*. Oh! miserable girl! She closes two azure eyes with two slender fingers from the light of day, as this thought occurs to her. Then, she smirked at her own graceful image in Taffy's glass, and made all sorts of conceited remarks about her personal appearance, and then she said she hoped to subjugate "*him*." What "him" could there be but this one? and of course he knows it. Oh! unhappy young woman!

As for Taffy, bad, bad boy that he is, never to give her a hint. Vengeance surely is in store for him. What right had he to forget? If there is one thing she detests, it is a person devoid of tact. If there is one thing she could adore, it would be the power to shake the wretched Taffy out of his shoes.

What is there left to her but to gain her room, plead bad headache, and spend the remainder of the evening in retirement? In this mood she gains the drawing-room door, and, hesitating before it, thinks better of the solitary-confinement idea; and, entering the room, seats herself in a cozy chair and prepares to meet

her fate with admirable calmness.

Dinner is ready,—waiting,—and still no Archibald. Then there is a step in the hall, the door is thrown open, and he enters, as much hurried as it is possible for a well-bred young man to be in this nineteenth century.

Lady Chetwoode instantly says, with old-fashioned grace, the sweeter that it is somewhat obsolete,——

"Lilian, permit me to introduce to you your cousin, Archibald Chesney."

Whereupon Lilian bows coldly and refuses to meet her cousin's eyes, while kind Lady Chetwoode thinks it is a little stiff of the child, and most unlike her, not to shake hands with her own kin.

An awkward pause is almost inevitable, when Taffy says out loud, to no one in particular, but with much gusto:

"How odd it is they should never have seen each other until now!" after which he goes into silent agonies of merriment over his own wit, until brought to his senses by an annihilating glance from Lilian.

The dinner-hour is remarkable for nothing except Lilian's silence. This, being so utterly unexpected, is worthy of note. After dinner, when the men gain the drawing-room, Archibald, coming over, deliberately pushes aside Miss Chesney's velvet skirts, and seats himself on the low ottoman beside her with modest determination.

Miss Chesney, raising her eyes, regards him curiously.

He is tall, and eminently gloomy in appearance. His hair is of a rare blackness, his eyes are dark, so is his skin. His eyebrows are slightly arched, which gives him an air of melancholy protest against the world in general. His nose is of the high and mighty order that comes under the denomination of aquiline, or hooked, as may suit you best. Before his arrival Cyril used to tell Lilian that if Nature had meant him for anything it was to act as brigand in a private theatre; and Lilian, now calling to mind this remark, acknowledges the truth of it, and almost laughs in the face of her dark-browed cousin. Nevertheless she refrains from outward mirth, which is wisdom on her part, as ridicule is his *bête noir*.

Despite the extreme darkness of his complexion he is unmistakably handsome, though somewhat discontented in expression. Why, no one knows. He is rich,

courted, as are all young men with a respectable rent-roll, and might have made many a titled *débutante* Mrs. Chesney had he so chosen. He has not even a romantic love-affair to fall back upon as an excuse for his dejection; no unfortunate attachment has arisen to sour his existence. Indeed, it is seldom the owner of landed property has to complain on this score, all such luxuries being reserved for the poor of the earth.

Archibald Chesney's gloom, which is becoming if anything, does not sink deeper than his skin. It gives a certain gentleness to his face, and prevents the ignorant from guessing that he is one of the wildest, maddest young men about London. Lilian, regarding him with quiet scrutiny, decides that he is good to look at, and that his eyes are peculiarly large and dark.

"Are you angry with me for what happened up-stairs?" he asks, gently, after a pause spent in as earnest an examination of her as any she has bestowed upon him.

"Up-stairs?" says Lilian, with raised brows of inquiry and carefully studied ignorance.

"I mean my unfortunate *rencontre* with you in Musgrave's room."

"Oh, dear, no," with clear denial. "I seldom grow angry over *trifles*. I have not thought of it since." She utters her fib bravely, the truth being that all during dinner she has been consumed with shame.

"Have you not? *I* have. I have been utterly miserable ever since you bestowed that terrible look upon me when your eyes first met mine. Won't you let me explain my presence there? I think if you do you will forgive me."

"It was not your fault: there is nothing about which you need apologize," says Lilian; but her tone is more cordial, and there is the faintest dimpling of a smile around her mobile lips.

"Nevertheless I hate myself in that I caused you a moment's uneasiness," says Mr. Chesney, that being the amiable word he employs for her ill-temper. "I shall be discontented until I tell you the truth: so pray let me."

"Then tell it," says Lilian.

"I have a man, a perfect treasure, who can do all that man can possibly do, who is in fact faultless,—but for one small weakness."

"And that is?"

"Like Mr. Stiggins, his vanity is—brandy hot. Now and then he drinks more of it than is good for him, though to do him justice not very often. Once in six months, regular as clockwork, he gets hopelessly drunk, and just now the time being up, he, of course, chose this particular day to make his half-yearly exhibition of himself, and having imbibed brandy *ad lib.*, forgot to bring himself and my traps to Chetwoode in time for the first dressing-bell."

"What a satisfactory sort of servant!"

"He is, very, when he is sober,—absolutely invaluable. And then his little mistakes occur so seldom. But I wish he had not chosen this night of all others in which to play me false. I don't know what I should have done had I not thrown myself upon Musgrave's mercy and borrowed his brushes and combs and implements of war generally. As it was, I had almost given up hope of being able to reach the drawing-room at all to-night, when just at the last moment my 'treasure' arrived with my things and—any amount of concealed spirits. Do I bore you with my explanation? It is very good of you to listen so patiently, but I should have been too unhappy had I been prevented from telling you all this."

"I think, after all, it is I should explain my presence in that room," says Lilian, with a gay, irresistible laugh that causes Guy, who is at the other end of the room, to lift his head and regard her anxiously.

He is sitting near Florence, on a sofa (or rather, to speak more correctly, she is sitting near him), and is looking bored and *gêné*. Her laugh pains him unaccountably; glancing next at her companion he marks the still admiration in the dark face as it gazes into her fair one. Already—*already*—he is surely *empressé*.

"But the fact is," Lilian is saying, "I have always been in the habit of visiting Taffy's room before he has quite finished his dressing, to see if there be any little final touch required that I might give him. Did you meet him in London?"

"No; never saw him until a couple of hours ago. Very nice little fellow, I should say. Cousin of yours?"

"Yes: isn't he a pet?" says Lilian, eagerly, always glad to hear praise of her youthful plunger. "There are very few like him. He is my nearest relative, and you can't think how I love that boy."

"That boy is, I should say, older than you are."

"Ye—es," doubtfully, "so he says: about a year, I think. Not that it matters," says Miss Chesney, airily, "as in reality I am any number of years older than he is. He is nothing but a big child, so I have to look after him."

"You have, I supposed, constituted yourself his mother?" asks Archibald, intensely amused at her pretty assumption of maternity.

"Yes," with a grave nod, "or his elder sister, just as I feel it my duty at the moment to pet or scold him."

"Happy Taffy!"

"Not that he gives me much trouble. He is a very good boy generally."

"He is a very handsome boy, at all events. You have reason to be proud of your child. I am your cousin also."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

A pause, after which Mr. Chesney says, meekly:

"I suppose you would not take me as a second son?"

"I think not," says Lilian, laughing; "you are much too important a person and far too old to be either petted or scolded."

"That is very hard lines, isn't it? You might say anything you liked to me, and I am almost positive I should not resent it. And if you will be kind enough to turn your eyes on me once more, I think you will acknowledge I am not so very old."

"Too old for me to take in hand. I doubt you would be an unruly member,—a *mauvais sujet*,—a disgrace to my teaching. I should lose caste. At dinner I saw you frown, and frowns,"—with a coquettishly plaintive sigh—"frighten me!"

"Do you imagine me brutal enough to frown upon my mother?—and such a mother?"

"Nevertheless, I cannot undertake your reformation. You should remember you are scarcely in my good books. Are you not a usurper in my eyes? Have you not stolen from me my beloved Park?"

"Ah! true. But you can have it back again, you know," returns he, in a low tone, half jest, though there is a faint under-current—that is almost earnestness—running through it.

At this moment Lady Chetwoode saves Lilian the embarrassment of a reply.

"Sing us something, darling," she says.

And Lilian, rising, trails her soft skirts after her across the room, and, sitting down at the piano, commences "Barbara Allen," sweetly, gravely, tenderly, as is her wont.

Guy's gaze is following her. The pure though *piquante* face, the golden hair, the rich old-fashioned texture of the gown, all combine to make a lovely picture lovelier. The words of the song make his heart throb, and bring to life a certain memory of earlier days, when on the top of a high wall he first heard her singing it.

Pathetically, softly, she sings it, without affectation or pretense of any kind, and, having finished, still lets her fingers wander idly over the notes (drawing from them delicate minor harmonies that sadden the listener), whilst the others applaud.

Guy alone being silent, she glances at him presently with a smile full of kindliness, that claims and obtains an answering smile in return.

"Have I ever seen that gown on you before?" he asks, after a pause.

"No. This dress is without doubt an eminent success, as everybody admires it. No; you never saw it before. Do you like it?"

"More than I can say. Lilian, you have formed your opinion of your cousin, and —you like him?"

"Very much, indeed. He is handsome, *debonnaire*, all that may be desired, and—he quite likes Taffy."

"A passport to your favor," says Chetwoode, smiling. "Though no one could help liking the boy." Then his eyes seeking her hands once more, fasten upon the right one, and he sees the ring he had placed upon the third finger a few hours before now glistens bravely upon the second.

The discovery causes him a pang so keen that involuntarily he draws himself up

to his full height, and condemns himself as a superstitious fool. As if she divines his thought,—though in reality she knows nothing of it,—Lilian says, gazing admiringly at the glittering trinket in question:

"I think your ring grows prettier and prettier every time I look at it. But it would not stay on the finger you chose; while I was dressing it fell off; so, fearing to lose it, I slipped it upon this one. It looks as well, does it not?"

"Yes," said Chetwoode, though all the time he is wishing with all his heart it had not fallen from the engagement finger. When we love we grow fearful; and with fear there is torment.

"Why don't you ask Florence to sing?" asks Lilian, suddenly.

Archibald Chesney has risen and lounged over to the piano, and now is close beside her. To Guy's jealous ears it seems as though the remark was made to rid her of his presence.

"Because I detest French songs," he answers, somewhat sharply,—Miss Beauchamp being addicted to such foreign music.

"Do you?" says Lilian, laughing at his tone, which she fully understands, and straightway sings one (the gayest, brightest, most nonsensical to be found in her *repertoire*) in her sweet fresh voice, glancing at him with a comical challenge in her eyes every time the foolish yet tender refrain occurs.

When she has finished she says to him, saucily:

"Well, Sir Guy?"

And he answers:

"I am vanquished, utterly convinced. I confess I now like French songs as well as any others."

"I like them ten times better," says Archibald, impulsively, "when they are sung by you. There is a *verve*, a gayety about them that other songs lack. Have you any more? Do you know any of Gounod's? I like them, though they are of a different style."

"They are rather beyond me," says Lilian, laughing. "But hear this: it is one of Beranger's, very simply set, but I think pretty."

This time she sings to *him*,—unmistakably,—a soft little Norman love-song, full of grace and tenderest entreaty, bestowing upon him all the beguiling smiles she had a moment since given exclusively to her guardian, until at length Sir Guy, muttering "coquette" to his own heart, turns aside, leaving Chesney master of the field.

Lilian, turning from her animated discussion with Archibald, follows his departing footsteps with her eyes, in which lies a faintly malicious smile; an expression full of suppressed enjoyment curves her lips; she is evidently satisfied at his abrupt retreat, and continues her interrupted conversation with her cousin in still more joyous tones. Perhaps this is how she means to fulfill her mysterious threat of "showing" Sir Guy.

CHAPTER XV.

"I will gather thee, he cried,
  Rosebud brightly blowing!
Then I'll sting thee, it replied,
And you'll quickly start aside
  With the prickle glowing.
Rosebud, rosebud, rosebud red,
  Rosebud brightly blowing!"
—GOETHE—*translated*.

"Nurse, wash my hair," says Lilian, entering her nurse's sanctum, which is next her own, one lovely morning early in September when

"Dew is on the lea,
And tender buds are fretting to be free."

The fickle sun is flinging its broad beams far and near, now glittering upon the ivied towers, and now dancing round the chimney-tops, now necking with gold the mullioned window. Its brightness is as a smile from the departing summer, the sweeter that it grows rarer every hour; its merry rays spread and lengthen, the wind grows softer, balmier, beneath its influence; it is as the very heart of lazy July.

"And on the woods and on the deep
The smile of heaven lay.
It seemed as if the day were one
  Sent from beyond the skies,
Which shed to earth above the sun
  A light of Paradise."

There is an "inviolable quietness" in all the air.

Some late roses have grown, and cluster round Lilian's window; stooping out, she kisses and caresses them, speaking to them as though they were (as indeed they are) her dear friends, when nurse's voice recalls her to the present, and the inner room.

"La, my dear," says Mrs. Tipping, "it is only four days since I washed it before."

"Never mind, ninny; wash it again. To-day is so delicious, with such a dear little breeze, and such a prodigality of sun, that I cannot resist it. You know how I love running through the air with my hair wet, and feeling the wind rushing through it. And, nurse, be sure now"—coaxingly—"you put plenty of soda in the water."

"What, and rot all your pretty locks? Not I, indeed!" says nurse, with much determination.

"But you must; you will now, won't you?" in a wheedling tone. "It never stands properly out from my head unless it is full of soda."

"An' what, I wonder, would your poor mamma say to me if she could see me spoiling your bonny hair this day, an' it the very color of her own? No, no; I cannot indeed. It goes against my conscience, as it were. Go get some one else to wash it, not me; it would sadden me."

"If you won't wash it, no one else shall," pouts Lilian. And when Lilian pouts she looks so lovely, and so naughty, and so irresistible, that, instead of scolding her for ill-temper, every one instantly gives in to her. Nurse gives in, as she has done to her little mistress's pout ever since the latter was four years old, and forthwith produces soap and water and plenty of soda.

The long yellow hair being at length washed, combed out carefully, and brushed until it hangs heavily all down her back, Lilian administers a soft little kiss to her nurse as reward for her trouble, and runs delightedly down the stairs, straight into the open air, without hat, or covering of any kind for her head.

The garden is listless and sleepy. The bees are silent, the flowers are nodding drowsily, wakened into some sort of life by the teasing wind that sighs and laughs around them unceasingly. Lilian plucks a blossom here and there, and scatters far and near the gaudy butterfly in very wantonness of enjoyment, while the wooing wind whistles through her hair, drying it softly, lovingly, until at last some of its pristine gloss returns to it, and its gold shines with redoubled vigor beneath the sun's rays.

As she saunters, reveling—as one from Fairyland might revel—in the warmth and gladness of the great heathen god, she sings; and to Guy in his distant study the sound and the words come all too distinctly,—

"Why shouldn't I love my love?

Why shouldn't he love me?
Why shouldn't he come after me,
Since love to all is free?"

Beneath his window she pauses, and, finally, running up the steps of the balcony, peers in, full of an idle curiosity.

Sir Guy's den is the most desirable room in the house,—the coziest, the oddest, the most interesting. Looking at it, one guesses instinctively how addicted to all pretty things the owner is, from women down to less costly *bijouterie*.

Lovely landscapes adorn the walls side by side with Greuze-like faces, angelic in expression, unlike in appearance. There are a few portraits of beauties well known in the London and Paris worlds, frail as they are fair, false as they are *piquante*, whose garments (to do him justice) are distinctly decent, perhaps more so than their characters. But then indecency has gone out of fashion.

There are two or three lounges, some priceless statuettes, a few bits of *bric-a-brac* worth their weight in gold, innumerable yellow-backed volumes by Paul de Kock and his fellows, chairs of all shapes and sizes, one more comfortable and inviting than the other, enough meerschaum pipes and cigarette-holders and tobacco-stands to stock a small shop, a couple of dogs snoozing peacefully upon the hearth-rug, under the mistaken impression that a fire is burning in the grate, a writing-table, and before it Sir Guy. These are the principal things that attract Lilian's attention, as she gazes in, with her silken hair streaming behind her in the light breeze.

On the wall she cannot see, there are a few hunters by Herring, a copy of Millais' "Yes or No," a good deal of stable-ware, and beneath them, on a table, more pipes, cheroots, and boxes of cigars, mixed up with straw-covered bottles of perfume, thrust rather ignominiously into the corner.

A shadow falling across the paper on which he is writing, Guy raises his head, to see a fairy vision staring in at him,—a little slight figure, clothed in airy black with daintiest lace frillings at the throat and wrists, and with a wealth of golden hair brought purposely all over her face, letting only the laughing sapphire eyes, blue as the skies above her, gleam out from among it.

"Open the door, O hermit, and let a poor wanderer in," croons this fairy, in properly saddened tones.

Rising gladly, he throws wide the window to her, whereupon she steps into the room, still with her face hidden.

"You come?" asks he, in a deferential tone.

"To know what you are doing, and what can keep you in-doors this exquisite day. Do you remember how late in the season it is? and that you are slighting Nature? She will be angry, and will visit you with storms and drooping flowers, if you persist in flouting her. Come out. Come out."

"Who are you?" asks Guy. "Are you Flora?" He parts her hair gently and throws it back over her shoulders. "I thought you a nymph,—a fairy,—a small goddess, and——"

"And behold it is only Lilian! Naughty Lilian! Are you disappointed, Sir Guardian?" She laughs, and running her fingers through all her amber locks, spreading them out on either side of her like a silken veil, that extends as far as her arms can reach. She is lovely, radiant, bright as the day itself, fairer than the lazy flowers.

"What a child you are!" says Guy, with some discontent in his voice, feeling how far, *far* younger than he she is.

"Am I? Nonsense! Nurse says," going to a glass and surveying herself with critical eyes, "nurse says I am a 'very well grown girl of my age.'" Almost unconsciously she assumes nurse's pompous though adoring manner to such perfection that Guy laughs heartily.

"That is right, Guardy," says Miss Lilian, with bland encouragement. "I like to hear you laugh; of late you have grown almost as discontented to look at as my cousin. Have I amused you?"

"Yes; your assumption of Mrs. Tipping was admirable. Though I am not sure that I agree with her: you are not very much grown, are you? I don't think you are up to my shoulder."

"What a tarradiddle!" says Lilian. "Get off that table directly and let me convince you."

As Guy obeys her and draws himself up to his liberal six feet one, she goes to him and lays her soft head against his arm, only to find he—not she—is right; she is half an inch below his shoulder. Standing so, it takes Guy all he knows to

keep himself from throwing his arms round her and straining her to the heart that beats for her so passionately,—that beats for her alone.

"You have raised your shoulder," she says, most unfairly: "it wasn't half so high yesterday. You shouldn't cheat!—What a charming room yours is! I quite envy it to you. And the flowers are so well selected. Who adorns your den so artistically? Florence? But of course it is the invaluable Florence: I might have known. That good creature always does the correct thing!"

"I think it is the mother sees to it," replies he, gently.

"Oh, is it? Kind auntie! What a delicious little bit of blue! Forget-me-not, is it? How innocent it looks, and babyish, in its green leaves! May I rob you, Sir Guy? I should like a spray or two for my dress."

"You may have anything you wish that I can give you."

"What a noble offer!—Are you going to waste much more time over your tiresome letters?" glancing with pretty impertinence at the half-finished sheets lying on the table near her: "I suppose they are all business, or love, or suchlike rubbish! Well, good-bye, Guardy, I must go and finish the drying of my hair; you will find me in the garden when you come to the end of your last *billet-doux*."

So saying, she trips away from him down the handsome oak-paneled room, and disappears through the doorway that leads into the hall.

Where she goes the sunshine seems to follow her. To Guy's fancy it appears as though a shadow has fallen suddenly into the room, when the last glimpse of her yellow hair has vanished out of sight. With a rather abstracted air he betakes himself once more to his writing, and tries to forget her.

But somehow the impetus that urged him on half an hour ago is wanting; the spur to his industry has lost its sharpness; and presently, throwing down his pen with an impatient gesture, he acknowledges himself no longer in the mood for work.

What a child she is!—again the thought occurs to him;—yet with what power to torture! To-day all sweetness and honeyed gayety, to-morrow indifferent, if not actually repellent. She is an anomaly,—a little frail lily beset with thorns that puts forth its stings to wound, and probe, and madden, when least expected.

Only yesterday—after an hour's inward conflict—he had convinced himself of

her love for her cousin Archibald, with such evident pleasure did she receive his very marked attentions. And now,—to-day,—surely if she loved Chesney her eyes could not have dwelt so kindly upon another as they did a few minutes since upon her guardian. With what a pretty grace she had demanded that blue forget-me-not and placed it in the bosom of her dress! With what evident sincerity she had hinted at her wish to see him in the garden when his work should be over! Perhaps—perhaps——

Of late a passionate desire to tell her of the affection with which she has inspired him consumes him daily,—hourly; but a fear, a sad certainty of disappointment to follow on his declaration has hitherto checked the words that so often tremble on his lips. Now the unwonted gentleness of her manner tempts him to follow her and put his fate "to the touch," and so end all the jealous anguish and heart-burnings that torment him all day long.

Quitting his sanctum, he crosses the hall, and enters the drawing-room, where he finds Florence alone.

She is, as usual, bending industriously over her crewel work; the parrot's tail is now in a high state of perfection, not a color in the rainbow being missing from it. Seeing Guy, she raises her head and smiles upon him sweetly, blandly, invitingly.

"Where is Lilian?" asks Guy, abruptly, with all the tactless truthfulness of a man when he has one absorbing object in view.

Miss Beauchamp's bland smile freezes on her lips, and shows itself no more. She makes answer, nevertheless, in an unmoved tone:

"Where she always is,—in the garden with her cousin, Mr. Chesney."

"Always?" says Guy, lightly, though in reality his face has grown suddenly pale, and his fingers clinch involuntarily.

"Well," in her unchangeable placid staccato voice, "generally. He seems very *épris* with her, and she appears to receive his admiration favorably. Have you not noticed it?"

"I cannot say I have."

"No?"—incredulously—"how extraordinary! But men are proverbially dull in the observation of such matters as love-affairs. Some, indeed," with slow

meaning, "are positively *blind*."

She lays her work upon the table before her and examines it critically. She does not so much as glance at her victim, though secretly enjoying the knowledge that he is writhing beneath the lash.

"Chesney would be a good match for her," says Guy, with the calmness of despair. But his calmness does not deceive his companion.

"Very good. The Park, I am told, is even larger than Chetwoode. You, as her guardian, should, I think, put carefully before her all the advantages to be derived from such a marriage."

Here she smooths out her parrot, and, turning her head slightly to one side, wonders whether a little more crimson in the wings would not make them look more attractive. No, perhaps not: they are gaudy enough already,—though one often sees—a parrot—with——

"I don't believe mere money would have weight with Lilian," Guy breaks in upon her all-important reverie, with a visible effort.

"No? Perhaps not. But then the Park is her old home, and she, who professes such childish adoration for it, might possibly like to regain it. You really should speak to her, Guy. She should not be allowed to throw away such a brilliant chance, when a few well-chosen words might bias her in the right direction."

Guy makes no reply, but, stepping on to the balcony outside, walks listlessly away, his heart in a tumult of fear and regret, while Miss Beauchamp, calmly, and with a certain triumph, goes on contentedly with her work. A nail in Lilian's coffin has, she hopes, been driven, and sews her hopes into the canvas beneath her hand, as long ago the Parisian women knitted their terrible revenge and cruel longings into their children's socks, whilst all the flower and beauty and chivalry of France fell beneath the fatal guillotine.

Guy, wandering aimlessly, full of dismal thought, follows out mechanically his first idea, and turns in the direction of the garden, the spot so beloved by his false, treacherous little mistress.

In the distance he sees her; she is standing motionless in the centre of a grassplot, while behind her Chesney is busily engaged tying back her yellow hair with a broad piece of black ribbon she has evidently given him for the purpose. He has all her rich tresses gathered together in one, and is lingering palpably

over his task. In his coat is placed conspicuously the blue forget-me-not begged of Guy by Lilian only a few minutes ago as though her heart were set upon its possession.

"Coquette," mutters Chetwoode between his teeth.

"Not done yet?" asks the coquette at this moment of her cousin, giving her head a little impatient shake.

"Yes, just done," finishing up in a hurry the somewhat curious bow he is making.

"Well, now run," says Lilian, "and do as I bade you. I shall be here on this spot when you return. You know how I hate waiting: so don't be long,—do you hear?"

"Does that mean you will be impatient to see me again?"

"Of course," laughing. "I shall be *dying* to see you again, longing, pining for your return, thinking every minute an hour until you come back to me."

Thus encouraged, Archibald quickly vanishes, and Guy comes slowly up to her.

"I think you needn't have put that flower in Chesney's coat," he says, in an aggrieved tone. "I had no idea you meant it for his adornment."

"Is it in his coat?" As she makes this mean reply she blushes a rich warm crimson, so full of consciousness that it drives Guy absolutely wild with jealousy. "Yes, now I remember," she says, with an assumption of indifference; "he either took it from me, or asked me for it, I quite forget which."

"Do you?"

"I do," resenting his manner, which borders on disbelief, and is in her eyes highly objectionable. "Why should I trouble myself to recollect such trifles?"

After a pause, and with a distinct effort, Chetwoode says:

"You were foolishly prejudiced against your cousin before his arrival. I am glad you have learned to be civil to him."

"More than that, I have learned to like him very much indeed. He is quite charming, and not in the least *exigeant*, or *difficile*," this rather pronounced. "Besides, he is my cousin, and the master of my old home. Whenever I think of the dear Park I naturally think of him, until now they are both associated in my

mind: this adds to my liking."

Guy's heart sinks within him as he remembers Florence's words and now hears Lilian's own confession. He glances at her despairingly. She is picking a flower to pieces, and as she does so a little soft sigh escapes her. Is it for her lost home? Is she already dreaming of an hour when she may return to it once more as its happy mistress? Is she mercenary, as Florence hinted? or is it homesickness that is tempting her? or can it be that at heart she loves this cousin?

"It is the same with all women," he says bitterly; "the last comer is always the best, the newest face the dearest."

"I do not understand you,"—with cold reproof; "surely you are wandering from the subject: we were saying nothing about last comers or new faces. If you happen to be in a bad temper, Sir Guy, I really think it a little hard that you should come here to inflict it upon me."

"I am not in a bad temper,"—indignantly.

"No? It seems very like it," says Miss Chesney. "I can't bear cross people: they are always saying unpleasant as well as unmeaning things. New faces, indeed! I really wish Archibald would come; he is always agreeable, and never starts distasteful topics. Ah, here he is! Archie, how long you have been! I thought you were never coming! Sir Guy is in one of his terrible moods, and has frightened me out of my life. I was in danger of being lectured off the face of the earth. No woman should be pitied but she that has a guardian! You have come to my rescue barely in time: another minute, and you would have found only a lifeless Lilian."

Sir Guy, black with rage, turns aside. Archibald, ignorant of the storm brewing, sinks beside her contentedly upon the grass.

CHAPTER XVI.

"O spirit of love, how fresh and quick thou art!"—SHAKESPEARE.

It is the gloaming,—that tenderest, fondest, most pensive time of all the day. As yet, night crouches on the borders of the land, reluctant to throw its dark shadow over the still smiling earth, while day is slowly, sadly receding. There is a hush over everything; above, on their leafy perches, the birds are nestling, and crooning their cradle songs; the gay breeze, lazy with its exertions of the day, has fallen asleep, so that the very grasses are silent and unstirred. An owl in the distance is hooting mournfully. There is a serenity on all around, an all-pervading stillness that moves one to sadness and fills unwittingly the eyes with tears. It is the peace that follows upon grief, as though the busy world, that through all the heat and turmoil of the day has been weeping and groaning in anguish, has now for a few short hours found rest.

The last roses of summer in Mrs. Arlington's garden, now that those gay young sparks the bees have deserted them, are growing drowsy, and hang their heavy heads dejectedly. Two or three dissipated butterflies, fond of late hours and tempted by the warmth, still float gracefully through the air.

Cecilia, coming down the garden path, rests her arms upon her wicket gate and looks toward Chetwoode.

She is dressed in an exquisite white cambric, fastened at the throat by a bit of lavender ribbon; through her gown here and there are touches of the same color; on her head is a ravishing little cap of the mob description, that lends an additional charm to her face, making her seem, if possible, more womanly, more lovable than ever.

As she leans upon the gate a last yellow sunbeam falls upon her, peeps into her eyes, takes a good-night kiss from her parted lips, and, descending slowly, lovingly, crosses her bosom, steals a little sweetness from the white rose dying on her breast, throws a golden shade upon her white gown, and finally dies chivalrously at her feet.

But not for the dear devoted sunbeam does that warm blush grow and mantle on her cheek; not for it do her pulses throb, her heart beat fast. Toward her, in his

evening dress, and without his hat, regardless of consequences, comes Cyril, the quickness of his step betraying a flattering haste. As yet, although many weeks have come and gone since their first meeting, no actual words of love have been spoken between them; but each knows the other's heart, and has learned that eyes can speak a more eloquent language, can utter tenderer thoughts, than any the lips can frame.

"Again?" says Cecilia, softly, a little wonder, a great undisguised gladness, in her soft gray eyes.

"Yes; I could not keep away," returns he, simply.

He does not ask to enter, but leans upon the gate from his side, very close to her. Most fair men look well in evening clothes; Cyril looks downright handsome: his blonde moustache seems golden, his blue eyes almost black, in the rays of the departing sun: just now those eyes are filled with love and passionate admiration.

Her arms, half bare, with some frail shadowy lace falling over them, look rounded and velvety as a child's in the growing dusk; the fingers of her pretty, blue-veined hands are interlaced. Separating them, Cyril takes one hand between both his own and strokes it fondly, silently, yet almost absently.

Suddenly raising his head, he looks at her, his whole heart in his expression, his eyes full of purpose. Instinctively she feels the warmth, the tenderness of his glance, and changes from a calm lily into an expectant rose. Her hand trembles within his, as though meditating flight, and then lies passive as his clasp tightens firmly upon it. Slowly, reluctantly, as though compelled by some hidden force, she turns her averted eyes to his.

"Cecilia," murmurs he, imploringly, and then—and then their lips meet, and they kiss each other solemnly, with a passionate tenderness, knowing it is their betrothal they are sealing.

* * * * * * *

"I wish I had summoned courage to kiss you a week ago," he says, presently. He is inside the gate now, and seems to have lost in this shamefully short time all the hesitation and modesty that a few minutes ago were so becoming. His arm is around her; even as he makes this *risqué* remark, he stoops and embraces her again, without even having the grace to ask permission, while she (that I should

live to say it of Cecilia!) never reproves him.

"Why?" she asks, smiling up at him.

"See how I have wasted seven good days," returns he, drinking in gladly all the beauty of her face and smile. "This day last week I might have been as happy as I am now,—whereas I was the most miserable wretch alive, the victim of suspense."

"You bore your misery admirably: had you not told me, I should never have guessed your wretchedness. Besides, how do you know I should have been so kind to you seven long days ago?"

"I know it,—because you love me."

"And how do you know that either?" asks she, with new-born coquetry that sits very sweetly upon her. "Cyril, when did you begin to love me?"

"The very moment I first saw you."

"No, no; I do not want compliments from *you*: I want the very honest truth. Tell me."

"I have told you. The honest truth is this. That morning after your arrival when I restored your terrier to you, I fell in love with you: you little thought then, when I gave your dog into your keeping, I was giving my heart also."

"No," in a low, soft voice, that somehow has a smile in it, "how could I? I am glad you loved me always,—that there was no time when I was indifferent to you. I think love at first sight must be the sweetest and truest of all."

"You have the best of it, then, have you not?" with a rather forced laugh. "Not only did I love you from the first moment I saw you, but you are the only woman I ever really cared for; while you," with some hesitation, and turning his eyes steadily away from hers, "you—of course—did love—once before."

"Never!"

The word comes with startling vehemence from between her lips, the new and brilliant gladness of her face dies from it. A little chill shudder runs through all her frame, turning her to stone; drawing herself with determination from his encircling arms, she stands somewhat away from him.

"It is time I told you my history," she says, in cold, changed tones, through which quivers a ring of pain, while her face grows suddenly as pale, as impenetrable as when they were yet quite strangers to each other. "Perhaps when you hear it you may regret your words of to-night." There is a doubt, a weariness in her voice that almost angers him.

"Nonsense!" he says, roughly, the better to hide the emotion he feels; "don't be romantic; nobody commits murder, or petty larceny, or bigamy nowadays, without being found out; unpleasant mysteries, and skeletons in the closet have gone out of fashion. We put all our skeletons in the *Times* now, no matter how we may have to blush for their nakedness. I don't want to hear anything about your life if it makes you unhappy to tell it."

"It doesn't make me unhappy."

"But it does. Your face has grown quite white, and your eyes are full of tears. Darling, I won't have you distress yourself for me."

"I have not committed any of the crimes you mention, or any other particular crime," returns she, with a very wan little smile. "I have only been miserable ever since I can remember. I have not spoken about myself to any one for years, except one friend; but now I should like to tell you everything."

"But not there!" holding out his hands to her reproachfully. "I don't believe I could hear you if you spoke from such a distance." There is exactly half a yard of sward between them. "If you are willfully bent on driving us both to the verge of melancholy, at least let us meet our fate together."

Here he steals his arm round her once more, and, thus supported, and with her head upon his shoulder, she commences her short story:

"Perhaps you know my father was a Major in the Scots Greys; your brother knew him: his name was Duncan."

Cyril starts involuntarily.

"Ah, you start. You, too, knew him?"

"Yes, slightly."

"Then," in a curiously hard voice, "you knew nothing good of him. Well," with a sigh, "no matter; afterward you can tell me what it was. When I was eighteen he

brought me home from school, not that he wanted my society,—I was rather in his way than otherwise, and it wasn't a good way,—but because he had a purpose in view. One day, when I had been home three months, a visitor came to see us. He was introduced to me by my father. He was young, dark, not ugly, well-mannered," here she pauses as though to recover breath, and then breaks out with a passion that shakes all her slight frame, "but hateful, vile, *loathsome*."

"My darling, don't go on; I don't want to hear about him," implores Cyril, anxiously.

"But I must tell you. He possessed that greatest of all virtues in my father's eyes,—wealth. He was rich. He admired me; I was very pretty then. He dared to say he loved me. He asked me to marry him, and—I refused him."

As though the words are forced from her, she utters them in short, unequal sentences; her lips have turned the color of death.

"I suppose he went then to my father, and they planned it all between them, because at this time he—that is, my father—began to tell me he was in debt, hopelessly, irretrievably in debt. Among others, he mentioned certain debts of (so-called) honor, which, if not paid within a given time, would leave him not only a beggar, but a disgraced one upon the face of the earth; and I believed him. He worked upon my feelings day by day, with pretended tears, with vows of amendment. I don't know," bitterly, "what his share of the bargain was to be, but I do know he toiled for it conscientiously. I was young, unusually so for my age, without companions, romantic, impressionable. It seemed to me a grand thing to sacrifice myself and thereby save my father; and if I would only consent to marry Mr. Arlington he had promised not only to avoid dice, but to give up his habits of intemperance. It is an old story, is it not? No doubt you know it by heart. Crafty age and foolish youth,—what chance had I? One day I gave in, I said I would marry Mr. Arlington, and he sold me to him three weeks later. We were married."

Here her voice fails her again, and a little moan of agonized recollection escapes her. Cyril, clasping her still closer to him, presses a kiss upon her brow. At the sweet contact of his lips she sighs, and two large tears gathering in her eyes roll slowly down her cheeks.

"A week after my wretched marriage," she goes on, "I discovered accidentally that my father had lied to me and tricked me. His circumstances were not so bad as he had represented to me, and it was on the condition that he was to have a

certain income from Mr. Arlington yearly that he had persuaded me to marry him. He did not long enjoy it. He died," slowly, "two months afterward. Of my life with—my husband I shall not tell you; the recital would only revolt you. Only to think of it now makes me feel deadly ill; and often from my dreams, as I live it all over again, I start, cold with horror and disgust. It did not last long, which was merciful: six months after our marriage he eloped with an actress and went to Vienna."

"The blackguard! the scoundrel!" says Cyril, between his teeth, drawing his breath sharply.

"I never saw him again. In a little while I received tidings of his death: he had been stabbed in a brawl in some drinking-house, and only lived a few hours after it. And I was once more free."

She pauses, and involuntarily stretches forth both her hands into the twilight, as one might who long in darkness, being thrust into the full light of day, seeks to grasp and retain it.

"When I heard of his death," she says, turning to Cyril, and speaking in a clear intense tone, "I *laughed*! For the first time for many months, I laughed aloud! I declared my thankfulness in a distinct voice. My heart beat with honest, undisguised delight when I knew I should never see him again, should never in all the years to come shiver and tremble in his hated presence. He was dead, and I was heartily glad of it."

She stops, in terrible agitation. An angry fire gleams in her large gray eyes. She seems for the moment to have utterly forgotten Cyril's nearness, as in memory she lives over again all the detested past. Cyril lays his hand lightly upon her shoulder, her eyes meet his, and then the anger dies from them. She sighs heavily, and then goes on:

"After that I don't know what happened for a long time, because I got brain-fever, and, but for one friend who all through had done his best for me, I should have died. He and his sister nursed me through it, and brought me back to life again; but," mournfully, "they could not restore to me my crushed youth, my ruined faith, my girlish hopes. A few months had changed me from a mere child into a cold, unloving woman."

"Don't say that," says Cyril, gently.

"Until now," returns she, looking at him with eyes full of the most intense affection; "now all is different."

"Beloved, how you have suffered!" he says, pressing her head down again upon his breast, and caressing with loving fingers her rich hair. "But it is all over, and if I can make you so, you shall be happy in the future. And your one friend? Who was he?"

She hesitates perceptibly, and a blush creeping up dyes her pale face crimson.

"Perhaps I know," says Cyril, an unaccountable misgiving at his heart. "Was it Colonel Trant? Do not answer me if you do not wish it," very gently.

"Yes, it was he. There is no reason why I should not answer you."

"No?"

"No."

"He asked Guy to let you have the cottage?"

"Yes; I had wearied of everything, and though by some chance I had come in for all Mr. Arlington's property, I only cared to go away and hide myself somewhere where I should find quiet and peace. I tried several places, but I was always restless until I came here." She smiles faintly.

Cyril, after a pause, says, hesitatingly:

"Cecilia, did you ever care for—for—Trant?"

"Never: did you imagine that? I never cared for any one but you; I never shall again. And you, Cyril," the tears rushing thickly to her eyes, "do you still think you can love me, the daughter of one bad man, the wife of another? I can hardly think myself as good as other women when I remember all the hateful scenes I have passed through."

"I shall treat you to a crowning scene if you ever dare say that again," says Cyril, whose spirits are rising now she has denied having any affection for Trant. "And if every relation you ever had was as bad as bad could be, I should adore you all the same. I can't say any more."

"You needn't," returns she, laughing a little. "Oh, Cyril, how sweet it is to be beloved, to me especially, who never yet (until now) had any love offered me; at

least," correcting herself hastily, "any I cared to accept!"

"But you had a lover?" asks he, earnestly.

"Yes, one."

"Trant again?" letting his teeth close somewhat sharply on his under lip.

"Yes."

"Cecilia, I am afraid you liked that fellow once. Come, confess it."

"No, indeed, not in the way you mean; but in every other way more than I can tell you. I should be the most ungrateful wretch alive if it were otherwise. As a true friend, I love him."

"How dare you use such a word to any one but me?" says Cyril, bending to smile into her eyes. "I warn you not to do it again, or I shall be dangerously and outrageously jealous. Tears in your eyes still, my sweet? Let me kiss them away: poor eyes! surely they have wept enough in their time to permit of their only smiling in the future."

When they have declared over and over again (in different language every time, of course) the everlasting affection each feels for the other, Cecilia says:

"How late it grows! and you are in your evening dress, and without a hat. Have you dined?"

"Not yet; but I don't want any dinner." (By this remark, O reader, you may guess the depth and sincerity of his love.) "We generally dine at half-past seven, but to-night we are to starve until eight to oblige Florence, who has been spending the day somewhere. So I dressed early and came down to see you."

"At eight," says Cecilia, alarmed: "it is almost that now. You must go, or Lady Chetwoode will be angry with me, and I don't want any one belonging to you to think bad thoughts of me."

"There is plenty of time: it can't be nearly eight yet. Why, it is only half an hour since I came."

"It is a quarter to eight," says Cecilia, solemnly. "Do go, and come again as early as you can to-morrow."

"You will be glad to see me?"

"Yes, if you come very early."

"And you are sure, my own darling, that you really love me?"

"Quite, *quite* sure," tenderly.

"What a bore it is having to go home this lovely evening!" discontentedly. "Certainly 'Time was made for slaves.' Well,"—with a sigh,—"good-night. I suppose I must go. I shall run down directly after breakfast. Good-night, my own, my dearest."

"Good-night, Cyril."

"What a cold farewell! I shan't go away at all if you don't say something kinder."

Standing on tiptoe, Cecilia lays her arms around his neck.

"Good-night, my—darling," she whispers, tremulously, and with a last lingering caress they part, as though years were about to roll by before they can meet again.

CHAPTER XVII.

"And, though she be but little, she is fierce."
—Midsummer Night's Dream.

"RENE. Suffer love! A good epithet! I do suffer love, indeed, for I love thee against my will."*—Much Ado About Nothing.*

It is a glorious evening toward the close of September. The heat is intense, delicious, as productive of happy languor as though it was still the very heart of summer.

Outside upon the grass sits Lilian, idly threading daisies into chains, her riotous golden locks waving upon her fair forehead beneath the influence of the wind. At her feet, full length, lies Archibald, a book containing selections from the works of favorite poets in his hand. He is reading aloud such passages as please him and serve to illustrate the passion that day by day is growing deeper for his pretty cousin. Already his infatuation for her has become a fact so palpable that not only has he ceased to deny it to himself, but every one in the house is fully aware of it, from Lady Chetwoode down to the lowest housemaid. Sometimes, when the poem is an old favorite, he recites it, keeping his dark eyes fixed the while upon the fair coquettish face just above him.

Upon the balcony looking down upon them sits Florence, working at the everlasting parrot, with Guy beside her, utterly miserable, his whole attention concentrated upon his ward. For the past week he has been wretched as a man can be who sees a rival well received before his eyes day after day. Miss Beauchamp's soft speeches and tender glances, although many and pronounced, fail to console him, though to others he appears to accept them willingly enough, and to make a generous return, spending—how, he hardly knows, though perhaps *she* does—a good deal of time in her society. He must indeed be devoid of observation if now he cannot pass a strict examination of the hues of that crewel bird (this is not a joke), for wherever he may be, there Miss Beauchamp is sure to show a few minutes later, always with her wools.

Noting all this, be sure Lilian draws from it her own conclusions.

As each clear silvery laugh reaches him from below, Guy frowns and winces at

every fond poetical sentiment that, floated upward by the wind, falls upon his ears.

"See the mountain kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother:
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?"

The words recited by Mr. Chesney with much *empressement* soar upward and gain Guy's ear; Archibald is pointing his quotation with many impassioned glances and much tender emphasis; all of which is rather thrown away upon Lilian, who is not in the least sentimental.

"Read something livelier, Archie," she says, regarding her growing chain with unlimited admiration. "There is rather too much honey about that."

"If you can snub Shelley, I'm sure I don't know what it is you *do* like," returns he, somewhat disgusted. A slight pause ensues, filled up by the faint noise of the leaves of Chesney's volume as he turns them over impatiently.

"'Oh, my Luve's like a red, red, rose,'" he begins, bravely, but Lilian instantly suppresses him.

"Don't," she says: "that's worse. I always think what a horrid 'luve' she must have been. Fancy a girl with cheeks like that rose over there! Fancy writing a sonnet to a milk-maid! Go on, however; the other lines are rather pretty."

"Oh, my love's like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune,"

reads Archie, and then stops.

"It is pretty," he says, agreeably; "but if you had heard the last word persistently called 'chune,' I think it would have taken the edge off your fancy for it. I had an uncle who adored that little poem, but he *would* call the word 'chune,' and it rather spoiled the effect. He's dead," says Mr. Chesney, laying down his book, "but I think I see him now."

"In the pride of youth and beauty,
With a garland on his brow,"

quotes Lilian, mischievously.

"Well, not quite. Rather in an exceedingly rusty suit of evening clothes at the Opera. I took him there in a weak moment to hear the 'late lamented Titiens' sing her choicest song in 'Il Trovatore,'—you know it?—well, when it was over and the whole house was in a perfect uproar of applause, I turned and asked him what he thought of it, and he instantly said he thought it was 'a very pretty "chune"!' Fancy Titiens singing a 'chune'! I gave him up after that, and carefully avoided his society. Poor old chap, he didn't bear malice, however, as he died a year later and left me all his money."

"More than you deserved," says Lilian.

Here Cyril and Taffy appearing on the scene cause a diversion. They both simultaneously fling themselves upon the grass at Lilian's feet, and declare themselves completely used up.

"Let us have tea out here," says Lilian, gayly, "and enjoy our summer to the end." Springing to her feet, she turns toward the balcony, careless of the fact that she has destroyed the lovely picture she made sitting on the greensward, surrounded by her attendant swains.

"Florence, come down here, and let us have tea on the grass," she calls out pleasantly to Miss Beauchamp.

"Do, Florence," says Archibald, entreatingly.

"Miss Beauchamp, you really *must*," from Taffy, decides the point.

Florence, feeling it will look ungracious to refuse, rises with reluctance, and sails down upon the *quartette* below, followed by Sir Guy.

"What an awful time we shall be having at Mrs. Boileau's this hour to-morrow night," says Cyril, plaintively, after a long silence on his part. "I shudder when I think of it. No one who has never spent an evening at the Grange can imagine the agony of it."

"I vow I would rather be broken on the wheel than undergo it," says Archibald. "It was downright mean of Lady Chetwoode to let us all in for it. And yet no

doubt things might have been worse; we ought to feel devoutly thankful old Boileau is well under the sod."

"What was the matter with him?" asks Lilian.

"Don't name him," says Cyril, "he was past all human endurance; my blood runs cold when I remember, I once did know him. I rejoice to say he is no more. His name was Benjamin: and as he was small and thin, and she was large and fat, she (that is, Mrs. Boileau) was always called 'Benjamin's portion.' That's a joke; do you see it?"

"I do: so you don't take any bobs off *my* wages," retorts Miss Chesney, promptly, with a distinct imitation of Kate Stantley. "And yet I cannot see how all this made the poor man odious."

"No, not exactly that, though I don't think a well-brought-up man should let himself go to skin and bone. He was intolerable in other ways. One memorable Christmas day Guy and I dined with him, and he got beastly drunk on the sauce for the plum-pudding. We were young at the time, and it made a lasting impression upon us. Indeed, he was hardly the person to sit next at a prolonged dinner-party, first because he was unmistakably dirty, and——"

"Oh, Cyril!"

"Well, and why not? It is not impossible. Even Popes, it now appears, can be indifferent to the advantages to be derived from soap and water."

"Really, Cyril, I think you might choose a pleasanter subject upon which to converse," says Florence, with a disgusted curl of her short upper lip.

"I beg pardon all round, I'm sure," returns Cyril, meekly. "But Lilian should be blamed: she *would* investigate the matter; and I'm nothing, if not strictly truthful. He was a very dirty old man, I assure you, my dear Florence."

"Mrs. Boileau, however objectionable, seems to have been rather the best of the two: why did she marry him?" asks Lilian.

"Haven't the remotest idea, and, even if I had, I should be afraid to answer any more of your pertinent questions," with an expressive nod in the direction of Florence. "I can only say it was a very feeble proceeding on the part of such a capable person as Mrs. Boileau."

"Just 'another good woman gone wrong,'" suggests Taffy, mildly.

"Quite so," says Archibald, "though she adored him,—she said. Yet he died, some said of fever, others of—Mrs. Boileau; no attention was ever paid to the others. When he *did* droop and die she planted all sorts of lovely little flowers over his grave, and watered them with her tears for ever so long. Could affection farther go?"

"Horrible woman!" says Miss Chesney, "it only wanted that to finish my dislike to her. I hope when I am dead no one will plant flowers on *my* grave: the bare idea would make me turn in it."

"Then we won't do it," says Taffy, consolingly.

"I wish we had a few Indian customs in this country," says Cyril, languidly. "The Suttee was a capital institution. Think what a lot of objectionable widows we should have got rid of by this time; Mrs. Boileau, for instance."

"And Mrs. Arlington," puts in Florence, quietly. An unaccountable silence follows this speech. No one can exactly explain why, but every one knows something awkward has been said. Cyril outwardly is perhaps the least concerned of them all: as he bites languidly a little blade of green grass, a faint smile flickers at the corners of his lips; Lilian is distinctly angry.

"Poor Mrs. Boileau; all this is rather ill-natured, is it not?" asks Florence, gently, rising as though a dislike to the gossip going on around her compels her to return to the house. In reality it is a dislike to damp grass that urges her to flight.

"Shall I get you a chair, Florence?" asks Cyril, somewhat irrelevantly as it seems.

"Pray don't leave us, Miss Beauchamp," says Taffy. "If you will stay on, we will swear not to make any more ill-natured remarks about any one."

"Then I expect silence will reign supreme, and that the remainder of the *conversazione* will be of the deadly-lively order," says Archibald; and, Cyril at this moment arriving with the offered chair, Miss Beauchamp is kindly pleased to remain.

As the evening declines, the midges muster in great force. Cyril and Taffy, being in the humor for smoking,—and having cheroots,—are comparatively speaking happy; the others grow more and more secretly irritated every moment. Florence

is making ladylike dabs at her forehead every two seconds with her cambric handkerchief, and is regretting keenly her folly in not retiring in-doors long ago. Midges sting her and raise uninteresting little marks upon her face, thereby doing irremediable damage for the time being. The very thought of such a catastrophe fills her with horror. Her fair, plump hands are getting spoiled by these blood-thirsty little miscreants; this she notices with dismay, but is ignorant of the fact that a far worse misfortune is happening higher up. A tasteless midge has taken a fancy to her nose, and has inflicted on it a serious bite; it is swelling visibly, and a swelled nose is not becoming, especially when it is set as nearly as nature will permit in the centre of a pale, high-bred, but expressionless face.

Ignorant, I say, of this crowning mishap, she goes on dabbing her brow gently, while all the others lie around her dabbing likewise.

At last Lilian loses all patience.

"Oh! *hang* these midges!" she says, naturally certainly but rather too forcibly for the times we live in. The petulance of the soft tone, the expression used, makes them all laugh, except Miss Beauchamp, who, true to her training, maintains a demeanor of frigid disapproval, which has the pleasing effect of rendering the swelled nose more ludicrous than it was before.

"Have I said anything very *bizarre*?" demands Lilian, opening her eyes wide at their laughter. "Oh!"—recollecting—"did I say 'hang them'? It is all Taffy's fault, he will use schoolboy slang. Taffy, you ought to be ashamed of yourself: don't you see how you have shocked Florence?"

"And no wonder," says Archibald, gravely; "you know we swore to her not to abuse anything for the remainder of this evening, not even these little winged torments," viciously squeezing half a dozen to death as he speaks.

"How are we going to the Grange to-morrow evening?" asks Taffy, presently.

The others have broken up and separated; Cyril and Archibald, at a little distance, are apparently convulsed with laughter over some shady story just being related by the former.

"I suppose," goes on Taffy, "as Lady Chetwoode won't come, we shall take the open traps, and not mind the carriage, the evenings are so fine. Who is to drive who, is the question."

"No; who is to drive poor little I, is the question. Sir Guy, will you?" asks Lilian,

plaintively, prompted by some curious impulse, seeing him silent, handsome, moody in the background. A moment later she could have killed herself for putting the question to him.

"Guy always drives me," says Florence, calmly: "I never go with any one else, except in the carriage with Aunt Anne. I am nervous, and should be miserable with any one I could not quite trust. Careless driving terrifies me. But Guy is never careless," turning upon Chetwoode a face she fondly hopes is full of feeling, but which unfortunately is suggestive of nothing but a midge's bite. The nose is still the principal feature in it.

Placed in this awkward dilemma, Guy can only curse his fate and be silent. How can he tell Florence he does not care for her society, how explain to Lilian his wild desire for hers? He bites his moustache, and, with his eyes fixed gloomily upon the ground, maintains a disgusted silence. Truly luck is dead against him.

"Oh,—that indeed!" says Lilian, and, being a thorough woman, of course makes no allowance for his unhappy position. Evidently,—according to her view of the case,—from his silent acquiescence in Miss Beauchamp's plan, he likes it. No doubt it was all arranged between them early this morning; and she, to have so far forgotten herself as to ask him to drive her! Oh! it is intolerable!

"You are quite right," she says sweetly to Florence, even producing a smile for the occasion, as women will when their hearts are sorest. "There is nothing so depressing as nervousness when driving. Perhaps Archibald will take pity upon me. Archie!" calling out to him, "come here. I want you to do me a great favor,"—with an enchanting smile. "Would it be putting you out dreadfully if I asked you to drive me to Mrs. Boileau's to-morrow evening?"—another smile still more enchanting.

"You really mean it?" asks Archibald, delighted, his dark face lighting, while Guy, looking on helplessly, almost groans aloud. "You know how glad I shall be: I had no idea when I got up this morning such luck was in store for me. *Dear* Mrs. Boileau! if she could only guess how eager I am to start for her *charming* Grange!"

He says this in a laughing tone, but Chetwoode fully understands that, like the famous well, it has truth at the bottom of it.

"It grows late, does it not?" Florence says, rising gracefully. "I think we had better go in-doors. We have left Aunt Anne too long alone."

"Auntie is lying down. Her head is bad," says Lilian; "I was with her just before I came out, and she said she wished to be alone."

"Yes; she can't bear noise," remarks Florence, calmly, but meaningly. "I must go and see how she is." There is the faintest suspicion of an emphasis upon the personal pronoun.

"That will be very kind of you, dear," says Miss Chesney, suavely. "And Florence—would you like anything to rub your poor nose?—cold cream—or glycerine—or that; nurse has all those sorts of things, I'm sure." This is a small revenge of Lilian's, impossible to forego; while enjoying it, she puts on the tenderest air of sympathetic concern, and carefully regards Miss Beauchamp's nose with raised brows of solicitude.

"My nose?" repeats Florence, reddening.

"Yes, dear. One of those unkind little insects has bitten it shamefully, and now it is all pink and swollen. Didn't you know it? I have been feeling so sorry for you for the last ten minutes. It is too bad,—is it not? I hardly think it will be well before dinner, and it is so disfiguring." All this she utters in tones of the deepest commiseration.

Florence wisely makes no reply. She would have borne the tortures of the rack rather than exhibit any vehement temper before Guy; so she contents herself with casting a withering glance upon Lilian,—who receives it with the utmost *sang-froid*,—and, putting her handkerchief up to the wounded member, sweeps into the house full of righteous indignation.

Sir Guy, after lengthened hesitation, evidently makes up his mind to do something, and, with his face full of purpose, follows her. This devotion on his part is more than Lilian—in spite of her suspicions—has bargained for.

"Gone to console his 'sleepy Venus' for the damage done to her 'Phidian nose,'" she says to Taffy, with rather a bitter laugh.

"Little girls should neither quote Don Juan nor say ill-natured things," replies that youth, with an air of lofty rebuke. But Lilian, not being in the mood for even Taffy's playfulness, makes no answer, and walks away to her beloved garden to seek consolation from the flowers.

Whatever Guy's conference with Florence was about, it was short and decisive, as in five minutes he again emerged from the house, and, looking vainly around

him, starts in search of Lilian. Presently, at the end of the long lawn, he sees her.

"Well, has her poor dear nose recovered all its pristine freshness?" she asks him, in a rather reckless tone, as he comes up to her.

"Lilian," says Guy, abruptly, eagerly, taking no notice of this sally,—indeed, scarcely hearing,—"it was all a mistake; I could not speak plainly a moment ago, but I have arranged it all with Florence; and—will you let me drive you to Mrs. Boileau's to-morrow evening?"

"No, thank you," a quick gleam in her large eyes that should have warned him; "I would not make Florence unhappy for the world. Think of her nerves!"

"She will be quite as safe with Cyril—or—your cousin."

"Which cousin?"

"Chesney."

"I think not, because I am going with Archibald."

"You can easily break off with him," anxiously.

"But supposing I do not wish to break off with him?"

"Am I to think, then, you prefer going with your cousin?" in a freezing tone.

"Certainly, I prefer his society to yours, ten thousand times," forcibly; "it was mere idleness made me say I wished to go with you. Had you agreed to my proposition I should probably have changed my mind afterward, so everything is better as it is; I am glad now you did not answer me differently."

"I did not answer you at all," returns Guy, unwisely.

"No, you were *afraid*," returns she, with a mocking laugh that sends the red blood to his forehead.

"What do you mean?" he asks, angrily.

"Nothing. It was foolish my mentioning the subject. We are disputing about a mere trifle. I am going with Archie whatever happens, because I like him, and because I know he is always glad to be with me."

She turns as though to leave him, and Guy impulsively catches her hand to

detain her; as he does so, his eyes fall upon the little white fingers imprisoned in his own, and there, upon one of them—beside his own ring—he sees another,—newer.

"Who gave you that?" he asks, impulsively, knowing well the answer to his question.

"Archibald," removing her hand quietly, but with determination.

A dead silence follows. Then, speaking calmly by a supreme effort, Guy says:

"I suppose so. Are you going to marry your cousin, Lilian?"

"Is it in the capacity of guardian you ask that question?" defiantly. "You should remember I don't acknowledge one."

"Must I understand by that you will accept him, or have accepted him?"

"Certainly not. You told me yesterday you found it impossible to understand me at any time; why seek to do what is beyond your power? However, I don't mind telling you that as yet Archibald has not made me a formal offer of his heart and hand. No doubt"—mockingly—"when he does me the honor to propose to me, he will speak to you on the subject." Then she laughs a little. "Don't you think it is rather absurd arranging matters for poor Archie without his consent? I assure you he has as much idea of proposing to me as the man in the moon."

"If you are not engaged to him you should not wear his ring," severely.

"I am not engaged to you, and I wear your ring. If it is wrong to accept a ring from a man to whom one is not engaged, I think it was very reprehensible of you to give me this," pointing to it.

"With me it is different," Guy is beginning, rather lamely, not being sure of his argument; but Miss Chesney, disdaining subterfuge, interrupts him.

"A thing is either right or wrong," she says, superbly. "I may surely wear either none, or both."

"Then remove both," says Guy, feeling he would rather see her without his, if it must only be worn in conjunction with Chesney's.

"I shan't," returns Lilian, deliberately. "I shall wear both as long as it suits me,—because I adore rings."

"Then you are acting very wrongly. I know there is little use in my speaking to you, once you are bent upon having your own way. You are so self-willed, and so determined."

> "Without a friend, what were humanity,
> To hunt our errors up with a good grace?"

quotes Lilian lightly. "There is no use in your lecturing me, Sir Guy; it does me little good. *You* want *your* way, and I want *mine*; I am not 'self-willed,' but I don't like tyranny, and I always said you were tyrannical."

"You are of course privileged to say what you like," haughtily.

"Very well; then I *shall* say it. One would think I was a baby, the way you—scold—and torment me," here the tears of vexation and childish wrath rise in her eyes; "but I do not acknowledge your authority; I have told you so a hundred times, and I never shall,—never, never, never!"

"Lilian, listen to me——"

"No, I will not. I wonder why you come near me at all. Go back to Florence; she is so calm, so sweet, so—*somnolent*,"—with a sneer,—"that she will not ruffle your temper. As for me, I hate disagreeable people! Why do you speak to me? It does neither of us any good. It only makes you ill-mannered and me thoroughly unhappy."

"Unhappy!"

"Yes," petulantly, "*miserable*. Surely of late you must have noticed how I avoid you. It is nothing but scold, scold, scold, all the time I am with you; and I confess I don't fancy it. You might have known, without my telling you, that I detest being with you!"

"I shall remember it for the future," returns he, in a low voice, falling back a step or two, and speaking coldly, although his heart is beating wildly with passionate pain and anger.

"Thank you," retorts Lilian: "that is the kindest thing you have said to me for many a day."

Yet the moment his back is turned she regrets this rude speech, and all the many others she has given way to during the last fortnight. Her own incivility vexes

her, wounds her to the heart's core, for, however mischievously inclined and quick-tempered she may be, she is marvelously warm-hearted and kindly and fond.

For full five minutes she walks to and fro, tormented by secret upbraidings, and then a revulsion sets in. What does it matter after all, she thinks, with an impatient shrug of her pretty soft shoulders. A little plain speaking will do him no harm,—in fact, may do him untold good. He has been so petted all his life long that a snubbing, however small, will enliven him, and make him see himself in his true colors. (What his true colors may be she does not specify even to herself.) And if he is so devoted to Florence, why, let him then spend his time with her, and not come lecturing other people on matters that don't concern him. Such a fuss about a simple emerald ring indeed! Could anything be more absurd?

Nevertheless she feels a keen desire for reconciliation; so much so that, later on, —just before dinner,—seeing Sir Guy in the shrubberies, walking up and down in deepest meditation,—evidently of the depressing order,—she makes up her mind to go and speak to him. Yes, she has been in the wrong; she will go to him, therefore, and make the *amende honorable*; and he (he is not altogether bad!) will doubtless rejoice to be friends with her again.

So thinking, she moves slowly though deliberately up to him, regarding the while with absolute fervor the exquisite though frail geranium blossom she carries in her hand. It is only partly opened, and is delicately tinted as her own skin.

When she is quite close to her guardian she raises her head, and instantly affects a deliciously surprised little manner at the fact of his unexpected (?) nearness.

"Ah, Sir Guy, you here?" she says, airily, with an apparent consummate forgetfulness of all past broils. "You are just in time: see what a lovely flower I have for you. Is not the color perfect? Is it not sweet?" proffering to him the pale geranium.

"It is," replies he, taking the flower mechanically, because it is held out to him, but hardly looking at it. His face is pale with suppressed anger, his lips are closely set beneath his fair moustache; she is evidently not forgiven. "And yet I think," he says, slowly, "if you knew my opinion of you, you would be the last to offer me a flower."

"And what then is your opinion?" demands Lilian, growing whiter and whiter until all her pretty face has faded to the "paleness o' the pearl." Instinctively she recoils a little, as though some slight blow has touched and shaken her.

"I think you a heartless coquette," returns he, distinctly, in a low tone that literally rings with passion. "Take back your gift. Why should you waste it upon one who does not care to have it?" And, flinging the flower contemptuously at her feet, he turns and departs.

For a full minute Miss Chesney neither stirs nor speaks. When he is quite gone, she straightens herself, and draws her breath sharply.

"Well, I never!" she says, between her little white teeth, which is a homely phrase borrowed from nurse, but very expressive, and with that she plants a small foot viciously upon the unoffending flower and crushes it out of all shape and recognition.

* * * * * * *

Dinner is over, and almost forgotten; conversation flags. Even to the most wakeful it occurs that it must be bordering upon bed-hour.

Lilian, whose nightly habit is to read for an hour or two in her bed before going to sleep, remembering she has left her book where she took off her hat on coming into the house some hours ago, leaves the drawing-room, and, having crossed the large hall, turns into the smaller one that leads to the library.

Midway in this passage one lamp is burning; the three others (because of some inscrutable reason known only to the under-footman) have not been lit: consequently to-night this hall is in semi-darkness.

Almost at the very end of it Miss Chesney finds herself face to face with her guardian, and, impelled by mischief and coquetry, stops short to confront him.

"Well, Sir Guy, have you got the better of your naughty temper?" she asks, saucily. "Fie, to keep a little wicked black dog upon your shoulder for so long! I hope by this time you are properly ashamed of yourself, and that you are ready to promise me never to do it again."

Guy is silent. He is thinking how lovely she is, how indifferent to him, how unattainable.

"Still unrepentant," goes on Lilian, with a mocking smile: "you are a more hardened sinner than ever I gave you credit for. And what is it all about, pray? What has vexed you? Was it my cousin's ring? or my refusing to accompany you to-morrow to Mrs. Boileau's?"

"Both," replies he, feeling compelled to answer. "I still think you should not wear your cousin's ring unless engaged to him."

"Nor yours either, of course," with a frown. "How you do love going over the same ground again and again! Well," determinately, "as I told you before, I shall wear both—do you hear?—just as long as I please. So now, my puissant guardian," with a gesture that is almost a challenge, "I defy you, and dare you to do your worst."

Her tone, as is intended, irritates him; her beauty, her open though childish defiance madden him. Gazing at her in the uncertain light, through which her golden hair and gleaming sapphire eyes shine clearly, he loses all self-control, and in another moment has her in his arms, and has kissed her once, twice, passionately.

Then recollection, all too late, returns, and shocked, horrified at his own conduct, he releases her, and, leaning against the wall with folded arms and lowered eyes, awaits his doom.

Standing where he has left her, pale as a little colorless ghost, with her lips as white as death, and her great eyes grown black through mingled terror and amazement, Lilian regards him silently. She does not move, she scarcely seems to breathe; no faintest sound of anger escapes her. Then slowly—slowly raising her handkerchief, she draws it lightly across her lips, and with a gesture full of contempt and loathing flings it far from her. After which she draws herself up to her extremest height, and, with her head erect and her whole figure suggestive of insulted pride and dignity, she sweeps past him into the library, closing the door quietly behind her.

When the last sound of her footsteps has disappeared, Guy rouses himself as if from a hateful dream, and presses his hand to his forehead. Stooping, he picks up the disdained handkerchief, that lies mournfully in the corner, thrusts it into his bosom, and turning away toward his own quarters, is seen no more that night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley,
And lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy."—BURNS.

All next day Lilian treats him as though to her eyes he is invisible. She bestows upon him none of the usual courtesies of life; she takes no "good-morrow," nor gives one. She is singularly deaf when he speaks; except when common etiquette compels her to return an answer to one or other of his speeches, she is dumb to him, or, when thus compelled, makes an answer in her iciest tones.

At five o'clock they all start for the Grange, Mrs. Boileau being one of those unpleasant people who think they can never see enough of their guests, or that their guests can never see enough of them,—I am not sure which,—and who consequently has asked them to come early, to inspect her gardens and walk through her grounds before dinner.

As the grounds are well worth seeing, and the evening is charming for strolling, this is about the pleasantest part of the entertainment. At least so thinks Lilian, who (seeing Guy's evident depression) is in radiant spirits. So does Archibald, who follows her as her shadow. They are both delighted at everything about the Grange, and wander hither and thither, looking and admiring as they go.

And indeed it is a charming old place, older perhaps than Chetwoode, though smaller and less imposing. The ivy has clambered up over all its ancient walls and towers and battlements, until it presents to the eye a sheet of darkest, richest green, through which the old-fashioned casements peep in picturesque disorder, hardly two windows being in a line.

Inside, steps are to be met with everywhere in the most unexpected places,—curious doors leading one never knows where,—ghostly corridors along which at dead of night armed knights of by-gone days might tramp, their armor clanking,—winding stairs,—and tapestries that tell of warriors brave and maidens fair, long since buried and forgotten.

Outside, the gardens are lovely and rich in blossom. Here, too, the old world

seems to have lingered, the very flowers themselves, though born yesterday, having all the grace and modesty of an age gone by.

Here

> "The oxlips and the nodding violet grow:
> Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
> with sweet musk-roses and with eglantine."

Here too the "nun-like lily" hangs its head, the sweet "neglected wall-flower" blows, the gaudy sunflower glitters, and the "pale jessamine, the white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet," display their charms; while among them, towering over all through the might of its majesty, shines the rose,—"Joy's own flower," as Felicia Hemans sweetly calls it.

Now—being late in the season—the blossom is more scarce, though still the air is heavy with delicate perfume, and the eyes grow drunk with gazing on the beauty of the autumn flowers. Through them goes Lilian, with Archibald gladly following.

All day long he has had her to himself, and she has been so good to him, so evidently pleased and contented with his society alone, that within his breast an earnest hope has risen, so strongly, that he only waits a fitting opportunity to lay his heart and fortune at her feet.

"I can walk no more," says Lilian, at last, sinking upon the grass beneath the shade of a huge beech that spreads its kindly arms above her. "Let us sit here and talk."

Archibald throws himself beside her, and for a few minutes silence reigns supreme.

"Well?" says Lilian, at length, turning lazy though inquisitive eyes upon her companion.

"Well?" says Archibald in return.

"I said you were to talk," remarks Lilian, in an aggrieved tone. "And you have not said one word yet. You ought to know by this time how I dislike silence."

"Blame yourself: I have been racking my brains without success for the last two minutes to try to find something suitable to say. Did you ever notice how, when

one person says to another, 'Come, let us talk,' that other is suddenly stricken with hopeless stupidity? So it is now with me: I cannot talk: I am greatly afraid."

"Well, I can," says Lilian, "and as I insist on your doing so also, I shall ask you questions that require an answer. First, then, did you ever receive a note from me on my leaving the Park, asking you to take care of my birds?"

"Yes."

"And you fed them?"

"Regularly," says Archibald, telling a fearful lie deliberately, as from the day he read that note to this he has never once remembered the feathered friends she mentions, and even now as he speaks has only the very haziest idea of what she means.

"I am glad of that," regarding him searchingly. "It would make me unhappy to think they had been neglected."

"Don't be unhappy, then," returning her gaze calmly and unflinchingly: "they are all right: I took care of that." His manner is truthful in the extreme, his eyes meet hers reassuringly. It is many years since Mr. Chesney first learned the advantage to be derived from an impassive countenance. And now with Lilian's keen blue eyes looking him through and through, he feels doubly thankful that practice has made him so perfect in the art of suppressing his real thoughts. He has also learned the wisdom of the old maxim,—

> "When you tell a lie, tell a good one,
> When you tell a good one, stick to it,"

and sticks to his accordingly.

"I am so pleased!" says Lilian, after a slight pause, during which she tells herself young men are not so wretchedly thoughtless after all, and that Archibald is quite an example to his sex in the matter of good nature. "One of my chiefest regrets on leaving home was thinking how my birds would miss me."

"I am sorry you ever left it."

"So am I, of course. I was very near declining to do so at the last moment. It took Aunt Priscilla a full week to convince me of the error of my ways, and prove to me that I could not live alone with a gay and (as she hinted) wicked bachelor."

"I have never been so unfortunate as to meet her," says Archibald, mildly, "but I would bet any money your Aunt Priscilla is a highly objectionable and interfering old maid."

"No, she is not: she is a very good woman, and quite an old dear in some ways."

"She is an old maid?" raising himself on his elbow with some show of interest.

"Well, yes, she is; but I like old maids," says Lilian, stoutly.

"Oh, she *likes* old maids," says Mr. Chesney, *sotto voce*, sinking back once more into his lounging position. He evidently considers there is nothing more to be said on that head. "And so she wouldn't let you stay?"

"No. You should have seen her face when I suggested writing to you to ask if I might have a suite of rooms for my own use, promising faithfully never to interfere with you in any way. It was a picture!"

"It pained you very much to leave the Park?"

"It was death to me. Remember, it had been my home all my life; every stick and stone about the place was dear to me."

"It was downright brutal, my turning you out," says Archibald, warmly: "I could hate myself when I think of it. But I knew nothing of it, and—I had not seen you then."

"If you had, would you have let me stay on?"

"I think so," returns he, softly, gazing with dangerous tenderness at the delicate rose-tinted face above him. Then, "Even so, I wish you had asked me; I so seldom go near the place, you would have been thoroughly welcome to stay on in it, had you been the ugliest person breathing."

"So I said at the time, but Aunt Priscilla would not hear of it. I am sure I heard enough about the proprieties at that time to last me all my life. When all arguments failed," says Miss Chesney, breaking into a gay laugh, as recollection crowds upon her, "I proposed one last expedient that nearly drove auntie wild with horror. What do you think it was?"

"Tell me."

"I said I would ask your hand in marriage, and so put an end to all slanderous

tongues; that is, if you consented to have me. See what a narrow escape you had," says Lilian, her merriment increasing: "it would have been so awkward to refuse!"

Archibald gazes at her earnestly. He has been through the hands of a good many women in his time, but now confesses himself fairly puzzled. Is her laughter genuine? is it coquetry? or simply amusement?

"Had you ever a proposal, Lilian?" asks he, quietly, his eyes still riveted upon her face.

"No," surprised: "what an odd question! I suppose it is humiliating to think that up to this no man has thought me worth loving. I often imagine it all," says Lilian, confidentially, taking her knees into her embrace, and letting her eyes wander dreamily over to the hills far away behind the swaying trees. "And I dare say some day my curiosity will be gratified. But I do hope he won't write: I should like to *see* him do it. I wouldn't," says Miss Chesney, solemnly, "give a pin for a man who wouldn't go down on his knees to his lady-love."

This last remark under the circumstances is eminently unwise. A moment later Lilian is made aware of it by the fact of Archibald's rising and going down deliberately on his knees before her.

"It can scarcely be news to you to tell you I love you," says he, eagerly. "Lilian, will you marry me?"

"What are you saying?" says Miss Chesney, half frightened, half amused: "you must be going mad! Do get up, Archie: you cannot think how ridiculous you look."

"Tell me you will marry me," entreats that young man, unmoved even by the fact of his appearing grotesque in the eyes of his beloved.

"No; I will not," shaking her head. "Archie, do move: there is the most dreadful spider creeping up your leg."

"I don't care; let him creep," says Archibald, valiantly; "I shan't stir until you give me a kind answer."

"I don't know what to say; and besides I can do nothing but laugh while you maintain your present position. Get up instantly, you foolish boy: you are ruining the knees of your best trousers."

Whether this thought carries weight with Mr. Chesney I know not, but certainly he rises to his feet without further demur.

"You spoke about the Park a few minutes ago," he says, slowly; "you know now you can have it back again if you will."

"But not in that way. Did you think I was hinting?" growing rather red. "No; please don't say another word. I wonder you can be so silly."

"Silly!" somewhat aggrieved; "I don't know what you mean by that. Surely a fellow may ask a woman to marry him without being termed 'silly.' I ask you again now. Lilian, will you marry me?"

"No, no, no, certainly not. I have no intention of marrying any one for years to come,—if ever. I think," with a charming pout, "it is very unkind of you to say such things to me,—and just when we were such good friends too; spoiling everything. I shall never be comfortable in your society again; I'm sure I never should have suspected you of such a thing. If I had——" A pause.

"You would not have come here with me to-day, you mean?" gloomily.

"Indeed I should not. Nothing would have induced me. You have put me out terribly."

"I suppose you like Chetwoode," says Archibald, still more gloomily. Having never been denied anything since his birth, he cannot bring himself to accept this crowning misfortune with becoming grace.

"I like everybody,—except Florence," returns Lilian, composedly.

Then there is another pause, rather longer than the first, and then—after a violent struggle with her better feelings—Miss Chesney gives way, and laughs long and heartily.

"My dear Archibald, don't look so woe-begone," she says. "If you could only see yourself! You look as though every relation you ever had was dead. Why, you ought to be very much obliged to me. Have you never heard Mr. Punch's advice to young men about to marry?"

"I don't want any one's advice; it is late for that, I fancy. Lilian—darling—*darling*—won't you——"

"I won't, indeed," recoiling and waving him back, while feeling for the first time

slightly embarrassed; "don't come a step nearer; nobody ever made love to me before, and I perfectly *hate* it! I hope sincerely no one will ever propose to me again."

"*I* shall!" doggedly; "I shan't give you up yet. You have not thought about it. When you know me better you may change your mind."

"Do not deceive yourself," gently, "and do not be offended. It is not you I have an objection to, it is marriage generally. I have only begun my life, and a husband must be such a bore. Any number of people have told me so."

"Old maids, such as your Aunt Priscilla, I dare say," says Archibald, scornfully. "Don't believe them. I wouldn't bore you: you should have everything exactly your own way."

"I have that now."

"And I will wait for you as long as you please."

"So you may," gayly; "but mind, I don't desire you.

"May I take that as a grain of hope?" demands he, eagerly grasping this poor shadow of a crumb with avidity, only to find later on it is no crumb at all. "Don't be cruel, Lilian: every one thinks differently after a while; you may also. You have said I am not hateful to you; if then you would only promise to think it over ____"

"Impossible," airily: "I never think: it is too fatiguing. So are you, by the bye, just now. I shan't stay with you any longer, lest I should be infected. Good-bye, Archie; when you are in a pleasanter mood you can return to me, but until then adieu."

So saying, she catches her train in one hand and runs away from him fast as her fleet little feet can carry her.

Down the pathway, round under the limes, into another path runs she, where suddenly she finds herself in Taffy's presence.

"Whither away, fair maid?" asks that youth, removing the cigar from his lips that he is enjoying all alone.

"I am running away from Archie. He was so excessively dull and disagreeable that I could not bring myself to waste another moment on him, so I ran away and

left him just *planté là*," says Miss Chesney, with a little foreign gesture and a delicious laugh that rings far through the clear air, and reaches Archibald's ears as he draws nearer.

"Come, I hear footsteps," whispers she, slipping her hand into Taffy's. "Help me to hide from him."

So together they scamper still farther away, until at last they arrive breathless but secure in the shrubberies that surround one side of the house.

When they have quite recovered themselves, it occurs to Taffy that he would like to know all about it.

"What was he saying to you?" asks he *à propos* of Chesney.

"Nothing," promptly.

Taffy, curiously: "Well, certainly that *was* very disagreeable."

Lilian, demurely: "It was."

At this Taffy lays his hands upon her shoulders and gives her a good shake.

"Tell me directly," says he, "what he was saying to you."

"How can I?" innocently; "he says so much and none of it worth repeating."

"Was he making love to you?"

"No. Oh, no," mildly.

"I'm certain he was," with conviction. "And look here, Lil, don't you have anything to do with him: he isn't up to the mark by any means. He is too dark, and there is something queer about his eyes. I once saw a man who had cut the throats of his mother, his grandmother, and all his nearest relations,—any amount of them,—and his eyes were just like Chesney's. Don't marry him, whatever you do."

"I won't," laughing: "I should hate to have my throat cut."

"There's Chetwoode, now," says Taffy, who begins to think himself a very deep and delicate diplomatist. "He is a very decent fellow all round if you like."

"I do like, certainly. It is quite a comfort to know Sir Guy is not indecent."

"Oh, you know what I mean well enough. There's nothing underhand about Chetwoode. By the bye, what have you been doing to him? He is awfully down on his luck all day."

"I!" coldly. "What should I do to Sir Guy?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, but girls have a horrid way of teasing a fellow while pretending to be perfectly civil to him all the time. It is my private opinion," says Mr. Musgrave, mysteriously,—"and I flatter myself I am seldom wrong,—that he is dead spoons on you."

"Really, Taffy!" begins Lilian, angrily.

"Yes, he is: you take my word for it. I'm rather a judge in such matters. Bet you a fiver," says Mr. Musgrave, "he proposes to you before the year is out."

"I wonder, Taffy, how you can be so vulgar!" says Lilian, with crimson cheeks, and a fine show of superior breeding. "I never bet. I forbid you to speak to me on this subject again. Sir Guy, I assure you, has as much intention of proposing to me as I have of accepting him should he do so."

"More fool you," says Taffy, unabashed. "I'm sure he is much nicer than that melancholy Chesney. If I were a girl I should marry him straight off."

"Perhaps he would not marry you," replies Lilian, cuttingly.

"Wouldn't he? he would like a shot, if I were like Lilian Chesney," says Taffy, positively.

"'Like a shot'—what does that mean?" says Miss Chesney, with withering sarcasm. "It is a pity you cannot forget your schoolboy slang, and try to be a gentleman. I don't think you over hear that 'decent fellow' Sir Guy, or even that cut-throat Archibald, use it."

With this parting shaft she marches off overflowing with indignation, leaving Mr. Musgrave lost in wonder at her sudden change of manner.

"What on earth is up with her now?" he asks himself, desperately; but the dressing-bell ringing at this moment disarms thought, and sends him in-doors to prepare for dinner.

Mrs. Boileau has asked no one to meet them except a lank and dreary curate, who is evidently a prime favorite with her. He is an Honorable Mr. Boer, with

nothing attractive about him except a most alarming voice that makes one glance instinctively at his boots under the mistaken impression that the sound must come from them. This is rather unfortunate for the curate, as his feet are not (or rather *are*) his strong point, Nature having endowed them with such a tremendous amount of heel, and so much sole, innocent of instep, as makes them unpleasantly suggestive of sledge-hammers.

He is painfully talkative, and oppressively evangelical, which renders him specially abhorrent to Lilian, who has rather a fancy for flowers and candles and nice little boys in white shirts. He is also undecided whether it is Miss Beauchamp or Miss Chesney he most admires. They have equal fortunes, and are therefore (in his clerical eyes) equally lovely. There is certainly more of Miss Beauchamp, but then there is a vivacity, a—ahem—"go," if one might say so, about Miss Chesney perfectly irresistible. Had one of these rival beauties been an heiress, and the other rich in love's charms, I think I know which one Mr. Boer would have bowed before,—not that I even hint at mercenary motives in his reverence, but as it is he is much exercised in his mind as to which he shall honor with his attentions.

I think Lilian wins the day, because after dinner he bears down upon her determinately, and makes for the fauteuil in which she lies ensconced looking bored and *ennuyée* to the last degree. Dinner has been insipid, the whole evening a mistake; neither Guy nor Archibald will come near her, or even look at her; and now Mr. Boer's meditated attack is the last straw that breaks the camel's back.

"I consider the school-board very much to blame," begins that divine while yet some yards distant, speaking in his usual blatant tones, that never change their key-note, however long they may continue to insult the air.

"So do I," says Lilian, very gently and sweetly, but with such unmistakable haste as suggests a determination on her part to bring the undiscussed subject to an ignominious close. "I quite agree with you; I think them terribly to blame. But I beg your pardon for one moment: I want to ask Mr. Chetwoode a question that has been haunting me for hours."

Rising, she glides away from him over the carpet, leaving Mr. Boer—who takes a long time to understand anything, and could not possibly believe in a rebuff offered to himself in person—watching the tail of her long sweeping gown, and wondering curiously if all the little white frillings beneath it may not have

something to do with a falling petticoat. At this point he pulls himself together with a start, and fears secretly he is growing immodest.

In the meantime Lilian has reached Cyril, who is sitting at a table somewhat apart, gazing moodily at a book containing prints of the chief villages in Wales. He, like herself, is evidently in the last stage of dejection.

Bending over him, she whispers in an awful tone, but with a beaming smile meant to mystify the observant Boer:

"If you don't instantly deliver me from that man I shall make a point of going off into such a death-like swoon as will necessitate my being borne from the room. He is now going to tell me about that miserable school-board all over again, and I can't and won't stand it."

"Poor child," says Cyril, with deepest sympathy; "I will protect you. If he comes a step nearer, I swear to you I will have his blood." Uttering this comforting assurance in the mildest tone, he draws a chair to the table, and together they explore Wales in print.

Then there is a little music, and a good deal of carefully suppressed yawning, and then the carriages are announced and they all bid their hostess good-night, and tell a few pretty lies about the charming evening they have spent, etc.

"Cyril, will you drive me home?" Lilian says to him hurriedly in the hall, while they are being finally cloaked and shawled. As she says it she takes care to avoid his eyes, so she does not see the look of amused scrutiny that lies in them.

"So soon!" he says, tragically. "It was an easy victory! I shall be only too charmed, my dear Lilian, to drive you to the other end of the world if need be."

So they start and drive home together placidly, through the cool, soft night. Lilian is strangely silent, so is Cyril,—the calm beauty of the heavens above them rendering their lips mute.

"Now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest; till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length—
Apparent queen!—unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."

The night is very calm, and rich in stars; brilliant almost as garish day, but bright with that tender, unchanging, ethereal light—clear, yet full of peaceful shadow—that day can never know.

"There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry and light."

Lilian sighs gently as they move rapidly through the still air,—a sigh not altogether born of the night's sweetness, but rather tinged with melancholy. The day has been a failure, and though through all its windings she has been possessed by the spirit of gayety, now in the subdued silence of the night the reaction setting in reduces her to the very verge of tears.

Cyril, too, is very quiet, but *his* thoughts are filled with joy. Lifting his gaze to the eternal vault above him, he seems to see in the gentle stars the eyes of his beloved smiling back at him. A dreamy happiness, an exquisite feeling of thankfulness, absorb him, making him selfishly blind to the sadness of his little companion.

"How silent you are!" Lilian says, at length, unable to endure her tormenting reverie any longer.

"Am I?" smiling. "I was thinking of some lines I read yesterday: the night is so lovely it recalls them. Of course they are as well known to you as to me; but hear them:

"How beautiful is the night!
A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor streak, nor stain,
Breaks the serene of heaven:
In full-orb'd glory yonder moon divine

Rolls through the dark-blue depths."

"Yes, they are pretty lines: they are Southey's, I think," says Lilian, and then she sighs again, and hardly another word is spoken between them until they reach home.

As they pull up at the hall-door, Guy, who has arrived a little before them, comes forward, and, placing one foot upon the step of Cyril's T-cart, takes Lilian in his arms and lifts her to the ground. She is so astonished at the suddenness of this demonstration on his part that she forgets to make any protest, only—she turns slowly and meaningly away from him, with lowered eyes and with averted head.

With a beseeching gesture he detains her, and gains for a moment her attention. He is looking pale, miserable; there is an expression of deep entreaty in his usually steady blue eyes.

"Lilian, forgive me," he whispers, anxiously, trying to read her face by the moonlight: "I have been sufficiently punished. If you could guess all I have endured to-day through your coldness, your scorn, you would say so too. Forgive me."

"Impossible," returns she, haughtily, in clear tones, and, motioning him contemptuously to one side, follows Cyril into the house.

Inside they find Lady Chetwoode not only up and waiting for them, but wide awake. This latter is a compliment so thoroughly unexpected as to rouse within them feelings of the warmest gratitude.

"What, Madre! you still here?" says Cyril. "Why, we imagined you not only out of your first but far into your second beauty sleep by this time."

"I missed you all so much I decided upon waiting up for you," Lady Chetwoode answers, smiling benignly upon them all; "besides, early in the evening—just after you left—I had a telegram from dear Mabel, saying she and Tom will surely be here to dinner to-morrow night. And the idea so pleased me I thought I would stay here to impart my news and hear yours."

Every one in the room who knows Mrs. Steyne here declares his delight at the prospect of so soon seeing her again.

"She must have made up her mind at the very last moment," says Guy. "Last week she was undecided whether she should come at all. She hates leaving

London."

"She must be at Steynemore now," remarks Cyril.

"Lilian, my dear child, how pale you are!" Lady Chetwoode says, anxiously taking Lilian's hand and rubbing her cheeks gently with loving fingers. "Cold, too! The drive has been too much for you, and you are always so careless about wraps. I ordered supper in the library an hour ago. Come and have a glass of wine before going to bed."

"No, thank you, auntie: I don't care for anything."

"Thank you, Aunt Anne, I think I will take something," interposes Florence, amiably; "the drive was long. A glass of sherry and one little biscuit will, I feel sure, do me good."

Miss Beauchamp's "one little biscuit," as is well known, generally ends in a substantial supper.

"Come to the library, then," says Lady Chetwoode, and still holding Lilian's hand, draws it within her arm, and in her own stately Old-World fashion leads her there.

When they have dismissed the butler, and declared their ability to help one another, Lady Chetwoode says pleasantly:

"Now tell me everything. Had you an agreeable evening?"

"Too agreeable!" answers Cyril, with suspicious readiness: "I fear it will make all other entertainments sink into insignificance. I consider a night at Mrs. Boileau's the very wildest dissipation. We all sat round the room on uneasy chairs and admired each other: it would perhaps have been (if *possible*) a more successful amusement had we not been doing the same thing for the past two months,—some of us for years! But it was tremendously exciting all the same."

"Was there no one to meet you?"

"My dear mother, how could you suspect Mrs. Boileau of such a thing!"

"Yes,—there was a Mr. Boer," says Florence, looking up blandly from her chicken, "a man of very good family,—a clergyman——"

"No, a curate," interrupts Cyril, mildly.

"He made himself very agreeable," goes on Florence, in her soft monotone, that nothing disturbs. "He was so conversational, and so well read. You liked him, Lilian?"

"Who? Mr. Boer? No; I thought him insufferable,—so dull,—so prosy," says Lilian, wearily. She has hardly heard Miss Beauchamp's foregoing remarks.

"His manner, certainly, is neither frivolous nor extravagant," Florence returns, somewhat sharply, "but he appeared sensible and earnest, rare qualities nowadays."

"Did I hear you say he wasn't extravagant?" breaks in Cyril, lazily, purposely misconstruing her application of the word. "My dear Florence, consider! Could anything show such reckless extravagance as the length of his coat-tails? I never saw so much superfluous cloth in any man's garment before. It may be saintly, but it was cruel waste!"

"How did you amuse yourselves?" asks Lady Chetwoode, hastily, forestalling a threatening argument.

"As best we might. Lilian and I amused each other, and I think we had the best of it. If our visit to the Grange did no other good, it at least awoke in me a thorough sense of loyalty: I cannot tell you," with a glance at Lilian, "how often I blessed the 'Prints of Wales' this night."

"Oh, Cyril, what a miserable joke!" says Lilian, smiling, but there is little warmth in her smile, and little real merriment in her usually gay tones. All this, Cyril—who is sincerely fond of her—notes with regret and concern.

"Guy, give Lilian a glass of Moselle," says his mother at this moment; "it is what she prefers, and it will put a little color into her cheeks: she looks fatigued." As she says this she moves across the room to speak to Florence, leaving Lilian standing alone upon the hearth-rug. Guy, as desired, brings the wine and hands it to Lilian.

"No, thank you," turning from him coldly. "I do not wish for it."

"Nevertheless, take it," Guy entreats, in a low voice: "you are terribly white, and," touching her hand gently, "as cold as death. Is it because *I* bring it you will not have it? Will you take it from Taffy?"

A choking sensation rises in Miss Chesney's throat; the unbidden tears spring to

her eyes; it is by a passionate effort alone she restrains them from running down her cheeks. As I have said before, the day had been a distinct failure. She will not speak to Guy, Archibald will not speak to her. A sense of isolation is oppressing and weighing her down. She, the pet, the darling, is left lonely, while all the others round her laugh and jest and accept the good the gods provide. Like a spoilt child, she longs to rush to her nurse and have a good cry within the shelter of that fond woman's arms.

Afraid to speak, lest her voice betray her, afraid to raise her eyes, lest the tell-tale tears within them be seen, she silently—though against her will—takes the glass Sir Guy offers, and puts it to her lips, whereupon he is conscious of a feeling of thankfulness,—the bare fact of her accepting anything at his hands seeming to breathe upon him forgiveness.

Lilian, having finished her Moselle, returns him the glass silently. Having carried it to the table, he once more glances instinctively to where he has left her standing. She has disappeared. Without a word to any one, she has slipped from the library and sought refuge in her own room.

CHAPTER XIX.

"This much, however, I may add; her years
Were ripe, they might make six-and-twenty springs;
But there are forms which Time to touch forbears,
And turns aside his scythe to vulgar things."—*Don Juan.*

Next day creates but little change in Lilian's demeanor. So far as Guy is concerned, her manner is still frozen and unrelenting. She shows no sign of a desire to pardon, and Chetwoode noting this grows hardened, and out-Herods Herod in his imitation of her coldness.

Archibald, on the contrary, gives in almost directly. Finding it impossible to maintain his injured bearing beyond luncheon, he succumbs, and, throwing himself upon her mercy, is graciously received and once more basks in the full smiles of beauty. At heart Lilian is glad to welcome him back, and is genial and sweet to him as though no ugly *contretemps* had occurred between them yesterday.

Mabel Steyne being expected in the evening, Lady Chetwoode is especially happy, and takes no heed of minor matters, or else her eldest son's distraction would surely have claimed her attention. But Mabel's coming is an event, and a happy one, and at half-past seven, pleased and complacent, Lady Chetwoode is seated in her drawing-room, awaiting her arrival. Lilian and Florence are with her, and one or two of the others, Guy among them. Indeed, Mrs. Steyne's coming is a gratification the more charming that it is a rarity, as she seldom visits the country, being strongly addicted to city pursuits and holding country life and ruralism generally in abhorrence.

Just before dinner she arrives; there is a little flutter in the hall, a few words, a few steps, and then the door is thrown open, and a young woman, tall, with dark eyes and hair, a nose slightly celestial, and a very handsome figure, enters. She walks swiftly up the room with the grand and upright carriage that belongs to her, and is followed by a tall, fair man, indolent though good to look at, with a straw-colored moustache, and as much whisker as one might swear by.

"Dear auntie, I have come!" says Mrs. Steyne, joyfully, which is a fact so

obvious as to make the telling of it superfluous.

"Mabel, my dear, how glad I am to see you!" exclaims Lady Chetwoode, rising and holding out her arms to her. A pretty pink flush comes to life in the old woman's cheeks making her appear ten years younger, and adding a thousand charms to her sweet old face.

They kiss each other warmly, the younger woman with tender *empressement*.

"It is kind of you to say so," she says, fondly. "And you, auntie—why, bless me, how young you look! it is disgraceful. Presently I shall be the auntie, and you the young and lovely Lady Chetwoode. Darling auntie, I am delighted to be with you again!"

"How do you do, Tom?" Lady Chetwoode says, putting her a little to one side to welcome her husband, but still holding her hand. "I do hope you two have come to stay a long time in the country."

"Yes, until after Christmas, so you will have time to grow heartily sick of us," says Mrs. Steyne. "Ah, Florence."

She and Florence press cheeks sympathetically, as though no evil passages belonging to the past have ever occurred between them. And then Lady Chetwoode introduces Lilian.

"This is Lilian," she says, drawing her forward. "I have often written to you about her."

"My supplanter," remarks Mabel Steyne, turning with a smile that lights up all her handsome brunette face. As she looks at Lilian, fair and soft and pretty, the rather *insouciant* expression that has grown upon her own during her encounter with Florence fades, and once more she becomes her own gay self. "I hope you will prove a better companion to auntie than I was," she says, with a merry laugh, taking and pressing Lilian's hand. Lilian instinctively returns the pressure and the laugh. There is something wonderfully fetching in Mrs. Steyne's dark, brilliant eyes.

"She is the best of children!" Lady Chetwoode says, patting Lilian's shoulder; "though indeed, my dear Mabel, I saw no fault in you."

"Of course not. Have you noticed, Miss Chesney, Lady Chetwoode's greatest failing? It is that she will not see a fault in any one."

"She never mentioned your faults, at all events," Lilian answers, smiling.

"I hope your baby is quite well?" Florence asks, calmly, who is far too well bred ever to forget her manners.

"The darling child,—yes,—I hope she is well," Lady Chetwoode says, hastily, feeling as though she has been guilty of unkindness in not asking for the baby before. Miss Beauchamp possesses to perfection that most unhappy knack of placing people in the wrong position.

"Quite, thank you," answering Lady Chetwoode instead of Florence, while a little fond glance that is usually reserved for the nursery creeps into her expressive eyes. "If you admired her before, you will quite love her now. She has grown so big and fat, and has such dear little sunny curls all over her head!"

"I like fair babies," says Lilian.

"Because you are a fair baby yourself," says Cyril.

"She can say Mammy and Pappy quite distinctly, and I have taught her to say Auntie very sweetly," goes on Mrs. Steyne, wrapt in recollection of her offspring's genius. "She can say 'cake' too, and—and that is all, I think."

"You forget, Mabel, don't you?" asks her husband, languidly. "You underrate the child's abilities. The other day when she was in a frenzy because I would not allow her to pull out my moustache in handfuls she said——"

"She was never in a frenzy, Tom," indignantly: "I wonder how you can say so of the dear angel."

"Was she not? if *you* say so, of course I was mistaken, but at the time I firmly believed it was temper. At all events, Lady Chetwoode, on that momentous occasion she said, 'Nanna warragood,' without a mistake. She is a wonderful child!"

"Don't pay any attention to him, auntie," with a contemptuous shrug. "He is himself quite idiotic about baby, so much so that he is ashamed of his infatuation. I shall bring her here some day to let you see her."

"You must name the day. Would next Monday suit you?"

"You needn't press the point," Tom Steyne says, warningly: "but for me, the child and its nurse would be in the room at this moment. Mab and I had a stand-up

fight about it in the hall just before starting, and it was only after a good deal of calm though firm expostulation I carried the day. I represented to her that as a rule babies are not invited out to dine at eight o'clock at night, and that children of her age are generally more attractive to their mothers than to any one else."

"Barbarian!" says Lady Chetwoode.

"How have you been getting on in London, Mab," asks Cyril. "Made any new conquests?"

"Several," replies Tom; "though I think on the whole she is going off. She did not make up her usual number this season. She has, however, on her list two nice boys in the F. O., and an infant in the Guards. She is rather unhappy about them, as she cannot make up her mind which it is she likes best."

"Wrong, Tom. Yesterday I made it up. I like the 'infant' best. But what really saddens me is that I am by no means sure he likes *me* best. He is terribly fond of Tom, and I sometimes fear thinks him the better fellow of the two."

At this moment the door opens and Taffy comes in.

"Why! Here is my 'infant,'" exclaims Mabel, surprised. "Dear Mr. Musgrave, I had no idea I should meet you here."

"My dear Mrs. Steyne! I had no idea such luck was in store for me. I am so glad to see you again! Lilian, why didn't you break it to me? Joyful surprises are sometimes dangerous."

"I thought you knew. We have been discussing 'Mabel's' coming," with a shy smile, "all the past month."

"But how could I possibly guess that the 'Mabel' who was occupying everybody's thoughts could be my Mrs. Steyne?"

"Ours!" murmurs Tom, faintly.

"Yes, mine," says Taffy, who is not troubled with over-much shyness.

"Mr. Musgrave is your cousin?" Mabel asks, turning to Lilian.

"No, I am her son," says Taffy: "you wouldn't think it—would you? She is a good deal older than she looks, but she gets herself up wonderfully. She is not a bad mother," reflectively, "when one comes to think of it."

"I dare say if you spoke the truth you would confess her your guardian angel," says Mabel, letting a kindly glance fall on pretty Lilian. "She takes care of you, no doubt."

"And such care," answers Lilian; "but for me I do believe Taffy would have gone to the bad long ago."

"'Taffy'! what a curious name. So quaint,—and pretty too, I think. May I," with a quick irrepressible glance, that is half fun, half natural coquetry, "call you Taffy?"

"You may call me anything you like," returns that young gentleman, with the utmost *bonhommie*

> "Call me Daphne, call me Chloris,
> Call me Lalage, or Doris,
> Only—*only*—call me thine!"

"It is really mortifying that I can't," says Mrs. Steyne, while she and the others all laugh.

"Sir," says Tom Steyne, "I would have you remember the lady you are addressing is my wife."

Says Taffy, reproachfully:

"Do you think I don't remember it,—to my sorrow?"

They have got down to dinner and as far as the fish by this time, so are all feeling friendly and good-natured.

"Tell you what you'll do, Mab," says Guy. "You shall come over here next week to stay with us, and bring baby and nurse with you,—and Tom, whether he likes it or not. We can give him as much good shooting as will cure him of his laziness."

"Yes, Mabel, indeed you must," breaks in Lady Chetwoode's gentle voice. "I want to see that dear child very badly, and how can I notice all her pretty ways unless she stays in the house with me?"

"Say yes, Mrs. Steyne," entreats Taffy: "I shall die of grief if you refuse."

"Oh, that! Yes, auntie, I shall come, thank you, if only to preserve Mr.—Taffy's

life. But indeed I shall be delighted to get back to the dear old home for a while; it is so dull at Steynemore all by ourselves."

"Thank you, darling," says Tom, meekly.

After dinner Mrs. Steyne, who has taken a fancy to Lilian, seats herself beside her in the drawing-room and chatters to her unceasingly of all things known and unknown. Guy, coming in later with the other men, sinks into a chair near Mabel, and with Miss Beauchamp's Fanchette upon his knee employs himself in stroking it and answering Mabel's numerous questions. He hardly looks at Lilian, and certainly never addresses her, in which he shows his wisdom.

"No, I can't bear the country," Mrs. Steyne is saying. "It depresses me."

"In the spring surely it is preferable to town," says Lilian.

"Is it? I suppose so, because I have so often heard it; but my taste is vitiated. I am not myself out of London. Of course Tom and I go somewhere every year, but it is to please fashion we go, not because we like it. You will say I exaggerate when I tell you that I find music in the very roll of the restless cabs."

Lilian tells her that she will be badly off for music of that kind at Steynemore; but perhaps the birds will make up for the loss.

"No, you will probably think me a poor creature when I confess to you I prefer Albani to the sweetest nightingale that ever trilled; that I simply detest the discordant noise made by the melancholy lamb; that I think the cuckoo tuneless and unmusical, and that I find no transcendent pleasure in the cooing of the fondest dove that ever mourned over its mate. These beauties of nature are thrown away upon me. Woodland groves and leafy dells are to me suggestive of suicide, and make me sigh for the 'sweet shady side of Pall Mall.' The country, in fact, is lonely, and my own society makes me shudder. I like noise and excitement, and the babel of tongues."

"You forget the flowers," says Lilian, triumphantly.

"No, my dear; experience has taught me I can purchase them cheaper and far finer than I can grow them for myself. I am a skeptic, I know," smiling. "I will not try to convert you to my opinion."

"Certainly I can see advantages to be gained from a town life," says Lilian, thoughtfully, leaning her elbow on a small table near her, and letting her chin

sink into her little pink palm. "One has a larger circle of acquaintances. Here everything is narrowed. One lives in the house with a certain number of persons, and, whether one likes them or the reverse, one must put up with them. There is no escape. Yes,"—with an audible and thoroughly meant sigh,—"that is very sad."

This little ungracious speech, though uttered in the most innocent tone, goes home (as is intended) to Guy's heart. He conceals, however, all chagrin, and pulls the ears of the sleepy snowball he is caressing with an air of the calmest unconcern.

"You mention a fact," says Mrs. Steyne, the faintest inflection of surprise in her manner. "But you, at least, can know nothing of such misery. Chetwoode is famous for its agreeable people, and you,—you appear first favorite here. For the last hour I have been listening, and I have heard only 'Lilian, look at this,' or, 'Lilian, listen to that,' or 'Lilian, child, what was it you told me yesterday?' You seem a great pet with every one here."

Lilian laughs.

"Not with every one," she says.

"No?"—raising her straight dark brows. "Is there then an enemy in the camp? Not Cyril, surely?"

"Oh, no, not Cyril."

Their voices involuntarily have sunk a little, and, though any one near can still hear distinctly, they have all the appearance of people carrying on a private conversation.

"Guy?"

Lilian is silent. Guy's face, as he still strokes the dog dreamily, has grown haughty in the extreme. He, like Mabel, awaits her answer.

"What?" says Mrs. Steyne, in an amused tone, evidently treating the whole matter as a mere jest. "So you are not a pet with Guy! How horrible! I cannot believe it. Surely Guy is not so ungallant as to have conceived a dislike for you? Guy, do you hear this awful charge she is bringing against you? Won't you refute it? Dear boy, how stern you look!"

"Do I? I was thinking of something disagreeable."

"Of me?" puts in Lilian, *sotto voce*, with a faint laugh tinged with bitterness. "Why should you think what I say so extraordinary? Did you ever know a guardian like his ward, or a ward like her guardian? I didn't—especially the latter. They always find each other *such* a mistake!"

Sir Guy, raising his head, looks full at Lilian for a moment; his expression is almost impossible to translate; then, getting up, he crosses the room deliberately and seats himself beside Florence, who welcomes him with one of her conventional smiles that now has something like warmth in it.

"I think you are a very cruel little girl," says Mrs. Steyne, gently, not looking at Lilian, and then turns the conversation in another channel.

"You will stay in the country until after Christmas?" says Lilian, somewhat hastily.

"Yes; something has gone wrong with our steward's accounts, and Tom is dissatisfied with him. So he has been dismissed, and we shall stay on here until we please ourselves with another."

"I am glad you live so near. Three miles is only a walk, after all."

"In good weather a mere nothing, though for my own part I am not addicted to exercise of any sort: I believe, however, Steynemore's proximity to Chetwoode was one of my chief reasons for marrying Tom."

"I am glad of any reason that made you do so. If you won't mind my saying it, I will tell you I like you very much,"—with a slight blush.

"I am very charmed to hear it," says Mrs. Steyne, heartily, whose liking for Lilian has grown steadily: "I should be very much disappointed if you didn't. I foresee we shall be great friends, and that you and auntie will make me fall quite in love with Tom's native soil. But"—naively—"you must not be unkind to poor Guy."

CHAPTER XX.

"*Orl.*—Is't possible that on so little acquaintance
You should like her? that, but seeing,
You should love her?"—*As You Like It.*

Four weeks have flown by swiftly, with ungracious haste,—as do all our happiest moments,—leaving their mark behind them. In their train Taffy has passed away from Chetwoode, and all in the house have mourned his departure openly and sincerely. Miss Chesney for two whole days was inconsolable, and cried her pretty eyes very nearly out; after which she recovered, and allowed herself to find consolation in the thought that he has promised to return to them for a fortnight at Christmas-tide.

"Summer was dead, and Autumn was expiring,
And infant Winter laughed upon the land
All cloudlessly and cold."

The men spend half their days wondering if it will be a good hunting-season, the women are wrapt in delicious dreams of fur and velvet.

At The Cottage all the roses have fluttered into their graves, but in their place a sweet flower has bloomed. Cecilia's eyes have grown brighter, gladder, her step firmer, her cheek richer in the tint that rivals the peach. In her calm home she has but one thought, one hope, and that is Cyril. She has forbidden him to mention their engagement to Lady Chetwoode, so as yet the sweet secret is all their own.

Florence has gained a *bona fide* admirer, Mr. Boer—after much deliberation—having, for private reasons, decided in favor of Miss Beauchamp and her fifteen thousand pounds. But not for Mr. Boer, however well connected, or however fondly cherished by a rich and aged uncle, can Miss Beauchamp bring herself to resign all hope of Guy and Chetwoode.

At Steynemore, Mabel and her baby are laughing the happy hours away; though, to speak more accurately, it is at Chetwoode most of them are spent. At least every second week they drive over there, to find their rooms ready, and stay on well content to talk and crow at "auntie," until the handsome head of that dearest

of old ladies is fairly turned.

Lilian has of course gone over heart and mind to Miss Steyne, who rewards her affection by practicing upon her the most ingenious tortures. With a craftiness terrible in one so young, she bides her opportunity and then pulls down all her friend's golden hair; at other times she makes frantic efforts at gouging out her eyes, tries to cut her eye-teeth upon her slender fingers, and otherwise does all in her power to tear her limb from limb. She also appears to find infinite amusement in scrambling up and down Miss Chesney's unhappy knees, to the detriment of that dainty lady's very dainty gowns, and shows symptoms of fight when she refuses to consume all such uninviting remnants of cake and bonbons as lie heavy on her hands.

Altogether Lilian has a lively time of it with Mabel's heiress, who, nevertheless, by right of her sweet witcheries and tender baby tricks, has gained a fast hold upon her heart.

But if Baby knows a slave in Lilian, Lilian knows a slave in some one else. Up to this Archibald has found it impossible to tear himself away from her loved presence; though ever since that fatal day at the Grange he has never dared speak openly to her of his attachment. Day by day his passion has grown stronger, although with every wind her manner toward him seems to vary,—now kind, to-morrow cold, anon so full of treacherous fancies and disdainful glances as to make him wonder whether in truth it is hatred and not love for her that fills his heart to overflowing. She is

> "One of those pretty, precious plagues, which haunt
> A lover with caprices soft and dear,
> That like to make a quarrel, when they can't
> Find one, each day of the delightful year;
> Bewitching, torturing, as they freeze or glow,
> And—what is worst of all—won't let you go."

Between her and Guy a silent truce has been signed. They now converse with apparent geniality; at times they appear, to outsiders, even to affect each other's society; but secretly they still regard each other with distrust, and to them alone is known the frailty of the coating that lies over their late hostility.

It is three o'clock, and the day for a wonder is fine, all the past week having been sullen and full of a desire to rain. Now the clouds have disappeared, and the blue

sky dotted with tiny flakes of foam-like vapor is overhead. The air is crispy, and, though cold, full of life and invigorating power.

"I shall go for a walk," says Lilian, appearing suddenly in the billiard-room, looking like a little northern fairy, so encased is she in velvet and dark fur. Upon her yellow hair is resting the most coquettish of fur caps, from beneath which her face smiles fairer and fresher for its rich surroundings. The two men she addresses look up, and let the honest admiration they feel for her beauty betray itself in their eyes.

Outside of the window, seated on the sill, which is some little distance from the ground, is Archibald, smoking. Archibald, as a rule, is always smoking. Inside is Guy, also indulging in a cigar, and disputing volubly about some knotty point connected with guns or cartridges, or the proper size of shot to be used for particular birds, I cannot remember exactly what; I do remember, however, that the argument completely falls through when Lilian makes her appearance.

"Were there ever such lazy men?" says Miss Lilian, scornfully. "Did all the shooting with Tom Steyne last week do you up so completely? I warned you, if you will be pleased to recollect, that there wasn't much work in you. Well, I am going to the wood. Who will come with me?"

"I will," say Guy and Archibald, in a breath. And then ensues a pause.

"*Embarras de richesses*," says Miss Chesney, with a gay laugh and a slight elevation of her brows. "You shouldn't all speak at once. Now, which shall I choose?" Then, impelled by the spirit of mischief that always possesses her when in her guardian's presence, she says, "It would be a shame to take you out, Sir Guy, would it not? You seem so cozy here,"—glancing at the fire,—"while Archibald is evidently bent on exercise."

"As you please, of course," says Guy, with well-feigned indifference, too well feigned for Miss Chesney's liking; it angers her, and awakes within her a desire to show how little she heeds it. Her smile ripens and rests alone on Archibald, insensibly her manner toward her cousin takes a warmer tinge; going over to the window, she lays her hand lightly on his shoulder, and, leaning over, looks at the ground beneath.

"Could I get out there?" she asks, a little fearfully, though in truth at another time she would regard with disdain the person who should tell her she could not jump so small a distance. "It would be so much better than going all the way round."

"Of course you can," returns he, dropping instantly downward, and then looking up at her; "it is no height at all."

"It looks high from here, does it not?" still doubtful. "I should perhaps break my neck if I tried to jump it. No," regretfully, "I must go round, unless, indeed,"—with another soft glance meant for Guy's discomfiture, and that alas! does terrible damage to Archibald's heart,—"you think you could take me down."

"I know I could," replies he, eagerly.

"You are sure?" hesitating. "I am very heavy, mind."

Archibald laughs and holds out his arms, and in another moment has taken her, slender fairy that she is, and deposited her safely on the ground.

Sir Guy, who has been an unwilling though fascinated spectator of this scene, grows pale and turns abruptly aside as Archibald and Lilian, laughing gayly, disappear into the shrubberies beyond.

But once out of sight of the billiard-room windows, Miss Chesney's gayety cruelly deserts her. She is angry with Guy for reasons she would rather die than acknowledge even to herself, and she is indignant with Archibald for reasons she would be puzzled to explain at all, while hating herself for what she is pleased to term her frivolity, such as jumping out of windows as though she were still a child, and instead of being a full-grown young woman! What must Gu——what would any one think of her?

"It was awfully good of you to choose me," says Archibald, after a few minutes, feeling foolishly elated at his success.

"For what?" coldly.

"For a walk."

"Did I choose you?" asks Lilian, in a tone that should have warned so worldly-wise a young man as Chesney. He, however, fails to be warned, and rushes wildly on his destruction.

"I thought so," returns he, growing perplexed: "Chetwoode was quite as anxious to accompany you as I was, and you decided in my favor."

"Simply because you were outside the window, and looked more like moving than he did."

"He was considerably sold for all that," says this foolish Archibald, with an idiotic laugh, that under the circumstances is madness. Miss Chesney freezes.

"Sold? how?" she asks, with a suspicious thirst for knowledge. "I don't understand."

The continued iciness of her tone troubles Archibald.

"You seem determined not to understand," he says, huffily. "I only mean he would have given a good deal to go with you, until you showed him plainly you didn't want him."

"I never meant to show him anything of the kind. You quite mistake."

"Do I?" with increasing wrath. "Well, I think when a woman tells a fellow she thinks it would be a pity to disturb him, it comes to very much the same thing in the end. At all events, Chetwoode took it in that light."

"How silly you can be at times, Archibald!" says Lilian, promptly: "I really wish you would not take up such absurd notions. Sir Guy did *not* look at it in that light; he knows perfectly well I detest long walks, and that I seldom go for one, so he did not press the point. And in fact I think I shall change my mind now: walking is such a bore, is it not?"

"Are you not coming then?" stopping short, and growing black with rage: "you don't seem to know your own mind for two minutes together, or else you are trying to provoke me! First you ask me to go to the wood with you, and now you say you will not go. What am I to think of it?"

"I wouldn't be rude, if I were you," says Miss Chesney, calmly, "and I wouldn't lose my temper. You make me absolutely uncomfortable when you let that wicked look grow upon your face. One would think you would like to murder me. Do try to be amiable! And as for trying to provoke you, I should not take the trouble! No, I shall not go with you now, certainly: I shall go with Cyril," pointing to where Cyril is sauntering toward the entrance to the wood at some short distance from them.

Without waiting to address another word to the discomfited Archibald, she runs to Cyril and slips her hand within his arm.

"Will you take me with you wherever you are going?" she says, smiling confidently up into his face.

"What a foolish question! of course I am only too glad to get so dear a little companion," replies he, smothering a sigh very successfully; though, to be honest, he is hardly enraptured at the thought of having Lilian's (or any one's) society just now. Nevertheless he buries his chagrin, and is eminently agreeable to her as they stroll leisurely in the direction of The Cottage.

When they come up to it Lilian pauses.

"I wish this wonderful goddess would come out. I want to see her quite close," she says, peeping through the hedge. "At a distance she is beautiful: I am always wondering whether 'distance lends enchantment to the view.'"

"No, it does not," absently. He is looking over the hedge.

"You seem to know all about it," archly: "shall I ask how? What lovely red berries!" suddenly attracted by some coloring a few yards away from her. "Do you see? Wait until I get some."

Springing on to a bank, she draws down to her some bunches of mountain-ash berry, that glow like live coals in the fading greenery around them, and having detached her prize from the parent stem, prepares to rejoin her companion, who is somewhat distant.

"Why did you not ask me to get them for you?" he asks, rousing himself from his reverie: "how precipitate you always are! Take care, child: that bank is steep."

"But I am a sure-footed little deer," says Miss Chesney, with a saucy shake of her pretty head, and, as she speaks, jumps boldly forward.

A moment later, as she touches the ground, she staggers, her right ankle refuses to support her, she utters a slight groan, and sinks helplessly to the ground.

"You have hurt yourself," exclaims Cyril, kneeling beside her. "What is it, Lilian? Is it your foot?"

"I think so," faintly: "it seems twisted. I don't know how it happened, but it pains me terribly. Just there all the agony seems to rest. Ah!" as another dart of anguish shoots through the injured ankle.

"My dear girl, what shall I do for you? Why on earth did you not take my advice?" exclaims Cyril, in a distracted tone. A woman's grief, a woman's tears, always unman him.

"Don't say you told me how it would be," murmurs Lilian, with a ghastly attempt at a smile that dies away in another moan. "It would be adding insult to injury. No, do not stir me: do not; I cannot bear it. Oh, Cyril, I think my ankle is broken."

With this she grows a little paler, and draws her breath with a sharp sound, then whiter, whiter still, until at last her head sinks heavily upon Cyril's supporting arm, and he finds she has fallen into a deep swoon.

More frightened than he cares to allow, Cyril raises her in his arms and, without a moment's thought, conveys his slight burden straight to The Cottage.

Cecilia, who from an upper window has seen him coming with his strange encumbrance, runs down to meet him at the door, her face full of anxiety.

"What is it?" she asks, breathlessly, bending over Lilian, who is still fainting. "Poor child! how white she is!"

"It is Lilian Chesney. She has sprained her foot, I think," says Cyril, who is white too with concern: "will you take her in while I go for a carriage?"

"Of course. Oh, make haste: her lips are quivering. I am sure she is suffering great agony. Bring her this way—or—no—shall I lay her on my bed?"

"The drawing-room sofa will do very well," going in and laying her on it. "Will you see to her? and give her some brandy and—and that."

"Yes, yes. Now go quickly, and send a messenger for Dr. Bland, while you bring the carriage here. How pretty she is! what lovely hair! Poor little thing! Go, Cyril, and don't be long."

When he has disappeared, Mrs. Arlington summons Kate, and together they cut the boot off Lilian's injured foot, remove the dainty little silk stocking, and do for her all that can be done until the doctor sees her. After which, with the help of eau de Cologne, and some brandy, they succeed in bringing her to life once more.

"What has happened?" she asks, languidly, raising her hand to her head.

"Are you better now?" Mrs. Arlington asks, in return, stooping kindly over her.

"Yes, thank you, much better," gazing at her with some surprise: "it was stupid of me to faint. But"—still rather dazed—"where am I?"

"At The Cottage. Mr. Chetwoode brought you here."

"And you are Mrs. Arlington?" with a slight smile.

"Yes," smiling in return. "Kate, put a little water into that brandy, and give it to Miss Chesney."

"Please do not, Kate," says Lilian, in her pretty friendly fashion: "I hate brandy. If"—courteously—"I may have some sherry instead, I should like it."

Having drunk the sherry, she sits up and looks quietly around her.

The room is a little gem in its own way, and suggestive of refinement of taste and much delicacy in the art of coloring. Between the softly-tinted pictures that hang upon the walls, rare bits of Worcester and Wedgwood fight for mastery. Pretty lounging-chairs covered with blue satin are dispersed here and there, while cozy couches peep out from every recess. *Bric-a-brac* of all kinds covers the small velvet tables, that are hung with priceless lace that only half conceals the spindle legs beneath. Exquisite little marble Loves and Venuses and Graces smile and pose upon graceful brackets; upon a distant table two charming Dresden baskets are to be seen smothered in late flowers. All is bright, pretty, and artistic.

"What a charming room!" says Lilian, with involuntary, and therefore flattering admiration.

"You like it? I fear it must look insignificant to you after Chetwoode."

"On the contrary, it is a relief. There, everything is heavy though handsome, as is the way in all old houses; here, everything is bright and gay. I like it so much, and you too if you will let me say so," says Lilian, holding out her hand, feeling already enslaved by the beauty of the tender, lovely face looking so kindly into hers. "I have wanted to know you so long, but we knew"—hesitating—"you wished to be quiet."

"Yes, so I did when first I came here; but time and solitude have taught me many things. For instance,"—coloring faintly,—"I should be very glad to know you; I feel sadly stupid now and then."

"I am glad to hear you say so; I simply detest my own society," says Miss Chesney, with much vivacity, in spite of the foot. "But,"—with a rueful glance at the bandaged member,—"I little thought I should make your acquaintance in this

way. I have given you terrible trouble, have I not?"

"No, indeed, you must not say so. I believe"—laughing,—"I have been only too glad, in spite of my former desire for privacy, to see some one from the outer world again. Your hair has come down. Shall I fasten it up again for you?" Hardly waiting an answer, she takes Lilian's hair and binds and twists it into its usual soft knot behind her head, admiring it as she does so. "How soft it is, and how long, and such a delicious color, like spun silk! I have always envied people with golden hair. Ah, here is the carriage: I hope the drive home will not hurt you very much. She is ready now, Mr. Chetwoode, and I think she looks a little better."

"I should be ungrateful otherwise," says Lilian. "Mrs. Arlington has been so kind to me, Cyril."

"I am sure of that," replies he, casting a curious glance at Cecilia that rather puzzles Lilian, until, turning her eyes upon Cecilia, she sees what a pretty pink flush has stolen into her cheeks. Then the truth all at once flashes upon her, and renders her rather silent, while Cyril and Mrs. Arlington are making the carriage more comfortable for her.

"Come," says Cyril, at length taking her in his arms. "Don't be frightened; I will hurt you as little as I can help." He lifts her tenderly, but the movement causes pain, and a touch of agony turns her face white again. She is not a hero where suffering is concerned.

"Oh, Cyril, be careful," says Mrs. Arlington, fearfully, quite unconscious in her concern for Lilian's comfort that she has used the Christian name of her lover.

When Lilian is at length settled in the carriage, she raises herself to stoop out and take Cecilia's hand.

"Good-bye, and thank you again so much," she says, earnestly. "And when I am well may I come and see you?"

"You may, indeed,"—warmly. "I shall be anxiously expecting you; I shall now"—with a gentle glance from her loving gray eyes—"have a double reason for wishing you soon well."

Moved by a sudden impulse, Lilian leans forward, and the two women as their lips meet seal a bond of friendship that lasts them all their lives.

For some time after they have left Cecilia's bower Lilian keeps silence, then all at once she says to Cyril, in tones of the liveliest reproach:

"I wouldn't have believed it of you."

"Would you not?" replies he, somewhat startled by this extraordinary address, being plunged in meditation of his own. "You don't say so! But what is it then you can't believe?"

"I think"—with keen upbraiding—"you might have told *me*."

"So I should, my dear, instantly, if I only knew what it was," growing more and more bewildered. "If you don't want to bring on brain-fever, my good Lilian, you will explain what you mean."

"You must have guessed what a treat a *real* love-affair would be to me, who never knew a single instance of one," says Lilian, "and yet you meanly kept it from me."

"Kept what?" innocently, though he has the grace to color hotly.

"Don't be deceitful, Cyril, whatever you are. I say it was downright unkind to leave me in ignorance of the fact that all this time there was a real, unmistakable, *bona fide* lover near me, close to me, at my *very elbow*, as one might say."

"I know I am happy enough to be at your elbow just now," says Cyril, humbly, "but, to confess the truth, I never yet dared to permit myself to look upon you openly with lover's eyes. I am still at a loss to know how you discovered the all-absorbing passion that I—that *any one* fortunate enough to know you—must feel for you."

"Don't be a goose," says Miss Chesney, with immeasurable scorn. "Don't you think I have wit enough to see you are head over ears in love with that charming, beautiful creature down there in The Cottage? I don't wonder at that: I only wonder why you did not tell me of it when we were such good friends."

"Are you quite sure I had anything to tell you?"

"Quite; I have eyes and I have ears. Did I not see how you looked at her, and how she blushed all up to the roots of her soft hair when you did so? and when you were placing me in the carriage she said, 'Oh, Cyril!' and what was the meaning of that, Master Chetwoode, eh? She is the prettiest woman I ever saw,"

says Lilian, enthusiastically. "To see her is indeed to love her. I hope *you* love her properly, with all your heart?"

"I do," says Cyril, simply. "I sometimes think, Lilian, it cannot be for one's happiness to love as I do."

"Oh, this is delightful!" cries Lilian, clapping her hands. "I am glad you are in earnest about it; and I am glad you are both so good-looking. I don't think ugly people ought to fall in love: they quite destroy the romance of the whole thing."

"Thanks awfully," says Cyril. "I shall begin to hold up my head now you have said a word in my favor. But,"—growing serious—"you really like her, Lilian? How can you be sure you do after so short an acquaintance?"

"I always like a person at once or not at all. I cannot explain why; it is a sort of instinct. Florence I detested at first sight; your Mrs. Arlington I love. What is her name?"

"Cecilia."

"A pretty name, and suited to her: with her tender beautiful face she looks a saint. You are very fortunate, Cyril: something tells me you cannot fail to be happy, having gained the love of such a woman."

"Dear little sibyl," says Cyril, lifting one of her hands to his lips, "I thank you for your prophecy. It does me good only to hear you say so."

CHAPTER XXI.

"As on her couch of pain a child was lying."—*Song.*

Lilian's injury turns out to be not only a sprain, but a very bad one, and strict quiet and rest for the sufferer are enjoined by the fat little family doctor. So for several days she lies supine and obedient upon a sofa in Lady Chetwoode's boudoir, and makes no moan even when King Bore with all his horrible train comes swooping down upon her. He is in greatest force at such times as when all the others are down-stairs dining and she is (however regretfully) left to her own devices. The servants passing to and fro with dishes sometimes leave the doors open, and then the sound of merry voices and laughter, that seems more frequent because she is at a distance and cannot guess the cause of their merriment, steals up to her, as she lies dolefully upon her pillows with her hands clasped behind her sunny head.

When four days of penance have so passed, Lilian grows *triste*, then argumentative, then downright irritable, distracting Lady Chetwoode by asking her perpetually, with tears in her eyes, when she thinks she will be well. "She is so tired of lying down. Her foot must be nearly well now. It does not hurt her nearly so much. She is sure, if she might only use it a little now and then, it would be well in half the time," and so on.

At last, when a week has dragged itself to a close, Lilian turns her cajoleries upon the doctor, who is her sworn vassal, and coaxes and worries him into letting her go down-stairs, if only to dine.

"Eh? So soon pining for freedom? Why, bless me, you have been only two or three days laid up."

"Six long, *long* days, dear doctor."

"And now you would run the risk of undoing all my work. I cannot let you put your foot to the ground for a long time yet. Well,"—softened by a beseeching glance,—"if you must go down I suppose you must; but no walking, mind! If I catch you walking I shall put you into irons and solitary confinement for a month. I dare say, Lady Chetwoode,"—smiling archly down upon Miss Chesney's slight figure,—"there will be some young gentleman to be found in

the house not only able but willing to carry to the dining-room so fair a burden!"

"We shall be able to manage that easily. And it will be far pleasanter for her to be with us all in the evening. Guy, or her cousin Mr. Chesney, can carry her down."

"I think, auntie," speaking very slowly, "I should prefer Archibald."

"Eh! eh! you hear, madam, she prefers Archibald,—happy Archibald!" cackles the little doctor, merrily, being immensely tickled at his own joke.

"Archibald Chesney is her cousin," replies Lady Chetwoode, with a sigh, gazing rather wistfully at the girl's flushed, averted face.

So Lilian gains the day, and Sir Guy coming into his mother's boudoir half an hour later is told the glad news.

"Dr. Bland thinks her so much better," Lady Chetwoode tells him. "But she is not to let her foot touch the ground; so you must be careful, darling," to Lilian. "Will you stay with her a little while, Guy? I must go and write some letters."

"I shan't be in the least lonely by myself, auntie," says Lilian, smoothly, letting her fingers stray meaningly to the magazine beside her; yet in spite of this chilling remark Sir Guy lingers. He has taken up his station on the hearth-rug and is standing with his back to the fire, his arms crossed behind him, and instead of seeking to amuse his wounded ward is apparently sunk in reverie. Suddenly, after a protracted silence on both sides, he raises his head, and regarding her earnestly, says:

"May I take you down to dinner to-night, Lilian?"

"Thank you," formally: "it is very kind of you to offer, Sir Guy. But Archie was here a moment ago, and he has promised to take that trouble upon himself." Then, in a low but perfectly distinct tone, "I can trust Archie!"

Although no more is said, Guy thoroughly understands her thoughts have traveled backward to that one unlucky night when, through a kiss, he sinned past all chance of pardon. As his own mind follows hers, the dark color mounts slowly to his very brow.

"Am I never to be forgiven for that one offense?" he asks, going up to her couch and looking gravely down upon her.

"I have forgiven, but unhappily I cannot forget," returns she, gently, without

letting her eyes meet his. Then, with an air of deliberation, she raises her magazine, and he leaves the room.

So Sir Guy retires from the contest, and Archibald is elected to the coveted position of carrier to her capricious majesty, and this very night, to her great joy, brings her tenderly, carefully, to the dining-room, where a sofa has been prepared for her reception.

It so happens that three days later Archibald is summoned to London on business, and departs, leaving with Lilian his faithful promise to be back in time to perform his evening duty toward her.

But man's proposals, as we know, are not always carried out, and Chesney's fall lamentably short; as just at seven o'clock a telegram arriving for Lady Chetwoode tells her he has been unexpectedly detained in town by urgent matters, and cannot by any possibility get home till next day.

Cyril is dining with some bachelor friends near Truston: so Lady Chetwoode, who is always thoughtful, bethinks her there is no one to bring Lilian down to dinner except Guy. This certainly, for some inward reason, troubles her. She sighs a little as she remembers Lilian's marked preference for Chesney's assistance, then she turns to her maid—the telegram has reached her as she is dressing for dinner—and says to her:

"A telegram from Mr. Chesney: he cannot be home to dinner. My hair will do very well. Hardy: go and tell Sir Guy he need not expect him."

Hardy, going, meets Sir Guy in the hall below, and imparts her information.

Naturally enough, he too thinks first of Lilian. Much as it displeases his pride, he knows he must in common courtesy again offer her his rejected services. There is bitterness in the thought, and perhaps a little happiness also, as he draws his breath rather quickly, and angrily suppresses a half smile as it curls about his lips. To ask her again, to be again perhaps refused! He gazes irresolutely at the staircase, and then, with a secret protest against his own weakness, mounts it.

The second dinner-bell has already sounded: there is no time for further deliberation. Going reluctantly up-stairs, he seeks with slow and lingering footsteps his mother's boudoir.

The room is unlit, save by the glorious fire, half wood, half coal, that crackles and laughs and leaps in the joy of its own fast living. Upon a couch close to it,

bathed in its warm flames, lies the little slender black-robed figure so inexpressibly dear to him. She is so motionless that but for her wide eyes, gazing so earnestly into the fire, one might imagine her wrapt in slumber. Her left arm is thrown upward so that her head rests upon it, the other hangs listlessly downward, almost touching the carpet beneath her.

She looks pale, but lovely. Her golden hair shines richly against the crimson satin of the cushion on which she leans. As Guy approaches her she never raises her eyes, although without doubt she sees him. Even when he stands beside her and gazes down upon her, wrathful at her insolent disregard, she never pretends to be aware of his near presence.

"Dinner will be ready in three minutes," he says, coldly: "do you intend coming down to-night?"

"Certainly. I am waiting for my cousin," she answers, with her eyes still fixed upon the fire.

"I am sorry to be the conveyer of news that must necessarily cause you disappointment. My mother has had a telegram from Chesney saying he cannot be home until to-morrow. Business detains him."

"He promised me he would return in time for dinner," she says, turning toward him at last, and speaking doubtfully.

"No doubt he is more upset than you can be at his unintended defection. But it is the case for all that. He will not be home to-night."

"Well, I suppose he could not help it."

"I am positive he couldn't!" coldly.

"You have great faith in him," with an unpleasant little smile. "Thank you, Sir Guy: it was very kind of you to bring me such disagreeable news." As she ceases speaking she turns back again to the contemplation of the fire, as though desirous of giving him his *congé*.

"I can hardly say I came to inform you of your cousin's movements," replies he, haughtily; "rather to ask you if you will accept my aid to get down-stairs?"

"Yours!"

"Even mine."

"No, thank you," with slow surprise, as though she yet doubts the fact of his having again dared to offer his services: "I would not trouble you for worlds!"

"The trouble is slight," he answers, with an expressive glance at the fragile figure below him.

"But yet a trouble! Do not distress yourself, Sir Guy: Parkins will help me, if you will be so kind as to desire him."

"Your nurse"—hastily—"would be able, I dare say."

"Oh, no. I can't bear trusting myself to women. I am an arrant coward. I always think they are going to trip, or let me drop, at every corner."

"Then why refuse my aid?" he says, even at the price of his self-respect.

"No; I prefer Parkins!"

"Oh, if you prefer the assistance of a *footman*, there is nothing more to be said," he exclaims, angrily, going toward the door much offended, and with just a touch of disgust in his tone.

Now, Miss Chesney does not prefer the assistance of a footman; in fact, she would prefer solitude and a lonely dinner rather than trust herself to such a one; so she pockets her pride, and, seeing Sir Guy almost outside the door, raises herself on her elbow and says, pettishly, and with the most flagrant injustice:

"Of course I can stay here all by myself in the dark, if there is no one to take me down."

"I wish I understood you," says Guy, irritably, coming back into the room. "Do you mean you wish me to carry you down? I am quite willing to do so, though I wish with all my heart your cousin were here to take my place. It would evidently be much pleasanter for all parties. Nevertheless, if you deign to accept my aid," proudly, "I shall neither trip nor drop you, I promise."

There is a superciliousness in his manner that vexes Lilian; but, having an innate horror of solitude, go down she will: so she says, cuttingly:

"You are graciousness itself! you give me plainly to understand how irksome is this duty to you. I too wish Archie were here, for many reasons, but as it is——" she pauses abruptly; and Guy, stooping, raises her quietly, tenderly, in his arms, and, with the angry scowl upon his face and the hauteur still within his usually

kind blue eyes, begins his march down-stairs.

It is rather a long march to commence, with a young woman, however slender, in one's arms. First comes the corridor, which is of a goodly length, and after it the endless picture-gallery. Almost as they enter the latter, a little nail half hidden in the doorway catches in Lilian's gown, and, dragging it roughly, somehow hurts her foot. The pain she suffers causes her to give way to a sharp cry, whereupon Guy stops short, full of anxiety.

"You are in pain?" he says, gazing eagerly into the face so close to his own.

"My foot," she answers, her eyes wet with tears; "something dragged it: oh, how it hurts! And you promised me to be so careful, and now——but I dare say you are *glad* I am punished," she winds up, vehemently, and then bursts out crying, partly through pain, partly through nervousness and a good deal of self-torturing thought long suppressed, and hides her face childishly against his sleeve because she has nowhere else to hide it. "Lay me down," she says, faintly.

There is a lounging-chair close to the fire that always burns brightly in the long gallery: placing her in it, he stands a little aloof, cursing his own ill-luck, and wondering what he has done to make her hate him so bitterly. Her tears madden him. Every fresh sob tears his heart. At last, unable to bear the mental agony any longer, he kneels down beside her, and, with an aspect of the deepest respect, takes one of her hands in his.

"I am very unfortunate," he says, humbly. "Is it hurting you very much?"

"It is better now," she whispers; but for all that she sobs on very successfully behind her handkerchief.

"You are not the only one in pain,"—speaking gently but earnestly: "every sob of yours causes me absolute torture."

This speech has no effect except to make her cry again harder than ever. It is so sweet to a woman to know a man is suffering tortures for her sake.

A little soft lock of her hair has shaken itself loose, and has wandered across her forehead. Almost unconsciously but very lovingly, he moves it back into its proper place.

"What have I done, Lilian, that you should so soon have learned to hate me?" he whispers: "we used to be good friends."

"So long ago"—in stifled tones from behind the handkerchief—"that I have almost forgotten it."

"Not so very long. A few weeks at the utmost,—before your cousin came."

"Yes,"—with a sigh,—"before my cousin came."

"That is only idle recrimination. I know I once erred deeply, but surely I have repented, and—— Tell me why you hate me."

"I cannot."

"Why?"

"Because I don't know myself."

"What! you confess you hate me without cause?"

"That is not it."

"What then?"

"How can I tell you," she says, impatiently, "when I know I don't hate you *at all*?"

"Lilian, is that true?" taking away the handkerchief gently but forcibly that he may see her face, which after all is not nearly so tear-stained as it should be, considering all the heart-rending sobs to which he has been listening. "Are you sure? am I not really distasteful to you? Perhaps even,"—with an accession of hope, seeing she does not turn from him,—"you like me a little, still?"

"When you are good,"—with an airy laugh and a slight pout—"I do a *little*. Yes,"—seeing him glance longingly at her hand,—"you may kiss it, and then we shall be friends again, for to-night at least. Now do take me down, Sir Guy: if we stay here much longer I shall be seeing bogies in all the corners. Already your ancestors seem to be frowning at me, and a more dark and blood-thirsty set of relatives I never saw. I hope you won't turn out as bad to look at in your old age."

"It all depends. When we are happy we are generally virtuous. Misery creates vice."

"What a sententious speech!" He has taken up his fair burden again, and they are now (very slowly, I must say) descending the stairs. "Now here comes a curve,"

she says, with a return of all her old sauciness: "please do not drop me."

"I have half a mind to," laughing. "Suppose, now, I let you fall cleverly over these banisters on to the stone flooring beneath, I should save myself from many a flout and many a scornful speech, and rid myself forever of a troublesome little ward."

Leaning her head rather backward, she looks up into his face and smiles one of her sweetest, tenderest smiles.

"I am not afraid of you now, Guardy," she murmurs, softly; whereat his foolish heart beats madly. The old friendly appellation, coming so unexpectedly from her, touches him deeply: it is with difficulty he keeps himself from straining her to his heart and pressing his lips upon the beautiful childish mouth upheld to him. He has had his lesson, however, and refrains.

He is still regarding her with unmistakable admiration, when Miss Beauchamp's voice from the landing above startles them both, and makes them feel, though why they scarcely know, partners in guilt.

There is a metallic ring in it that strikes upon the ear, and suggests all sorts of lady-like disgust and condemnation.

"I am sure, Guy, if Lilian's foot be as bad as she says it is, she would feel more comfortable lying on a sofa. Are you going to pose there all the evening for the benefit of the servants? I think it is hardly good taste of you to keep her in your arms upon the public staircase, whatever you may do in private."

The last words are uttered in a rather lower tone, but are still distinctly audible. Lilian blushes a slow and painful red, and Sir Guy, giving way to a naughty word that is also distinctly audible, carries her down instantly to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XXII.

"For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

* * * * * * *

This thought is as a death."—SHAKESPEARE.

The next day is dark and lowering, to Lilian's great joy, who, now she is prevented by lameness from going for one of her loved rambles, finds infinite satisfaction in the thought that even were she quite well, it would be impossible for her to stir out of doors. According to her mode of arguing, this is one day not lost.

About two o'clock Archibald returns, in time for luncheon, and to resume his care of Lilian, who gives him a gentle scolding for his desertion of her in her need. He is full of information about town and their mutual friends there, and imparts it freely.

"Everything is as melancholy up there as it can be," he says, "and very few men to be seen: the clubs are deserted, all shooting or hunting, no doubt. The rain was falling in torrents all the day."

"Poor Archie, you have been having a bad time of it, I fear."

"In spite of the weather and her ruddy locks, Lady Belle Damascene has secured the prize of the season, out of season. She is engaged to Lord Wyntermere: it is not yet publicly announced, but I called to see her mother for five minutes, and so great was her exultation she could not refrain from whispering the delightful intelligence into my ear. Lady Belle is staying with his people now in Sussex."

"Certainly, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder.' She is painfully ugly," says Miss Beauchamp. "Such feet, such hands, and such a shocking complexion!"

"She is very kind-hearted and amiable," says Cyril.

"That is what is always said of a plain woman," retorts Florence. "When you hear a girl is amiable, always conclude she is hideous. When one's trumpeter is

in despair, he says that."

"I am sure Lord Wyntermere must be a young man of good sound sense," says Lilian, who never agrees with Florence. "If she has a kind heart he will never be disappointed in her. And, after all, there is no such great advantage to be derived from beauty. When people are married for four or five years, I dare say they quite forget whether the partner of their joys and sorrows was originally lovely or the reverse: custom deadens perception."

"It is better to be good than beautiful," says Lady Chetwoode, who abhors ugly women: "you know what Carew says:

> "But a smooth and steadfast mind,
> Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
> Hearts with equal love combined,
> Kindle never-dying fires;
> Where these are not, I despise
> Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes."

"Well done, Madre," says Cyril. "You are coming out. I had no idea you were so gifted. Your delivery is perfect."

"And what are you all talking about?" continues Lady Chetwoode: "I think Belle Damascene very sweet to look at. In spite of her red hair, and a good many freckles, and—and—a rather short nose, her expression is very lovable: when she smiles I always feel inclined to kiss her. She is like her mother, who is one of the best women I know."

"If you encourage my mother she will end by telling you Lady Belle is a beauty and a reigning toast," says Guy, *sotto voce*.

Lady Chetwoode laughs, and Lilian says:

"What is every one wearing now, Archie?"

"There is nobody to wear anything. For the rest they had all on some soft, shiny stuff like the dress you wore the night before last."

"What an accurate memory you have!" says Florence, letting her eyes rest on Guy's for a moment, though addressing Chesney.

"Satin," translates Lilian, unmoved. "And their bonnets?"

"Oh, yes! they all wore bonnets or hats, I don't know which," vaguely.

"Naturally; mantillas are not yet in vogue. You are better than 'Le Follet,' Archie; your answers are so satisfactory. Did you meet any one we know?"

"Hardly any one. By the bye,"—turning curiously to Sir Guy,—"was Trant here to-day?"

"No," surprised: "why do you ask?"

"Because I met him at Truston this morning. He got out of the train by which I went on,—it seems he has been staying with the Bulstrodes,—and I fancied he was coming on here, but had not time to question him, as I barely caught the train; another minute's delay and I should have been late."

Archibald rambles on about his near escape of being late for the train, while his last words sink deep into the minds of Guy and Cyril. The former grows singularly silent; a depressed expression gains upon his face. Cyril, on the contrary, becomes feverishly gay, and with his mad observations makes merry Lilian laugh heartily.

But when luncheon is over and they all disperse, a gloom falls upon him: his features contract; doubt and a terrible suspicion, augmented by slanderous tales that forever seem to be poured into his ears, make havoc of the naturally kind expression that characterizes his face, and with a stifled sigh he turns and walks toward the billiard-room.

Guy follows him. As Cyril enters the doorway, he enters too, and, closing the door softly, lays his hand upon his shoulder.

"You heard, Cyril?" he says, with exceeding gentleness.

"Heard what?" turning somewhat savagely upon him.

"My dear fellow,"—affectionate entreaty in his tone,—"do not be offended with me. Will you not listen, Cyril? It is very painful to me to speak, but how can I see my brother so—so shamefully taken in without uttering a word of warning."

"If you were less tragic and a little more explicit it might help matters," replies Cyril, with a sneer and a short unpleasant laugh. "Do speak plainly."

"I will, then,"—desperately,—"since you desire it. There is more between Trant and Mrs. Arlington than we know of. I do not speak without knowledge. From

several different sources I have heard the same story,—of his infatuation for some woman, and of his having taken a house for her in some remote spot. No names were mentioned, mind; but, from what I have unwillingly listened to it is impossible not to connect these evil whispers that are afloat with him and her. Why does he come so often to the neighborhood and yet never dare to present himself at Chetwoode?"

"And you believe Trant capable of so far abusing the rights of friendship as to ask you—*you*—to supply the house in the remote spot?"

"Unfortunately, I must."

"You are speaking of your friend,"—with a bitter sneer,—"and you can coldly accuse him of committing so blackguardly an action?"

"If all I have heard be true (and I have no reason to doubt it), he is no longer any friend of mine," says Guy, haughtily. "I shall settle with him later on when I have clearer evidence; in the meantime it almost drives me mad to think he should have dared to bring down here, so close to my mother, his——"

"What?" cries Cyril, fiercely, thrusting his brother from him with passionate violence. "What is it you would say? Take care, Guy; take care: you have gone too far already. From whom, pray, have you learned your infamous story?"

"I beg your pardon," Guy says, gently, extreme regret visible in his countenance. "I should not have spoken so, under the circumstances. It was not from one alone, but from several, I heard what I now tell you,—though I must again remind you that no names were mentioned; still, I could not help drawing my own conclusions."

"They lied!" returns Cyril, passionately, losing his head. "You may tell them so for me. And you,"—half choking,—"you lie too when you repeat such vile slanders."

"It is useless to argue with you," Guy says, coldly, the blood mounting hotly to his forehead at Cyril's insulting words, while his expression grows stern and impenetrable. "I waste time. Yet this last word I will say: Go down to The Cottage—now—this moment—and convince yourself of the truth of what I have said."

He turns angrily away: while Cyril, half mad with indignation and unacknowledged fear, follows this final piece of advice, and almost

unconsciously leaving the house, takes the wonted direction, and hardly draws breath until the trim hedges and pretty rustic gates of The Cottage are in view.

The day is showery, threatening since dawn, and now the rain is falling thickly, though he heeds it not at all.

As with laggard steps he draws still nearer the abode of her he loves yet does not wholly trust, the sound of voices smites upon his ear. He is standing upon the very spot—somewhat elevated—that overlooks the arbor where so long ago Miss Beauchamp stood and learned his acquaintance with Mrs. Arlington. Here now he too stays his steps and gazes spell-bound upon what he sees before him.

In the arbor, with his back turned to Cyril, is a man, tall, elderly, with an iron-gray moustache. Though not strictly handsome, he has a fine and very military bearing, and a figure quite unmistakable to one who knows him: with a sickly chill at his heart, Cyril acknowledges him to be Colonel Trant.

Cecilia is beside him. She is weeping bitterly, but quietly, and with one hand conceals her face with her handkerchief. The other is fast imprisoned in both of Trant's.

A film settles upon Cyril's eyes, a dull faintness overpowers him, involuntarily he places one hand upon the trunk of a near elm to steady himself; yet through the semi-darkness, the strange, unreal feeling that possesses him, the voices still reach him cruelly distinct.

"Do not grieve so terribly: it breaks my heart to see you, darling, *darling,*" says Trant, in a low, impassioned tone, and raising the hand he holds, presses his lips to it tenderly. The slender white fingers tremble perceptibly under the caress, and then Cecilia says, in a voice hardly audible through her tears:

"I am so unhappy! it is all my fault; knowing you loved me, I should have told you before of——"

But her voice breaks the spell: Cyril, as it meets his ears, rouses himself with a start. Not once again does he even glance in her direction, but with a muttered curse at his own folly, turns and goes swiftly homeward.

A very frenzy of despair and disappointment rages within him: to have so loved, —to be so foully betrayed! Her tears, her sorrow (connected no doubt with some early passages between her and Trant), because of their very poignancy, only render him the more furious.

On reaching Chetwoode he shuts himself into his own room, and, feigning an excuse, keeps himself apart from the rest of the household all the remainder of the evening and the night. "Knowing you loved me,"—the words ring in his ears. Ay, she knew it,—who should know it better?—but had carefully kept back all mention of the fact when pressed by him, Cyril, upon the subject. All the world knew what he, poor fool, had been the last to discover. And what was it her tender conscience was accusing her of not having told Trant before?—of her flirtation, as no doubt she mildly termed all the tender looks and speeches, and clinging kisses, and loving protestations so freely bestowed upon Cyril,—of her flirtation, no doubt.

The next morning, after a sleepless night, he starts for London, and there spends three reckless, miserable days that leave him wan and aged through reason of the conflict he is waging with himself. After which a mad desire to see again the cause of all his misery, to openly accuse her of her treachery, to declare to her all the irreparable mischief she has done, the utter ruin she has made of his life, seizes hold upon him, and, leaving the great city, and reaching Truston, he goes straight from the station to The Cottage once so dear.

In her garden Cecilia is standing all alone. The wind is sighing plaintively through the trees that arch above her head, the thousand dying leaves are fluttering to her feet. There is a sense of decay and melancholy in all around that harmonizes exquisitely with the dejection of her whole manner. Her attitude is sad and drooping, her air depressed; there are tears, and an anxious, expectant look in her gray eyes.

"Pining for her lover, no doubt," says Cyril, between his teeth (in which supposition he is right); and then he opens the gate, and goes quickly up to her.

As she hears the well-known click of the latch she turns, and, seeing him, lets fall unheeded to the ground the basket she is holding, and runs to him with eyes alight, and soft cheeks tinged with a lovely generous pink, and holds out her hands to him with a little low glad cry.

"At last, truant!" she exclaims, joyfully; "after three whole long, long days; and what has kept you from me? Why, Cyril, Cyril!"—recoiling, while a dull ashen shade replaces the gay tinting of her cheeks,—"what has happened? How oddly you look! You,—you are in trouble?"

"I am," in a changed, harsh tone she scarcely realizes to be his, moving back with a gesture of contempt from the extended hands that would so gladly have

clasped his. "In so far you speak the truth: I have discovered all. One lover, it appears, was not sufficient for you; you should dupe another for your amusement. It is an old story, but none the less bitter. No, it is useless your speaking," staying her with a passionate movement: "I tell you I know *all*."

"All what?" she asks. She has not removed from his her lustrous eyes, though her lips have turned very white.

"Your perfidy."

"Cyril, explain yourself," she says, in a low, agonized tone, her pallor changing to a deep crimson. And to Cyril hateful certainty appears if possible more certain by reason of this luckless blush.

"Ay, you may well change countenance," he says, with suppressed fury in which keen agony is blended; "have you yet the grace to blush? As to explanation, I scarcely think you can require it; yet, as you demand it, you shall have it. For weeks I have been hearing of you tales in which your name and Trant's were always mingled; but I disregarded them; I madly shut my ears and was deaf to them; I would not believe, until it was too late, until I saw and learned beyond dispute the folly of my faith. I was here last Friday evening!"

"Yes?" calmly, though in her soft eyes a deep well of bitterness has sprung.

"Well, you were there, in that arbor"—pointing to it—"where *we*"—with a scornful laugh—"so often sat; but then you had a more congenial companion. Trant was with you. He held your hand, he caressed it; he called you his 'darling,' and you allowed it, though indeed why should you not? doubtless it is a customary word from him to you! And then you wept as though your heart, your *heart*"—contemptuously—"would break. Were you confessing to him your coquetry with me? and perhaps obtaining an easy forgiveness?"

"No, I was not," quietly, though there is immeasurable scorn in her tone.

"No?" slightingly. "For what, then, were you crying?"

"Sir,"—with a first outward sign of indignation,—"I refuse to tell you. By what right do you now ask the question? yesterday, nay, an hour since, I should have felt myself bound to answer any inquiry of yours, but not now. The tie between us, a frail one as it seems to me, is broken; our engagement is at an end: I shall not answer you!"

"Because you dare not," retorts he, fiercely, stung by her manner.

"I think you dare too much when you venture so to address me," in a low clear tone. "And yet, as it is in all human probability the last time we shall ever meet, and as I would have you remember all your life long the gross injustice you have done me, I shall satisfy your curiosity. But recollect, sir, these are indeed the final words that shall pass between us.

"A year ago Colonel Trant so far greatly honored me as to ask me to marry him: for many reasons I then refused. Twice since I came to Chetwoode he has been to see me,—once to bring me law papers of some importance, and last Friday to again ask me to be his wife. Again I refused. I wept then, because, unworthy as I am, I know I was giving pain to the truest, and, as I know now,"—with a faint trembling in her voice, quickly subdued—"the *only* friend I have! When declining his proposal, I gave my reason for doing so! I told him I loved another! That other was you!"

Casting this terrible revenge in his teeth, she turns, and, walking majestically into the house, closes the door with significant haste behind her.

This is the one solitary instance of inhospitality shown by Cecilia in all her life. Never until now was she known to shut her door in the face of trouble. And surely Cyril's trouble at this moment is sore and needy!

To disbelieve Cecilia when face to face with her is impossible. Her eyes are truth itself. Her whole manner, so replete with dignity and offended pride, declares her innocent. Cyril stands just where she had left him, in stunned silence, for at least a quarter of an hour, repeating to himself miserably all that she has said, and reminding himself with cold-blooded cruelty of all he has said to her.

At the end of this awful fifteen minutes, he bethinks himself his hair must now, if ever, be turned gray; and then, a happier and more resolute thought striking him, he takes his courage in his two hands, and walking boldly up to the hall door, knocks and demands admittance with really admirable composure. Abominable composure, thinks Cecilia, who in spite of her stern determination never to know him again, has been watching him covertly from behind a handkerchief and a bedroom curtain all this time, and is now stationed at the top of the staircase, with dim eyes, but very acute ears.

"Yes," Kate tells him, "her mistress is at home," and forthwith shows him into the bijou drawing-room. After which she departs to tell her mistress of his

arrival.

Three minutes, that to Cyril's excited fancy lengthen themselves into twenty, pass away slowly, and then Kate returns.

"Her mistress's compliments, and she has a terrible headache, and will Mr. Chetwoode be so kind as to excuse her?"

Mr. Chetwoode on this occasion is not kind. "He is sorry," he stammers, "but if Mrs. Arlington could let him see her for five minutes, he would not detain her longer. He has something of the utmost importance to say to her."

His manner is so earnest, so pleading, that Kate, who scents at least a death in the air, retires full of compassion for the "pore gentleman." And then another three minutes, that now to the agitated listener appear like forty, drag themselves into the past.

Suspense is growing intolerable, when a well-known step in the hall outside makes his heart beat almost to suffocation. The door is opened slowly, and Mrs. Arlington comes in.

"You have something to say to me?" she asks, curtly, unkindly, standing just inside the door, and betraying an evident determination not to sit down for any consideration upon earth. Her manner is uncompromising and forbidding, but her eyes are very red. There is rich consolation in this discovery.

"I have," replies Cyril, openly confused now it has come to the point.

"Say it, then. I am here to listen to you. My servant tells me it is something of the deepest importance."

"So it is. In all the world there is nothing so important to me. Cecilia,"—coming a little nearer to her,—"it is that I want your forgiveness; I ask your pardon very humbly, and I throw myself upon your mercy. You must forgive me!"

"Forgiveness seems easy to you, who cannot feel," replies she, haughtily, turning as though to leave the room; but Cyril intercepts her, and places his back against the door.

"I cannot let you go until you are friends with me again," he says, in deep agitation.

"Friends!"

"Think what I have gone through. *You* have only suffered for a few minutes, *I* have suffered for three long days. Think of it. My heart was breaking all the time. I went to London hoping to escape thought, and never shall I forget what I endured in that detestable city. Like a man in a dream I lived, scarcely seeing, or, if seeing, only trying to elude, those I knew. At times——"

"You went to London?"

"Yes, that is how I have been absent for three days; I have hardly slept or eaten since last I saw you."

Here Cecilia is distinctly conscious of a feeling of satisfaction: next to a man's dying for you the sweetest thing is to hear of a man's starving for you!

"Sometimes," goes on Cyril, piling up the agony higher and higher, and speaking in his gloomiest tones, "I thought it would be better if I put an end to it once for all, by blowing out my brains."

"How dare you speak to me like this?" Cecilia says in a trembling voice: "it is horrible. You would commit suicide? Am I not unhappy enough, that you must seek to make me more so? Why should you blow your brains out?" with a shudder.

"Because I could not live without you. Even now,"—reproachfully,—"when I see you looking so coldly upon me, I almost wish I had put myself out of the way for good."

"Cyril, I forbid you to talk like this."

"Why? I don't suppose you care whether I am dead or alive." This artful speech, uttered in a heart-broken tone, does immense execution.

"If you were dead," begins she, forlornly, and then stops short, because her voice fails her, and two large tears steal silently down her cheeks.

"Would you care?" asks Cyril, going up to her and placing one arm gently round her; being unrepulsed, he gradually strengthens this arm with the other. "Would you?"

"I hardly know."

"Darling, don't be cruel. I was wrong, terribly, unpardonably wrong ever to doubt your sweet truth; but when one has stories perpetually dinned into one's

ears, one naturally grows jealous of one's shadow, when one loves as I do."

"And pray, who told you all these stories?"

"Never mind."

"But I do mind," with an angry sob. "What! you are to hear lies of me, and to believe them, and I am not even to know who told you them! I do mind, and I insist on knowing."

"Surely it cannot signify now, when I tell you I don't believe them."

"It does signify, and I should be told. But indeed I need not ask," with exceeding bitterness; "I know. It was your brother, Sir Guy. He has always (why I know not) been a cruel enemy of mine."

"He only repeated what he heard. He is not to be blamed."

"It *was* he, then?" quickly. "But 'blamed'?—of course not; no one is in the wrong, I suppose, but poor me! I think, sir,"—tremulously,—"it would be better you should go home, and forget you ever knew any one so culpable as I am. I should be afraid to marry into a family that could so misjudge me as yours does. Go, and learn to forget me."

"I can go, of course, if you desire it," laying hold of his hat: "that is a simple matter; but I cannot promise to forget. To some people it may be easy, to me impossible."

"Nothing is impossible. The going is the first step. Oblivion"—with a sigh —"will quickly follow."

"I do not think so. But, since you wish my absence—"

He moves toward the door with lowered head and dejected manner.

"I did not say I wished it," in faltering tones; "I only requested you to leave me for your own sake, and because I would not make your people unhappy. Though"—piteously—"it should break my heart, I would still bid you go."

"Would it break your heart?" flinging his hat into a corner (for my own part, I don't believe he ever meant going): coming up to her, he folds her in his arms. "Forgive me, I entreat you," he says, "for what I shall never forgive myself."

The humbleness of this appeal touches Cecilia's tender heart. She makes no

effort to escape from his encircling arms; she even returns one out of his many caresses.

"To think you could behave so badly to me!" she whispers, reproachfully.

"I am a brute! I know it."

"Oh, no! indeed you are not," says Mrs. Arlington. "Well, yes,"—drawing a long breath,—"I forgive you; but *promise*, promise you will never distrust me again."

Of course he gives the required promise, and peace is once more restored.

"I shall not be content with an engagement any longer," Cyril says, presently. "I consider it eminently unsatisfactory. Why not marry me at once? I have nine hundred a year, and a scrap of an estate a few miles from this,—by the bye, you have never yet been to see your property,—and, if you are not afraid to venture, I think we might be very happy, even on that small sum."

"I am not afraid of anything with you," she says, in her calm, tender fashion; "and money has nothing to do with it. If," with a troubled sigh, "I ever marry you, I shall not come to you empty-handed."

"'If: dost thou answer me with ifs?'" quotes he, gayly. "I tell you, sweet, there is no such word in my dictionary. I shall only wait a favorable opportunity to ask my mother's consent to our marriage."

"And if she refuses it?"

"Why, then I shall marry you without hers, or yours, or the consent of any one in the world."

"You jest," she says, tears gathering in her large appealing eyes. "I would not have you make your mother miserable."

"Above all things, do not let me see tears in your eyes again," he says, quickly. "I forbid it. For one thing, it makes me wretched, and"—softly—"it makes me feel sure *you* are wretched, which is far worse. Cecilia, if you don't instantly dry those tears I shall be under the painful necessity of kissing them away. I tell you I shall get my mother's consent very readily. When she sees you, she will be only too proud to welcome such a daughter."

Soon after this they part, more in love with each other than ever.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"*Phebe*.—I have more cause to hate him than to love him:
For what had he to do to chide at me?"—*As You Like It.*

When Lilian's foot is again strong and well, almost the first use she makes of it is to go to The Cottage to see Cecilia. She is gladly welcomed there; the two girls are as pleased with each other as even in fond anticipation they had dreamed they should be: and how seldom are such dreams realized! They part with a secret though mutual hope that they shall soon see each other again.

Of her first two meetings with the lovely widow Lilian speaks openly to Lady Chetwoode; but with such an utter want of interest is her news received that instinctively she refrains from making any further mention of her new acquaintance. Meantime the friendship ripens rapidly, until at length scarcely a week elapses without Lilian's paying at least one or two visits at The Cottage.

Of the strength of this growing intimacy Sir Guy is supremely ignorant, until one day chance betrays to him its existence.

It is a bright but chilly morning, one of November's rawest efforts. The trees, bereft of even their faded mantle, that has dropped bit by bit from their meagre arms, now stand bare and shivering in their unlovely nakedness. The wind, whistling shrilly, rushes through them with impatient haste, as though longing to escape from their gaunt and most untempting embraces. There is a suspicion of snow in the biting air.

In The Cottage a roaring fire is scolding and quarreling vigorously on its way up the chimney, illuminating with its red rays the parlor in which it burns; Cecilia is standing on one side of the hearth, looking up at Lilian, who has come down by appointment to spend the day with her, and who is mounted on a chair hanging a picture much fancied by Cecilia. They are freely discussing its merits, and with their gay chatter are outdoing the noisy fire. To Cecilia the sweet companionship of this girl is not only an antidote to her loneliness, but an excessive pleasure.

The picture just hung is a copy of the "Meditation," and is a special favorite of Lilian's, who, being the most unsentimental person in the world, takes a tender delight in people of the visionary order.

"Do you know, Cecilia," she says, "I think the eyes something like yours?"

"Do you?" smiling. "You flatter me."

"I flatter 'Mademoiselle la Meditation,' you mean. No; you have a thoughtful, almost a wistful look about you, at times, that might strongly remind any one of this picture. Now, I"—reflectively—"could *never* look like that. When I think (which, to do me justice, is seldom), I always dwell upon unpleasant topics, and in consequence I maintain on these rare occasions an exceedingly sour, not to say ferocious, expression. I hate thinking!"

"So much the better," replies her companion, with a faint sigh. "The more persistently you put thought behind you, the longer you will retain happiness."

"Why, how sad you look! Have I, as usual, said the wrong thing? You *mustn't* think,"—affectionately,—"if it makes you sad. Come, Cis, let me cheer you up."

Cecilia starts as though struck, and moves backward as the pretty abbreviation of her name sounds upon her ear. An expression of hatred and horror rises and mars her face.

"Never call me by that name again," she says with some passion, laying her hand upon the sideboard to steady herself. "Never! do you hear? My father called me so——" she pauses, and the look of horror passes from her, only to be replaced by one of shame. "What must you think of me," she asks, slowly, "you who honored your father? I, too, had a father, but I did not—no, I did not love him. Am I hateful, am I unnatural, in your eyes?"

"Cecilia," says Lilian, with grave simplicity, "you could not be unnatural, you could not be hateful, in the sight of any one."

"That name you called me by"—struggling with her emotion—"recalled old scenes, old memories, most horrible to me. I am unhinged to-day: you must not mind me."

"You are not well, dearest."

"That man, my husband,"—with a strong shudder,—"he, too, called me by that name. After long years," she says, throwing out her hands with a significant gesture, as though she would fain so fling from her all haunting thoughts, "I cannot rid myself of the fear, the loathing, of those past days. *Are* they past? Is my terror an omen that they are not yet ended?"

"Cecilia, you shall not speak so," says Lilian, putting her arms gently round her. "You are nervous and—and upset about something. Why should you encourage such superstitious thoughts, when happiness lies within your grasp? How can harm come near you in this pretty wood, where you reign queen? Come, smile at me directly, or I shall tell Cyril of your evil behavior, and send him here armed with a stout whip to punish you for your naughtiness. What a whip that would be!" says Lilian, laughing so gleefully that Cecilia perforce laughs too.

"How sweet you are to me!" she says, fondly, with tears in her eyes. "At times I am more than foolish, and last night I had a terrible dream; but your coming has done me good. Now I can almost laugh at my own fears, that were so vivid a few hours ago. But my youth was not a happy one."

"Now you have reached old age, I hope you will enjoy it," says Miss Chesney, demurely.

Almost at this moment, Sir Guy Chetwoode is announced, and is shown by the inestimable Kate into the parlor instead of the drawing-room, thereby causing unutterable mischief. It is only the second time since Mrs. Arlington's arrival at The Cottage he has put in an appearance there, and each time business has been his sole cause for calling.

He is unmistakably surprised at Lilian's presence, but quickly suppresses all show of emotion. At first he looks faintly astonished, but so faintly that a second later one wonders whether the astonishment was there at all.

He shakes hands formally with Mrs. Arlington, and smiles in a somewhat restrained fashion upon Lilian. In truth he is much troubled at the latter's evident familiarity with the place and its inmate.

Lilian, jumping down from her high elevation, says to Cecilia:

"If you two are going to talk business, I shall go into the next room. The very thought of anything connected with the bugbear 'Law' depresses me to death. You can call me, Cecilia, when you have quite done."

"Don't be frightened," says Guy, pleasantly, though inwardly he frowns as he notes Lilian's unceremonious usage of his tenant's Christian name. "I shan't detain Mrs. Arlington two minutes."

Then he addresses himself exclusively to Cecilia, and says what he has to say in a perfectly courteous, perfectly respectful, perfectly freezing tone,—to all of

which Cecilia responds with a similar though rather exaggerated amount of coldness that deadens the natural sweetness of her behavior, and makes Lilian tell herself she has never yet seen Cecilia to such disadvantage, which is provoking, as she has set her heart above all things on making Guy like her lovely friend.

Then Sir Guy, with a distant salutation, withdraws; and both women feel, silently, as though an icicle had melted from their midst.

"I wonder why your guardian so dislikes me," says Mrs. Arlington, in a somewhat hurt tone. "He is ever most ungenerous in his treatment of me."

"Ungenerous!" hastily, "oh, no! he is not that. He is the most generous-minded man alive. But—but——"

"Quite so, dear,"—with a faint smile that yet has in it a tinge of bitterness. "You see there is a 'but.' I have never wronged him, yet he hates me."

"Never mind who hates you," says Lilian, impulsively. "Cyril loves you, and so do I."

"I can readily excuse the rest," says Mrs. Arlington, with a bright smile, kissing her pretty consoler with grateful warmth.

* * * * * * *

An hour after Lilian's return to Chetwoode on this momentous day, Guy, having screwed his courage to the sticking-point, enters his mother's boudoir, where he knows she and Lilian are sitting alone.

Lady Chetwoode is writing at a distant table; Miss Chesney, on a sofa close to the fire, is surreptitiously ruining—or, as she fondly but erroneously believes, is knitting away bravely at—the gray sock her ladyship has just laid down. Lilian's pretty lips are pursed up, her brow is puckered, her soft color has risen as she bends in strong hope over her work. The certain charm that belongs to this scene fails to impress Sir Guy, who is too full of agitated determination to leave room for minor interests.

"Lilian," he says, bluntly, with all the execrable want of tact that characterizes the very gentlest of men, "I wish you would not cultivate an acquaintance with Mrs. Arlington."

"Eh?" says Lilian, looking up in somewhat dazed amazement from her knitting, which is gradually getting into a more and more hopeless mess, "what is it, then, Sir Guy?"

"I wish you would not seek an intimacy with Mrs. Arlington," repeats Chetwoode, speaking all the more sternly in that he feels his courage ebbing.

The sternness, however, proves a mistake; Miss Chesney resents it, and, scenting battle afar off, encases herself in steel, and calmly, nay, eagerly, awaits the onslaught.

"What has put you out?" she says, speaking in a tone eminently calculated to incense the listener. "You seem disturbed. Has Heskett been poaching again? or has that new pointer turned out a *disappointer*? What has poor Mrs. Arlington done to you, that you must send her to Coventry?"

"Nothing, only——"

"Nothing! Oh, Sir Guy, surely you must have some substantial reason for tabooing her so entirely."

"Perhaps I have. At all events, I ask you most particularly to give up visiting at The Cottage."

"I am very sorry, indeed, to seem disobliging, but I shall not give up a friend without sufficient reason for so doing."

"A friend! Oh, this is madness," says Sir Guy, with a perceptible start; then, turning toward his mother, he says, in a rather louder tone, that adds to the imperiousness of his manner, "Mother, will *you* speak to Lilian, and desire her not to go?"

"But, my dear, why?" asks Lady Chetwoode, raising her eyes in a vague fashion from her pen.

"Because I will not have her associating with people of whom we know nothing," replies he, at his wit's end for an excuse. This one is barefaced, as at any other time he is far too liberal a man to condemn any one for being a mere stranger.

"I know a good deal of her," says Lilian, imperturbably, "and I think her charming. Perhaps,—who knows?—as she is unknown, she may prove a duchess

in disguise."

"She may, but I doubt it," replies he, a disagreeable note of irony running through his speech.

"Have you discovered her parentage?" asks Lady Chetwoode, hastily. "Is she of low birth? Lilian, my dear, don't have low tastes: there is nothing on earth," says Lady Chetwoode, mildly, "so—so—so *melancholy* as a person afflicted with low tastes."

"If thinking Mrs. Arlington a lady in the very best sense of the word is a low taste, I confess myself afflicted," says Miss Chesney, rather saucily; whereupon Lady Chetwoode, who knows mischief is brewing and is imbued with a wholesome horror of all disputes between her son and his ward, rises hurriedly and prepares to quit the room.

"I hope Archie will not miss his train," she says, irrelevantly. "He is always so careless, and I know it is important he should see his solicitor this evening about the transfer of York's farm. Where is Archibald?"

"In the library, I think," responds Lilian. "Dear Archie, how we shall miss him! shan't we, auntie?"

This tenderly regretful speech has reference to Mr. Chesney's intended departure, he having at last, through business, been compelled to leave Chetwoode and the object of his adoration.

"We shall, indeed. But remember,"—kindly,—"he has promised to return to us at Christmas with Taffy."

"I do remember," gayly; "but for that, I feel I should give way to tears."

Here Lady Chetwoode lays her hand upon the girl's shoulder, and presses it gently, entreatingly.

"Do not reject Guy's counsel, child," she says, softly; "you know he always speaks for your good."

Lilian makes no reply, but, gracefully turning her head, lays her red lips upon the gentle hand that still rests upon her shoulder.

Then Lady Chetwoode leaves the room, and Lilian and her guardian are alone. An ominous silence follows her departure. Lilian, who has abandoned the

unhappy sock, has now taken in hand a very valuable Dresden china cup, and is apparently examining it with the most profound interest.

"I have your promise not to go again to The Cottage?" asks Sir Guy at length, the exigency of the case causing his persistency.

"I think not."

"Why will you persist in this obstinate refusal?" angrily.

"For many reasons," with a light laugh. "Shall I tell you one? Did you ever hear of the 'relish of being forbidden?'"

"It is not a trifling matter. If it was possible, I would tell you what would prevent your ever wishing to know this Mrs. Arlington again. But, as it is, I am your guardian,"—determinately,—"I am responsible for you: I do not wish you to be intimate at The Cottage, and in this one matter at least I must be obeyed."

"Must you? we shall see," replies Miss Chesney, with a tantalizing laugh that, but for the sweet beauty of her *riante* face, her dewy, mutinous mouth, her great blue eyes, now ablaze with childish wrath, would have made him almost hate her. As it is, he is exceeding full of an indignation he scarcely seeks to control.

"I, as your guardian, forbid you to go to see that woman," he says, in a condensed tone.

"And why, pray?"

"I cannot explain: I simply forbid you. She is not fit to be an associate of yours."

"Then I will *not* be forbidden: so there!" says Miss Chesney, defiantly.

"Lilian, once for all, do not go to The Cottage again," says Guy, very pale. "If you do you will regret it."

"Is that a threat?"

"No; it is a warning. Take it as such if you are wise. If you go against my wishes in this matter, I shall refuse to take charge of you any longer."

"I don't want you to take charge of me," cries Lilian, tears of passion and wounded feeling in her eyes. In her excitement she has risen to her feet and stands confronting him, the Dresden cup still within her hand. "I am not a beggar, that I should crave your hospitality. I can no doubt find a home with

some one who will not hate me as you do." With this, the foolish child, losing her temper *in toto*, raises her hand and, because it is the nearest thing to her, flings the cherished cup upon the floor, where it lies shattered into a thousand pieces.

In silence Guy contemplates the ruins, in silence Lilian watches him; no faintest trace of remorse shows itself in her angry fair little face. I think the keenest regret Guy knows at this moment is that she isn't a boy, for the simple reason that he would dearly like to box her ears. Being a woman, and an extremely lovely one, he is necessarily disarmed.

"So now!" says Miss Lilian, still defiant.

"I have a great mind," replies Guy, raising his eyes slowly to hers, "to desire you to pick up every one of those fragments."

This remark is unworthy of him, proving that in his madness there is not even method. His speech falls as a red spark into the hot fire of Miss Chesney's wrath.

"*You* desire!" she says, blazing instantly. "What is it you would say? 'Desire!' On the contrary, *I* desire *you* to pick them up, and I shall stay here to see my commands obeyed."

She has come a little closer to him, and is now standing opposite him with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. With one firm little finger she points to the *débris*. She looks such a fragile creature possessed with such an angry spirit that Chetwoode, in spite of himself acknowledging the comicality of the situation, cannot altogether conceal a smile.

"Pick them up," says Lilian imperatively, for the second time.

"What a little Fury you are!" says Guy; and then, with a faint shrug, he succumbs, and, stooping, does pick up the pieces of discord.

"I do it," he says, raising himself when his task is completed, and letting severity once more harden his features, "to prevent my mother's being grieved by such an exhibition of——"

"No, you do not," interrupts she; "you do it because I wished it. For the future understand that, though you are my guardian, I will not be treated as though I were a wayward child."

"Well, you *have* a wicked temper!" says Guy, who is very pale, drawing his breath quickly. He smiles as he says it, but it is a smile more likely to incense than to soothe.

"I have not," retorts Lilian, passionately. "But that you goaded me I should never have given way to anger. It is you who have the wicked temper. I dislike you! I hate you! I wish I had never entered your house! And"—superbly, drawing herself up to her full height, which does not take her far—"I shall now leave it! And I shall never come back to it again!"

This fearful threat she hurls at his head with much unction. Not that she means it, but it is as well to be forcible on such occasions. The less you mean a thing, the more eloquent and vehement you should grow; the more you mean it, the less vehemence the better, because then it is energy thrown away: the fact accomplished later on will be crushing enough in itself. This is a rule that should be strictly observed.

Guy, whose head is held considerably higher than its wont, looks calmly out of the window, and disdains to take notice of this outburst.

His silence irritates Miss Chesney, who has still sufficient rage concealed within her to carry her victoriously through two quarrels. She is therefore about to let the vials of her wrath once more loose upon her unhappy guardian, when the door opens, and Florence, calm and stately, sweeps slowly in.

"Aunt Anne not here?" she says; and then she glances at Guy, who is still holding in his hands some of the fragments of the broken cup, and who is looking distinctly guilty, and then suspiciously at Lilian, whose soft face is crimson, and whose blue eyes are very much darker than usual.

There is a second's pause, and then Lilian, walking across the room, goes out, and bangs the door, with much unnecessary violence, behind her.

"Dear me!" exclaims Florence, affectedly, when she has recovered from the shock her delicate nerves have sustained through the abrupt closing of the door. "How vehement dear Lilian is! There is nothing so ruinous to one's manners as being brought up without the companionship of well-bred women. The loss of it makes a girl so—so—hoydenish, and——"

"I don't think Lilian hoydenish," interrupts Guy, who is in the humor to quarrel with his shadow,—especially, strange as it seems, with any one who may chance

to speak ill of the small shrew who has just flown like a whirlwind from the room.

"No?" says Miss Beauchamp, sweetly. "Perhaps you are right. As a rule,"—with an admiring glance, so deftly thrown as to make one regret it should be so utterly flung away,—"you always are. It may be only natural spirits, but if so,"—blandly,—"don't you think she has a great deal of natural spirits?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," says Sir Guy. As he answers he looks at her, and tells himself he hates all her pink and white fairness, her dull brown locks, her duller eyes, and more, *much* more than all, her large and fleshy nose. "Has she?" he says, in a tone that augurs ill for any one who may have the hardihood to carry on the conversation.

"I think she has," says Florence, innocently, a little touch of doggedness running beneath the innocency. "But, oh, Guy, is that Aunt Anne's favorite cup? the Dresden she so much prizes? I know it cost any amount of money. Who broke it?"

"I did," returns Guy, shortly, unblushingly, and moving away from her, quits the room.

Going up the staircase he pauses idly at a window that overlooks the avenue to watch Archibald disappearing up the drive in the dog-cart. Even as he watches him, vaguely, and without the least interest in his movements,—his entire thoughts being preoccupied with another object,—lo! that object emerges from under the lime-trees, and makes a light gesture that brings Chesney to a full stop.

Throwing the reins to the groom, he springs to the ground, and for some time the two cousins converse earnestly. Then Guy, who is now regarding them with eager attention, sees Chesney help Lilian into the trap, take his seat beside her and drive away up the avenue, past the huge laurustinus, under the elms, on out of sight.

A slight pang shoots across Guy's heart. Where are they going, these two? "I shall never return:"—her foolish words, that he so honestly considers foolish, come back to him now clearly, and with a strange persistency that troubles him, repeat themselves over again.

Chesney is going to London, but where is Lilian going? The child's lovely, angry face rises up before him, full of a keen reproach. What was she saying to

Archibald just now, in that quick vehement fashion of hers? was she upbraiding her guardian, or was she——? If Chesney had asked her then to take any immediate steps toward the fulfilling of her threat, would she, would she——?

Bah! he draws himself up with a shiver, and smiles contemptuously at the absurdity of his own fears, assuring himself she will certainly be home to dinner.

But dinner comes, and yet no Lilian! Lady Chetwoode has been obliged to give in an hour ago to one of her severest headaches, and now lies prone upon her bed, so that Miss Beauchamp and Guy perforce prepare to partake of that meal alone.

Florence is resplendent in cream-color and blue, which doesn't suit her in the least, though it is a pretty gown, one of the prettiest in her wardrobe, and has been donned by her to-night for Guy's special delectation, finding a *tête-à-tête* upon the cards.

Chetwoode regards her with feverish anxiety as she enters the drawing-room, hoping to hear some mention made of the absent Lilian; but in this hope he is disappointed. She might never have been a guest at Chetwoode, so little notice does Miss Beauchamp take of her non-appearance.

She says something amiable about "Aunt Anne's" headache, suggests a new pill as an unfailing cure for "that sort of thing," and then eats her dinner placidly, quietly, and, with a careful kindness that not one of the dishes shall feel slighted by her preference for another, patronizes all alike, without missing any. It is indeed a matter for wonder and secret admiration how Miss Beauchamp can so slowly, and with such a total absence of any appearance of gluttony, get through so much in so short a space of time. She has evidently a perfect talent for concealing any amount of viands without seeming to do so, which, it must be admitted, is a great charm.

To-night I fear Guy scarcely sees the beauty of it! He is conscious of feeling disgust and a very passion of impatience. Does she not notice Lilian's absence? Will she never speak of it? A strange fear lest she should express ignorance of his ward's whereabouts ties his own tongue. But she, she does, she *must* know, and presently no doubt will tell him.

How much more of that cream is she going to eat? Surely when the servants go she will say something. Now she has nearly done: thank the stars the last bit has disappeared! She is going to lay down her spoon and acknowledge herself

satisfied.

"I think, Guy, I will take a little more, *very* little, please. This new cook seems quite satisfactory," says Florence, in her slow, even, self-congratulatory way.

A naughty exclamation trembles on Sir Guy's lips; by a supreme effort he suppresses it, and gives her the smallest help of the desired cream that decency will permit. After which he motions silently though peremptorily to one of the men to remove *all* the dishes, lest by any chance his cousin should be tempted to try the cream a third time.

His own dinner has gone away literally untasted. A terrible misgiving is consuming him. Lilian's words are still ringing and surging in his brain,—"I shall never return." He recalls all her hastiness, her impulsive ways, her hot temper. What if, in a moment of pride and rage, she should have really gone with her cousin! If—it is impossible! ridiculously, utterly impossible! Yet his blood grows cold in spite of his would-be disbelief; a sickening shiver runs through his veins even while he tells himself he is a fool even to imagine such a thing. And yet, where is she?

"I suppose Lilian is at Mabel Steyne's," says Miss Beauchamp, calmly, having demolished the last bit on her plate with a deep sigh.

"Is she?" asks Guy, in a tone half stifled. As he speaks, he stoops as though to pick up an imaginary napkin.

"Your napkin is here," says Florence, in an uncompromising voice: "don't you see it?" pointing to where it rests upon the edge of the table. "Lilian, then,"—with a scrutinizing glance,—"did not tell you where she was going?"

"No. There is no reason why she should."

"Well, I think there is," with a low, perfectly lady-like, but extremely irritating laugh: "for one thing, her silence has cost you your dinner. I am sorry I did not relieve your mind by telling you before. But I could not possibly guess her absence could afflict you so severely. She said something this morning about going to see Mabel."

"I dare say," quietly.

The minutes drag. Miss Beauchamp gets through an unlimited quantity of dried fruit and two particularly fine pears in no time. She is looking longingly at a

third, when Guy rises impatiently.

"If she is at Mabel's I suppose I had better go and bring her home," he says, glancing at the clock. "It is a quarter to nine."

"I really do not think you need trouble yourself," speaking somewhat warmly for her: "Mabel is sure to send her home in good time, if she is there!" She says this slowly, meaningly, and marks how he winces and changes color at her words. "Then think how cold the night is!" with a comfortable shiver and a glance at the leaping fire.

"Of course she is at Steynemore," says Guy, hastily.

"I would not be too sure: Lilian's movements are always uncertain: one never quite knows what she is going to do next. Really,"—with a repetition of her unpleasant laugh,—"when I saw her stepping into the dog-cart with her cousin to-day, I said to myself that I should not at all wonder if——"

"What?" sternly, turning full upon her a pale face and flashing eyes. Miss Beauchamp's pluck always melts under Guy's anger.

"Nothing," sullenly; "nothing at least that can concern you. I was merely hurrying on in my own mind a marriage that must eventually come off. The idea was absurd, of course, as any woman would prefer a fashionable wedding to all the inconvenience attendant on a runaway match."

"You mean——"

"I mean"—complacently—"Lilian's marriage with her cousin."

"You speak"—biting his lips to maintain his composure—"as though it was all arranged."

"And is it not?" with well-affected surprise. "I should have thought you, as her guardian, would have known all about it. Perhaps I speak prematurely; but one must be blind indeed not to see how matters are between them. Do sit down, Guy: it fidgets one to see you so undecided. Of course, if Lilian is at Steynemore she is quite safe."

"Still, she may be expecting some one to go for her."

"I think, if so, she would have told you she was going," dryly.

"Tom hates sending his horses out at night," says Guy,—which is a weak remark, Tom Steyne being far too indolent a man to make a point of hating anything.

"Does he?" with calm surprise, and a prolonged scrutiny of her cousin's face. "I fancied him the most careless of men on that particular subject. Before he was married he used to drive over here night after night, and not care in the least how long he kept the wretched animals standing in the cold."

"But that was when he was making love to Mabel. A man in love will commit any crime."

"Oh, no, long before that."

"Perhaps, then, it was when he was making love to you," with a slight smile.

This is a sore point.

"I don't remember that time," says Miss Beauchamp with perfect calmness but a suspicious indrawing of her rather meagre lips. "If some one must go out to-night, Guy, why not send Thomas?"

"Because I prefer going myself," replies he, quietly.

Passing through the hall on his way to the door, he catches up a heavy plaid that happens to be lying there, on a side-couch, and, springing into the open trap outside, drives away quickly under the pale cold rays of the moon.

He has refused to take any of the servants with him, and so, alone with his thoughts, follows the road that leads to Steynemore.

They are not pleasant thoughts. Being only a man, he has accepted Miss Beauchamp's pretended doubts about Lilian's safety as real, and almost persuades himself his present journey will bear him only bitter disappointment. As to what he is going to do if Lilian has not been seen at Steynemore, that is a matter on which he refuses to speculate. Drawing near the house, his suspense and fear grow almost beyond bounds. Dismounting at the hall-door, which stands partly open, he flings the reins to Jericho, and going into the hall, turns in the direction of the drawing-room.

While he stands without, trying to summon courage to enter boldly, and literally trembling with suppressed anxiety, a low soft laugh breaks upon his ear. As he hears it, the blood rushes to his face; involuntarily he raises his hand to his

throat, and then (and only then) quite realizes how awful has been the terror that for four long hours has been consuming him.

The next instant, cold and collected, he turns the handle of the door, and goes in.

Upon a low seat opposite Mabel Steyne sits Lilian, evidently in the gayest spirits. No shadow of depression, no thought of all the mental agony he has been enduring, mars the brightness of her *mignonne* face. She is laughing. Her lustrous azure eyes are turned upward to her friend, who is laughing also in apparent appreciation of her guest's jest; her parted lips make merry dimples in her cheeks; her whole face is full of soft lines of amusement.

As Guy comes in, Mabel rises with a little exclamation, and goes toward him with outstretched hands.

"Why, Guy!" she says, "good boy! Have you come for Lilian? I was just going to order the carriage to send her home. Did you walk or drive?"

"I drove." He has studiously since his entrance kept his eyes from Lilian. The smile has faded from her lips, the happy light from her eyes; she has turned a pale, proud little face to the fire, away from her guardian.

"I made Lilian stay to dinner," says Mabel, who is too clever not to have remarked the painful constraint existing between her guest and Sir Guy. "Tom has been out all day shooting and dining at the Bellairs, so I entreated her to stay and bear me company. Won't you sit down for a while? It is early yet; there cannot be any hurry."

"No, thank you. My mother has a bad headache, and, as she does not know where Lilian is, I think it better to get home."

"Oh, if auntie has a headache, of course——"

"I shall go and put on my hat," says Lilian, speaking for the first time, and rising with slow reluctance from her seat. "Don't stir, Mab: I shan't be a minute: my things are all in the next room."

"Lilian is not very well, I fear," Mrs. Steyne says, when the door has closed upon her, "or else something has annoyed her. I am not sure which," with a quick glance at him. "She would eat no dinner, and her spirits are very fitful. But she did not tell me what was the matter, and I did not like to ask her. She is certainly vexed about something, and it is a shame she should be made unhappy, poor

pretty child!" with another quick glance.

"I thought she seemed in radiant spirits just now," remarks Guy, coldly.

"Yes; but half an hour ago she was so depressed I was quite uneasy about her: that is why I used the word 'fitful.' Get her to eat something before she goes to bed," says kindly Mabel, in an undertone, as Lilian returns equipped for her journey. "Good-night, dear," kissing her. "Have you wraps, Guy?"

"Yes, plenty. Good-night." And Mabel, standing on the door-steps, watches them until they have vanished beneath the starlight.

It is a dark but very lovely night. Far above them in the dim serene blue a fair young crescent moon rides bravely. As yet but a few stars are visible, and they gleam and shiver and twinkle in the eternal dome, restless as the hearts of the two beings now gazing silently upon their beauty.

"Silently, one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven,
Blossomed the lonely stars, the forget-me-nots of the
angels."

A creeping shadow lies among the trees; a certain sense of loneliness dwells in the long avenue of Steynemore as they pass beneath the branches of the overhanging foliage. A quick wind rustles by them, sad as a sigh from Nature's suffering breast, chill as the sense of injury that hangs upon their own bosoms.

Coming out upon the unshaded road, a greater light falls upon them. The darkness seems less drear, the feeling of separation more remote, though still Pride sits with triumphant mien between them, with his great wings outspread to conceal effectually any penitent glance or thought. The tender pensive beauty of the growing night is almost lost upon them.

"All round was still and calm; the noon of night
Was fast approaching; up th' unclouded sky
The glorious moon pursued her path of light,
And shed a silv'ry splendor far and nigh;
No sound, save of the night-wind's gentlest sigh,
Could reach the ear."

A dead silence reigns between them: they both gaze with admirable perseverance at the horse's ears. Never before has that good animal been troubled by two such steady stares. Then Lilian stirs slightly, and a little chattering sound escapes her, that rouses Guy to speech.

"You are tired?" he says, in freezing tones.

"Very."

"Cold?"

"*Very.*"

"Then put this round you," disagreeably, but with evident anxiety, producing the cozy plaid.

"No, thank you."

"Why?" surprised.

"Because it is yours," replies she, with such open and childish spite as at any other time would have brought a smile to his lips. Now it brings only a dull pain to his heart.

"I am sorry I only brought what you will not wear," he answers: "it did not occur to me you might carry your dislike to me even to my clothes. In future I shall be wiser."

Silence.

"Do put it on!" anxiously: "you were coughing all last week."

"I wouldn't be hypocritical, if I were you," with withering scorn. "I feel sure it would be a matter for rejoicing, where you are concerned, if I coughed all next week, and the week after. No: keep your plaid."

"You are the most willful girl I ever met," wrathfully.

"No doubt. I dare say you have met only angels. I am not one, I rejoice to say. Florence is, you know; and one piece of perfection should be enough in any household."

Silence again. Not a sound upon the night-air but the clatter of the horse's feet as he covers bravely the crisp dry road, and the rushing of the wind. It is a cold wind, sharp and wintry. It whistles past them, now they have gained the side of the bare moor, with cruel keenness, cutting uncivilly the tops of their ears, and making them sink their necks lower in their coverings.

Miss Chesney's small hands lie naked upon the rug. Even in the indistinct light he knows that they are shivering and almost blue.

"Where are your gloves?" he asks, when he can bear the enforced stillness no longer.

"I forgot them at Mabel's."

Impulsively he lays his own bare hand upon hers, and finds it chilled, nearly freezing.

"Keep your hands inside the rug," he says, angrily, though there is a strong current of pain underlying the anger, "and put this shawl on you directly."

"I will not," says Lilian, though in truth she is dying for it.

"You shall," returns Chetwoode, quietly, in a tone he seldom uses, but which, when used, is seldom disobeyed. Lilian submits to the muffling in silence, and, though outwardly ungrateful, is inwardly honestly rejoiced at it. As he fastens it beneath her chin, he stoops his head, until his eyes are on a level with hers.

"Was it kind of you, or proper, do you think, to make me so—so uneasy as I have been all this afternoon and evening?" he asks, compelling her to return his gaze.

"Were you uneasy?" says Miss Chesney, viciously and utterly unrepenting: "I am glad of it."

"Was it part of your plan to make my mother wretched also?" This is a slight exaggeration, as Lady Chetwoode has not even been bordering on the "wretched," and is, in fact, up to the present moment totally ignorant of Lilian's absence.

"I certainly did not mean to make dear auntie unhappy," in a faintly-troubled tone. "But I shall tell her all the truth, and ask her pardon, when I get home, —*back*, I mean," with studied correction of the sweet word.

"What is the truth?"

"First, that I broke her lovely cup. And then I shall tell her why I stayed so long at Steynemore."

"And what will that be?"

"You know very well. I shall just say to her, 'Auntie, your son, Sir Guy, behaved so rudely to me this afternoon, I was obliged to leave Chetwoode for a while.' Then she will forgive me."

Sir Guy laughs in spite of himself; and Lilian, could he only have peeped into the deep recesses of the plaid, might also be plainly seen with her pretty lips apart and all her naughty bewitching face dimpling with laughter.

These frivolous symptoms are, however, rapidly and sternly suppressed on both sides.

"I really cannot see what awful crime I have committed to make you so taciturn," she says, presently, with a view to discussing the subject. "I merely went for a drive with my cousin, as he should pass Steynemore on his way to the station."

"Perhaps that was just what made my misery," softly.

"What! my going for a short drive with Archie? Really, Sir Guy, you will soon be taken as a model of propriety. Poor old Archie! I am afraid I shan't be able to make you miserable in that way again for a very long time. How I wish those tiresome lawyers would let him alone!"

"Ask them to surrender him," says Guy, irritably.

"I would,"—cheerfully,—"if I thought it would do the least good. But I know they are all made of adamant."

"Lilian,"—suddenly, unexpectedly,—"is there anything between you and your cousin?"

"Who?"—with wide, innocent, suspiciously innocent eyes,—"Taffy?"

"No," impatiently: "of course I mean Chesney," looking at her with devouring interest.

"Yes,"—disconsolately, with a desire for revenge,—"more miles than I care to count."

"I feel"—steadily—"it is a gross rudeness my asking, and I know you need not answer me unless you like; but"—with a quick breath—"try to answer my question. Has anything passed between you and Chesney?"

"Not much," mildly: "one thrilling love-letter, and that ring."

"He never asked you to marry him?" with renewed hope.

"Oh, by the bye, I quite forgot that," indifferently. "Yes, he did ask me so much."

"And you refused him?" asks Guy, eagerly, intensely, growing white and cold beneath the moon's pitiless rays, that seem to take a heartless pleasure in lighting up his agitated face at this moment. But Lilian's eyes are turned away from his: so this degradation is spared him.

"No—n—o, not exactly," replies she.

"You accepted him?" with dry lips and growing despair.

"N—o, not exactly," again returns Miss Chesney, with affected hesitation.

"Then what *did* you do?" passionately, his impatient fear getting the better of his temper.

"I don't feel myself at liberty to tell you," retorts Lilian, with a provoking assumption of dignity.

Sir Guy looks as though he would like to give her a good shake, though indeed it is quite a question whether he has even the spirits for so much. He relapses into sulky silence, and makes no further attempt at conversation.

"However," says Lilian, to whom silence is always irksome, "I don't mind telling you what I shall do if he asks me again."

"What?" almost indifferently.

"I shall accept him."

"You will do very wisely," in a clear though constrained voice that doesn't altogether impose upon Lilian, but nevertheless disagrees with her. "He is very rich, very handsome, and a very good fellow all round."

"I don't much care about good fellows," perversely: "they are generally deadly slow; I am almost sure I prefer the other sort. I am afraid mine is not a well-regulated mind, as I confess I always feel more kindly disposed toward a man when I hear something bad of him."

"Perhaps if I told you something bad about myself it might make you feel more kindly disposed toward me," with a slight smile.

"Perhaps it might. But I believe you are incapable of a bad action. Besides, if I felt myself going to like you, I should stop myself instantly."

A pained hurt expression falls into his eyes.

"I think," he says, very gently, "you must make a point of reserving all your cruel speeches for me alone. Do you guess how they hurt, child? No, I am sure you do not: your face is far too sweet to belong to one who would willingly inflict pain. Am I to be always despised and hated? Why will you never be friends with me?"

"Because"—in a very low whisper—"you are so seldom good to me."

"Am I? You will never know how hard I try to be. But"—taking her hand in his—"my efforts are always vain." He glances sorrowfully at the little hand he holds, and then at the pretty face beneath the velvet hat so near him. Lilian does not return his glance: her eyes are lowered, her other hand is straying nervously over the tiger-skin that covers her knees; they have forgotten all about the cold,

the dreary night, everything; for a full half mile they drive on thus silently, her hand resting unresistingly in his; after which he again breaks the quiet that exists between them.

"Did you mean what you said a little time ago about Chetwoode not being your home?"

"I suppose so," in a rather changed and far softer tone. "Yes. What claim have I on Chetwoode?"

"But your tone implied that if even you had a claim it would be distasteful to you."

"Did it?"

"Don't you know it did?"

"Well, perhaps I didn't mean quite that. Did *you* mean all you said this morning?"

"Not all, I suppose."

"How much of it, then?"

"Unless I were to go through the whole of our conversation again, I could not tell you that, and I have no wish to do so: to be pained"—in a low voice—"as I have been, once in a day is surely sufficient."

"Don't imagine I feel the least sorrow for you," says Lilian, making a wild attempt at recovering her ill humor, which has melted and vanished away.

"I don't imagine it. How could I? One can scarcely feel sorrow or pity for a person whom one openly professes to 'hate' and 'despise,'" markedly, while searching her face anxiously with his eyes.

Miss Chesney pauses. A short but sharp battle takes place within her breast. Then she raises her face and meets his eyes, while a faint sweet smile grows within her own: impelled half by a feeling of coquetry, half by a desire to atone, she lets the fingers he has still imprisoned close with the daintiest pressure upon his.

"Perhaps," she whispers, leaning a little toward him, and raising her lips very close to his cheek as though afraid of being heard by the intrusive wind,

"perhaps I did not quite mean that either."

Then, seeing how his whole expression changes and brightens, she half regrets her tender speech, and says instantly, in her most unsentimental fashion:

"Pray, Sir Guy, are you going to make your horse walk all the way home? Can you not pity the sorrows of a poor little ward? I am absolutely frozen: do stir him up, lazy fellow, or I shall get out and run. Surely it is too late in the year for nocturnal rambles."

"If my life depended upon it, I don't believe I could make him go a bit faster," returns he, telling his lie unblushingly.

"I forgot you were disabled," says Miss Chesney, demurely, letting her long lashes droop until they partially (but only partially) conceal her eyes from her guardian. "How remiss I am! When one has only got the use of one hand, one can do so little; perhaps"—preparing to withdraw her fingers slowly, lingeringly from his—"if I were to restore you both yours, you might be able to persuade that horse to take us home before morning."

"I beg you will give yourself no trouble on my account," says Guy, hastily: "I don't want anything restored. And if you are really anxious to get 'home'"—with a pleased and grateful smile, "I feel sure I shall be able to manage this slow brute single-handed."

So saying, he touches up the good animal in question rather smartly, which so astonishes the willing creature that he takes to his heels, and never draws breath until he pulls up before the hall door at Chetwoode.

"Parkins, get us some supper in the library," says Sir Guy, addressing the ancient butler as he enters: "the drive has given Miss Chesney and me an appetite."

"Yes, Sir Guy, directly," says Parkins, and, going down-stairs to the other servants, gives it as his opinion that "Sir Guy and Miss Chesney are going to make a match of it. For when two couples," says Mr. Parkins, who is at all times rather dim about the exact meaning of his sentences, "when two couples takes to eating *teet-a-teet*, it is all up with 'em."

Whereupon cook says, "Lor!" which is her usual expletive, and means anything and everything; and Jane, the upper housemaid, who has a weakness for old Parkins's sayings, tells him with a flattering smile that he is "dreadful knowin'."

Meantime, Sir Guy having ascertained that Miss Beauchamp has gone to her room, and that his mother is better, and asleep, he and Lilian repair to the library, where a cozy supper is awaiting them, and a cheerful fire burning.

Now that they are again in-doors, out of the friendly darkness, with the full light of several lamps upon them, a second edition of their early restraint—milder, perhaps, but still oppressive—most unaccountably falls between them.

Silently, and very gently, but somewhat distantly, he unfolds the plaid from round her slight figure, and, drawing a chair for her to the table, seats himself at a decided distance. Then he asks her with exemplary politeness what she will have, and she answers him; then he helps her, and then he helps himself; and then they both wonder secretly what the other is going to say next.

But Lilian, who is fighting with a wild desire for laughter, and who is in her airiest mood, through having been compelled, by pride, to suppress all day her usual good spirits, decides on making a final effort at breaking down the barrier between them.

Raising the glass of wine beside her, she touches it lightly with her lips, and says, gayly:

"Come, fill, and pledge me, Sir Guy. But stay; first let me give you a little quotation that I hope will fall as a drop of nectar into your cup and chase that nasty little frown from your brow. Have I your leave to speak?" with a suspicion of coquetry in her manner.

Chetwoode's handsome lips part in a pleased smile: he turns his face gladly, willingly, to hers.

"Why do you ask permission of your slave, O Queen of Hearts?" he answers, softly, catching the infection of her gayety. He gazes at her with unchecked and growing admiration, his whole heart in his eyes; telling himself, as he has told himself a thousand times before, that to-night she is looking her fairest.

Her cheeks are flushed from her late drive; one or two glittering golden lovelocks have been driven by the rough wind from their natural resting-place, and now lie in gracious disorder on her white forehead; her lustrous sapphire eyes are gleaming upon him, full of unsubdued laughter; her lips are parted, showing all the small even teeth within.

She stoops toward him, and clinking her glass against his with the prettiest show

of *bonne camaraderie*, whispers, softly:

"Come, let us be happy together."

"Together!" repeats Guy, unsteadily, losing his head, and rising abruptly from his seat as though to go to her. She half rises also, seriously frightened at the unexpected effect of her mad words. What is he going to say to her? What folly urged her on to repeat that ridiculous line? The idea of flight has just time to cross her mind, but not time to be acted upon, when the door is thrown open suddenly, and Cyril—who has at this moment returned from his dinner party—entering noisily, comes to her rescue.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I have some naked thoughts that roam about
And loudly knock to have their passage out."—MILTON.

It goes without telling that Lilian gains the day, Guy's one solitary attempt at mastery having failed ignominiously. She persists in her allegiance to her friend, and visits The Cottage regularly as ever; being even more tender than usual in her manner toward Cecilia, as she recollects the narrowness of him who could (as she believes) without cause condemn her. And Sir Guy, though resenting her defiance of his wishes, and smarting under the knowledge of it, accepts defeat humbly, and never again refers to the subject of the widow, which henceforth is a tabooed one between them.

Soon after this, indeed, an event occurs that puts an end to all reason why Lilian should not be as friendly with Mrs. Arlington as she may choose. One afternoon, most unexpectedly, Colonel Trant, coming to Chetwoode, demands a private interview with Sir Guy. Some faint breaths of the scandal that so closely and dishonorably connects his name with Cecilia's have reached his ears, and, knowing of her engagement with Cyril, he has hastened to Chetwoode to clear her in the eyes of its world.

Without apology, he treats Guy to a succinct and studied account of Cecilia's history,—tells of all her sorrows, and gentle forbearance, and innocence so falsely betrayed, nor even conceals from him his own deep love for her, and his two rejections, but makes no mention of Cyril throughout the interview.

Guy, as he listens, grows remorseful, and full of self-reproach,—more, perhaps, for the injustice done to his friend in his thoughts, than for all the harsh words used toward Mrs. Arlington, though he is too clean-bred not to regret that also.

He still shrinks from all idea of Cecilia as a wife for Cyril. The daughter of a man who, though of good birth, was too sharp in his dealings for decent society, and the wife of a man, who, though rich in worldly goods, had no pretensions to be a gentleman at all, could certainly be no mate for a Chetwoode. A woman of no social standing whatsoever, with presumably only a pretty face for a dowry,—Cyril must be mad to dream of her! For him, Guy, want of fortune need not

signify; but for Cyril, with his expensive habits, to think of settling down with a wife on nine hundred a year is simply folly.

And then Cyril's brother thinks with regret of a certain Lady Fanny Stapleton, who, it is a notorious fact, might be had by Cyril for the asking. Guy himself, it may be remarked, would not have Lady Fanny at any price, she being rather wanting in the matter of nose and neck; but younger brothers have no right to cultivate fastidious tastes, and her snubby ladyship has a great admiration for Cyril, and a fabulous fortune.

All the time Trant is singing Cecilia's praises, Guy is secretly sighing over Lady Fanny and her comfortable thousands, and is wishing The Cottage had been knocked into fine dust before Mrs. Arlington had expressed a desire to reside there.

Nevertheless he is very gentle in his manner toward his former colonel all the day, spending with him every minute he stays, and going with him to the railway station when at night he decides on returning to town. Inwardly he knows he would like to ask his forgiveness for the wrong he has done him in his thoughts, but hardly thinks it wisdom to let him know how guilty toward him he has been. Cyril, he is fully persuaded, will never betray him; and he shrinks from confessing what would probably only cause pain and create an eternal breach between them.

However, his conscience so far smites him that he does still further penance toward the close of the evening.

Meeting Cyril on his way to dress just before dinner, he stops him.

"If you will accept an apology from me so late in the day," he says, "I now offer you one for what I said of Mrs. Arlington some time since. Trant has told me all the truth. I wronged her grossly, although"—with a faint touch of bitterness —"when I *lied* about her I did so unconsciously."

"Don't say another word, old man," says Cyril, heartily, and much gratified, laying his hand lightly upon his shoulder. "I knew you would discover your mistake in time. I confess at the moment it vexed me you should lend yourself to the spreading of such an absurd report."

"Yes, I was wrong." Then, with some hesitation, "Still, there was an excuse for me. We knew nothing of her. We know nothing still that we can care to know."

"How you worry yourself!" says Cyril, with a careless shrug, letting his hand, however, drop from his brother's shoulder, as he fully understands the drift of his conversation. "Why can't you let things slide as I do? It is no end a better plan."

"I am only thinking of a remark you made a long time ago," replies Guy, with a laugh, partially deceived by Cyril's indifferent manner: "shall I remind you of it? 'Samivel, Samivel, my son, never marry a widder.'"

CHAPTER XXV.

"*Hel.*—How happy some, o'er other some can be!"
—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

It is very close on Christmas; another week will bring in the twenty-fifth of December, with all its absurd affectation of merriment and light-heartedness.

Is any one, except a child, ever really happy at Christmas, I wonder? Is it then one chooses to forget the loved and lost? to thrust out of sight the regrets that goad and burn? Nay, rather, is it not then our hearts bleed most freely, while our eyes grow dim with useless tears, and a great sorrow that touches on despair falls upon us, as we look upon the vacant seat and grow sick with longing for the "days that are no more?"

Surely it is then we learn how vain is our determination to forget those unobtrusive ones who cannot by voice or touch demand attention. The haunting face, that once full of youth and beauty was all the world to us, rises from its chill shroud and dares us to be happy. The poor eyes, once so sweet, so full of gayest laughter, now closed and mute forever, gleam upon us, perchance across the flowers and fruit, and, checking the living smile upon our lips, ask us reproachfully how is it with us, that we can so quickly shut from them the doors of our hearts, after all our passionate protests, our vows ever to remember.

Oh, how soon, how *soon*, do we cease our lamentations for our silent dead!

When all is told, old Father Christmas is a mighty humbug: so I say and think, but I would not have you agree with me. Forgive me this unorthodox sentiment, and let us return to our—lamb!

Archibald has returned to Chetwoode; so has Taffy. The latter is looking bigger, fuller, and, as Mrs. Tipping says, examining him through her spectacles with a criticising air, "more the man," to his intense disgust. He embraces Lilian and Lady Chetwoode, and very nearly Miss Beauchamp, on his arrival, in the exuberance of his joy at finding himself once more within their doors, and is welcomed with effusion by every individual member of the household.

Archibald, on the contrary, appears rather done up, and faded, and, though

evidently happy at being again in his old quarters, still seems sad at heart, and discontented.

He follows Lilian's movements in a very melancholy fashion, and herself also, until it becomes apparent to every one that his depression arises from his increasing infatuation for her; while she, to do her justice, hardly pretends to encourage him at all. He lives in contemplation of her beauty and her saucy ways, and is unmistakably *distrait* when circumstances call her from his sight.

In his case "absence" has indeed made the heart grow fonder, as he is, if possible, more imbecile about her now than when he left, and, after struggling with his feelings for a few days, finally makes up his mind to tempt fortune again, and lay himself and his possessions at his idol's feet.

* * * * * * *

It is the wettest of wet days; against the window-panes the angry rain-drops are flinging themselves madly, as though desirous of entering and rendering more dismal the room within, which happens to be the library.

Sir Guy is standing at the bow-window, gazing disconsolately upon the blurred scene outside. Cyril is lounging in an easy chair with a magazine before him, making a very creditable attempt at reading. Archibald and Taffy are indulging in a mild bet as to which occupant of the room will make the first remark.

Lady Chetwoode is knitting her one hundred and twenty-fourth sock for the year. Lilian is dreaming, with her large eyes fixed upon the fire. The inestimable Florence (need I say it?) is smothered in crewel wools, and is putting a rose-colored eye into her already quite too fearful parrot.

"I wonder what we shall do all day," says Guy, suddenly, in tones of the deepest melancholy. Whereupon Taffy, who has been betting on Cyril, and Chesney, who has been laying on Lilian, are naturally, though secretly indignant.

"Just what we have been doing all the rest of the day,—nothing," replies Lilian, lazily: "could anything be more desirable?"

"I hope it will be fine to-morrow," says Mr. Musgrave, in an aggrieved voice. "But it won't, I shouldn't wonder, just because the meet is to be at Bellairs, and one always puts in such a good day there."

"I haven't got enough pluck to think of to-morrow," says Guy, still melancholy:

"to-day engrosses all my thoughts. What *is* to become of us?"

"Let us get up a spelling-bee," says Miss Beauchamp, with cheerful alacrity; "they are so amusing."

"Oh, don't! please, Miss Beauchamp, don't," entreats Taffy, tearfully,—"unless you want to disgrace me eternally. I can't spell anything; and, even if I could, the very fact of having a word hurled at my head would make me forget all about it, even were it an old acquaintance."

"But, my dear fellow," says Cyril, laying down his "Temple Bar," with all the air of a man prepared to argue until he and his adversary are black in the face, "that is the fun of the whole matter. If you spelled well you would be looked upon as a swindler. The greater mistakes you make, the more delighted we shall be; and if you could only succeed like that man in 'Caste' in spelling character with a K, we should give you two or three rounds of applause. People never get up spelling-bees to hear good spelling: the discomfiture of their neighbors is what amuses them most. Have I relieved your mind?"

"Tremendously. Nevertheless, I fling myself upon your tender mercies, Miss Beauchamp, and don't let us go in for spelling."

"Then let us have an historical-bee," substitutes Florence, amiably; she is always tender where Taffy is concerned.

"The very thing," declares Cyril, getting up an expression of the strongest hope. "Perhaps, if you do, I shall get answers to two or three important questions that have been tormenting me for years. For instance, I want to know whether the 'gossip's bowl' we read of was made of Wedgwood or Worcester, and why our ancestors were so uncomfortable as to take their tea out of 'dishes.' It must have got very cold, don't you think? to say nothing at all of the inconvenience of being obliged to lift it to one's lips with both hands."

"It didn't mean an actual 'dish,'" replies Florence, forgetting the parrot's rosy optic for a moment, in her desire to correct his ignorance: "it was merely a term for what we now call cup."

"No, was it?" says Cyril, with an affectation of intense astonishment; whereupon they all laugh.

"Talking of tea," says Lady Chetwoode, "I wonder where it is. Taffy, my dear, will you ring the bell?"

Tea is brought, tea is consumed; but still the rain rains on, and their spirits are at zero.

"I shall go out, 'hail, rain, or shine,'" says Cyril, springing to his feet with sudden desperation.

"So shall I," declares Guy, "to the stables. Taffy, will you come with me?"

"As nobody wants me," says Lilian, "I shall make a point of wanting somebody. Archie, come and have a game of billiards with me before dinner."

"My dear Guy, does it not still rain very hard?" protests Florence, anxiously.

"Very," laughing.

"You will get wet," with increasing anxiety, and a tender glance cleverly directed.

"Wet! he will get drenched," exclaims Cyril; "he will probably get his death of cold, and die of inflammation of the lungs. It is horrible to think of it! Guy, be warned; accept Florence's invitation to stay here with her, and be happy and dry. As sure as you are out to-day, you may prepare to shed this mortal coil."

"Forgive me, Florence, I must go or suffocate," says Guy, refusing to be warned, or to accept Miss Beauchamp's delicate hint: and together he and Musgrave sally forth to inspect the stables, while Lilian and Archibald retire to the billiard-room.

When they have played for some time, and Archibald has meanly allowed Lilian to win all the games under the mistaken impression that he is thereby cajoling her into staying with him longer than she otherwise might have done, she suddenly destroys the illusion by throwing down her cue impatiently, and saying, with a delicious little pout:

"I hate playing with people who know nothing about the game! there is no excitement in it. I remark when I play with you I always win. You're a regular muff at billiards, Archie; that's what *you* are."

This is a severe blow to Archie's pride, who is a first-class hand at billiards; but he grins and bears it.

"If you will give me a few more lessons," he says, humbly, "I dare say I shall improve."

"No, I can't afford to waste my time, and you are too tiresome. Let us go into the drawing-room."

"Rather let us stay here for a while," he says, earnestly. "They are all out, and I—I have something to say to you."

During the last half-hour one of the men has come in and given the fire a poke and lit the lamps, so that the room looks quite seductive. Miss Chesney, glancing doubtfully round, acknowledges so much, and prepares to give in.

"I hope it is something pleasant," she says, *àpropos* of Archie's last remark. "You have been looking downright miserable for days. I hope sincerely, you are not going melancholy mad, but I have my doubts of it. What is the matter with you, Archie? You used to be quite a charming companion, but now you are very much the reverse. Sometimes, when with you, your appearance is so dejected that if I smile I feel absolutely heartless. Do try to cheer up, there's a good boy."

"A fellow can't be always simpering, especially when he is wretched," retorts he, moodily.

"Then don't be wretched. That is the very thing to which I object. You are the very last man in the world who ought to suffer from the blues. Anything wrong with you?"

"Everything. I love a woman who doesn't care in the very least for me."

"Oh, so that is what you have been doing in London, is it?" says Lilian, after a short pause that makes her words still more impressive. "I certainly did think you weren't in a very great hurry to return, and that you looked rather blighted when you did come. I doubt you have been dancing the 'Geliebt und verloren' waltzes once too often. Did she refuse you?"

"I love you, Lilian, and only you," returns he, reproachfully. "No, do not turn from me; let me plead my cause once more. Darling, I have indeed tried to live without you, and have failed; if you reject me again you will drive me to destruction. Lilian, be merciful; say something kind to me."

"You promised me," says Lilian, nervously, moving away from him, "never to speak on this subject again. Oh, why is it that some people will insist on falling in love with other people? There is something so stupid about it. Now, *I* never fall in love; why cannot you follow my good example?"

"I am not bloodless, or——"

"Neither am I," holding up her pretty hand between her and the fire, so that the rich blood shows through the closed fingers of it. "But I have common sense, the one thing you lack."

"*You* are the one thing I lack," possessing himself of her hand and kissing it fatuously. "Without you I lack everything. Beloved, must I learn to look upon you as my curse? Give me, I entreat you, one little word of encouragement, if only one; I starve for want of it. If you only knew how I have clung for months, and am still clinging, to the barest shadow of a hope, you would think twice before you destroyed that one faint gleam of happiness."

"This is dreadful," says Lilian, piteously, the ready tears gathering in her eyes. "Would you marry a woman who does not love you?"

"I would,"—eagerly,—"when that woman assures me she does not love another, and I have your word for that."

Lilian winces. Then, trying to recover her spirits:

"'What one suffers for one's country—*men*!'" she misquotes, with an affectation of lightness. "Archie, billiards have a demoralizing effect upon you. I shan't play with you again."

"I don't want to bribe you," says Chesney, turning a little pale, and declining to notice her interruption; "I should be sorry to think I could do so; but I have ten thousand a year, and if you will marry me you shall have a thousand a year pin-money, and five thousand if you survive me."

"It would spoil my entire life fearing I shouldn't survive you," says Miss Chesney, who, in spite of her nervousness, or because of it, is longing to laugh.

"You will, you need not be afraid of that."

"It sounds dazzling," murmurs Lilian, "more especially when you give me your word you will die first; but still I think it downright shabby you don't offer me the whole ten."

"So I will!"—eagerly—"if——"

"Nonsense, Archie," hastily: "don't be absurd. Cannot you see I am only in jest? I am not going to marry any one, as I told you before. Come now,"—anxiously,

—"don't look so dismal. You know I am very, *very* fond of you, but after all one cannot marry every one one is fond of."

"I suppose not," gloomily.

"Then do try to look a little pleasanter. They will all notice your depression when we return to them."

"I don't care," with increasing gloom.

"But I do. Archie, look here, dear,"—taking the high and moral tone,—"do you think it is right of you to go on like this, just as if——"

"I don't care a hang what is right, or what is wrong," says Mr. Chesney, with considerable vehemence. "I only know you are the only woman I ever really cared for, and you won't have me. Nothing else is of the slightest consequence."

"I am not the only woman in the world. Time will show you there are others ten times nicer and lovelier."

"I don't believe it."

"Because you don't wish to," angrily. "In the first place, I am far too small to be lovely."

"You are tall enough for my fancy."

"And my mouth is too large," with growing irritation.

"It is small enough for my taste."

"And sometimes, when the summer is very hot, my skin gets quite *freckled*," with increasing warmth.

"I adore freckles. I think no woman perfect without them."

"I don't believe you," indignantly; "and at all events I have a horrible temper, and I defy you to say you like *that*!" triumphantly.

"I do," mournfully. "The hardest part of my unfortunate case is this, that the unkinder you are to me the more I love you."

"Then I won't have you love me," says Miss Chesney, almost in tears: "do you hear me? I forbid you to do it any more. It is extremely rude of you to keep on

caring for me when you know I don't like it."

"Look here, Lilian," says Archie, taking both her hands, "give me a little hope, a bare crumb to live on, and I will say no more."

"I cannot, indeed," deeply depressed.

"Why? Do you love any other fellow?"

"Certainly not," with suspicious haste.

"Then I shall wait yet another while, and then ask you again."

"Oh, don't!" exclaims Lilian, desperately: "I *beg* you won't. If I thought I was going to have these scenes all over again at intervals, it would kill me, and I should learn to hate you. I should, indeed; and then what would you do? Think of it."

"I won't," doggedly; "I often heard 'Faint heart never won fair lady,' and I shall take my chance. I shall never give you up, so long as you are not engaged to any other man."

There is a pause. Lilian's blue eyes are full of tears that threaten every moment to overflow and run down her pale cheeks. She is desperately sorry for Archibald, the more so that her heart tells her she will never be able to give him the consolation that alone can do him any good. Seeing the expression of tender regret that softens her face, Archibald falls suddenly upon his knees before her, and, pressing his lips to her hands, murmurs, in deep agitation:

"My own, my dearest, is there no pity in your kind heart for me?"

At this most unlucky moment Sir Guy lays his hand upon the door, and pushing it lightly open, enters. Five minutes later all the world might have entered freely, but just now the entrance of this one man causes unutterable pain.

Archibald has barely time to scramble to his feet; the tears are still wet on Lilian's cheeks; altogether it is an unmistakable situation, and Guy turns cold and pale as he recognizes it as such. Chesney on his knees, with Lilian's hands imprisoned in his own; Lilian in tears,—what can it mean but a violent love scene? Probably they have been quarreling, and have just made it up again. "The falling out of faithful friends, but the renewal is of love."

As he meets Lilian's shamed eyes, and marks the rich warm crimson that has

mantled in her cheeks, Chetwoode would have beaten a precipitous retreat, but is prevented by Taffy's following on his heels somewhat noisily.

"It is a charming night, Lil," says that young man, with his usual *bonhommie*. "The rain is a thing of the past. We shall have our run after all to-morrow."

"Indeed! I am glad of that," replies Lilian, half indifferently; though being the woman of the party, she is of course the quickest to recover self-possession. "I should have died of despair had the morning proved unkind."

"Well, you needn't die for a while. I say, Lil," says Mr. Musgrave, regarding her curiously, "what's the matter with you, eh? You look awfully down in the mouth. Anything wrong?"

"Nothing," sharply: "what should be?"

"Can't say, I'm sure. But your cheeks," persists this miserable boy, "are as red as fire."

"I—that is—it *was* the fire," confusedly, directing a wrathful glance at him, which is completely thrown away, as Mr. Musgrave is impervious to hints: "I was sitting close to it."

"That goes without telling. Any one would imagine by your color, you had been put upon the hob to simmer. By the bye,"—a most fortunate access of ignorance carrying his thoughts into another channel,—"what is a hob? I don't believe I ever saw one."

"Hob, substantive, short for goblin: as hobgoblin," says Cyril at this moment, having entered, how, or from where, nobody knows. "Still bent upon historical research?"

"It has something to do with kettles, I think," says Taffy. "I don't quite believe your meaning for it."

"Don't you? I am sorry for you. I do. But some people never will learn."

"That is true," says Lilian, somewhat abruptly. Involuntarily her eyes fall on Chesney. He has been staring in moody silence at the fire since Chetwoode's entrance, but now, at her words, straightens himself, and gives way to a low, rather forced, laugh.

"*Experientia docet*," says Guy, in a queer tone impossible to translate. "Time is a

stern school-master, who compels us against our will,"—letting his eyes meet Lilian's—"to learn many things."

"It has taught me one thing," puts in Cyril, who looks half amused,—"that the dressing-bell has rung some time since."

"Has it?" says Lilian, rising with alacrity, and directing a very grateful glance at him: "I never heard it. I shall scarcely have time now to get ready for dinner. Why did you not tell me before?"

As she speaks, she sweeps by him, and he, catching her hand, detains her momentarily.

"Because, when one is not in the habit of it, one takes time to form a good tarradiddle," replies he, in a soft whisper.

She returns his kindly pressure, and, going into the hall, finds that full five minutes must elapse before the bell really rings.

"Dear Cyril!" she murmurs to herself, almost aloud, and, running up to her room, cries a good deal upon nurse's breast before that kind creature can induce her to change her gown. After which she gets into her clothes, more because it would be indecent to go without them than from any great desire to look her best.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"For now she knows it is no gentle chase.

* * * * * * *

She looks upon his lips, and they are pale;
  She takes him by the hand, and that is cold;
She whispers in his ears a heavy tale,
  As if they heard the woful words she told:
She lifts the coffer-lids that close his eyes,
Where lo! two lamps, burnt out, in darkness lies.

* * * * * * *

Two glasses, where herself, herself beheld
  A thousand times, and now no more reflect;
Their virtue lost, wherein they late excell'd,
  And every beauty robb'd of his effect."—SHAKESPEARE.

"'A southern wind and a cloudy sky proclaim it a hunting morning,'" quotes Miss Chesney, gayly, entering the breakfast-room at nine o'clock next morning, looking, if anything, a degree more bewitching than usual in her hat and habit: in her hand is a little gold-mounted riding-whip, upon her lovable lips a warm, eager smile. "No one down but me!" she says, "at least of the gentler sex. And Sir Guy presiding! what fun! Archie, may I trouble you to get me some breakfast? Sir Guy, some tea, please: I am as hungry as a hawk."

Sir Guy pours her out a cup of tea, carefully, but silently. Archie, gloomy, but attentive, places before her what she most fancies: Cyril gets her a chair; Taffy brings her some toast: all are fondly dancing attendance on the little spoiled fairy.

"What are you looking at, Taffy?" asks she, presently, meeting her cousin's blue eyes, that so oddly resemble her own, fixed upon her immovably.

"At you. There is something wrong with your hair," replies he, unabashed: "some of the pins are coming out. Stay steady, and I'll wheel you into line in no time." So saying, he adjusts the disorderly hair-pin; while Chetwoode and Chesney, looking on, are consumed with envy.

"Thank you, dear," says Lilian, demurely, giving his hand a little loving pat:

"you are worth your weight in gold. Be sure you push it in again during the day, if you see it growing unruly. What a delicious morning it is!" glancing out of the window; "too desirable perhaps. I hope none of us will break our necks."

"Funky already, Lil?" says Taffy, with unpardonable impertinence. "Never mind, darling, keep up your heart; I'm fit as a fiddle myself, and will so far sacrifice my life as to promise you a lead whenever a copper brings me in your vicinity. I shall keep you in mind, never fear."

"I consider your remarks beneath notice, presumptuous boy," says Miss Chesney, with such a scornful uplifting of her delicate face as satisfies Taffy, who, being full of mischief, passes on to bestow his pleasing attentions on the others of the party. Chesney first attracts his notice. He is standing with his back to a screen, and has his eyes fixed in moody contemplation on the floor. Melancholy on this occasion has evidently marked him for her own.

"What's up with you, old man? you look suicidal," says Mr. Musgrave, stopping close to him, and giving him a rattling slap on the shoulder that rather takes the curl out of him, leaving him limp, but full of indignation.

"Look here," he says, in an aggrieved tone, "I wish you wouldn't do that, you know. Your hands, small and delicate as they are,"—Taffy's hands, though shapely, are decidedly large,—"can hurt. If you go about the world with such habits you will infallibly commit murder sooner or later: I should bet on the sooner. One can never be sure, my dear fellow, who has heart-disease and who has not."

"Heart-disease means love with most fellows," says the irrepressible Taffy, "and I have noticed you aren't half a one since your return from London." At this *mal à propos* speech both Lilian and Chesney change color, and Guy, seeing their confusion, becomes miserable in turn, so that breakfast is a distinct failure, Cyril and Musgrave alone being capable of animated conversation.

Half an hour later they are all in the saddle and are riding leisurely toward Bellairs, which is some miles distant, through as keen a scenting wind as any one could desire.

At Grantley Farm they find every one before them, the hounds sniffing and whimpering, the ancient M. F. H. cheery as is his wont, and a very fair field.

Mabel Steyne is here, mounted on a handsome bay mare that rather chafes and

rages under her mistress's detaining hand, while at some few yards' distance from her is Tom, carefully got up, but sleepy as is his wont. One can hardly credit that his indolent blue eyes a little later will grow dark and eager as he scents the fray, and, steadying himself in his saddle, makes up his mind to "do or die."

Old General Newsance is plodding in and out among the latest arrivals, prognosticating evil, and relating the "wondrous adventures" of half a century ago, when (if he is to be believed) hounds had wings, and hunters never knew fatigue. With him is old Lord Farnham, who has one leg in his grave, literally speaking, having lost it in battle more years ago than one cares to count, but who rides wonderfully nevertheless, and is as young to speak to, or rather younger, than any nineteenth-century man.

Mabel Steyne is dividing her attentions between him and Taffy, when a prolonged note from the hounds, and a quick cry of "gone away," startles her into silence. Talkers are scattered, conversation forgotten, and every one settles down into his or her saddle, ready and eager for the day's work.

Down the hill like a flash goes a good dog fox, past the small wood to the right, through the spinnies, straight into the open beyond. The scent is good, the pack lively: Lilian and Sir Guy are well to the front; Archibald close beside them. Cyril to the left is even farther ahead; while Taffy and Mabel Steyne can be seen a little lower down, holding well together, Mabel, with her eyes bright and glowing with excitement, sailing gallantly along on her handsome bay.

After a time—the fox showing no signs of giving in—hedges and doubles throw spaces in between the riders. Sir Guy is far away in the distance, Taffy somewhat in the background; Cyril is out of sight; while Miss Chesney finds herself now side by side with Archibald, who is riding recklessly, and rather badly. They have just cleared a very uncomfortable wall, that in cold blood would have damped their ardor, only to find a more treacherous one awaiting them farther on, and Lilian, turning her mare's head a little to the left, makes for a quieter spot, and presently lands in the next field safe and sound.

Archibald, however, holds on his original course, and Lilian, turning in her saddle, watches with real terror his next movement. His horse, a good one, rises gallantly, springs, and cleverly, though barely, brings himself clear to the other side. Both he and his master are uninjured, but it was a near thing, and makes Miss Chesney's heart beat with unpleasant rapidity.

"Archibald," she says, bringing herself close up to his side as they gallop across the field, and turning a very white face to his, "I wish you would not ride so recklessly: you will end by killing yourself if you go on in this foolish fashion."

Her late fear has added a little sharpness to her tone.

"The sooner the better," replies he, bitterly. "What have I got to live for? My life is of no use, either to myself or to any one else, as far as I can see."

"It is very wicked of you to talk so!" angrily.

"Is it? You should have thought of that before you made me think so. As it is, I am not in the humor for lecturing to do me much good. If I am killed, blame yourself. Meantime, I like hunting: it is the only joy left me. When I am riding madly like this, I feel again almost happy—almost," with a quickly suppressed sigh.

"Still, I ask you, for my sake, to be more careful," says Lilian, anxiously, partly frightened, partly filled with remorse at his words, though in her heart she is vexed with him for having used them. "Her fault if he gets killed." It is really too much!

"Do you pretend to care?" asks he, with a sneer. "Your manner is indeed perfect, but how much of it do you mean? Give me the hope I asked for last night,—say only two kind words to me,—and I will be more careful of my life than any man in the field to-day."

"I think I am always saying kind things to you," returns she, rather indignant; "I am only too kind. And one so foolishly bent on being miserable as you are, all for nothing, deserves only harsh treatment. You are not even civil to me. I regret I addressed you just now, and beg you will not speak to me any more."

"Be assured I shan't disobey this your last command," says Archibald, in a low, and what afterward appears to her a prophetic tone, turning away.

The field is growing thin. Already many are lying scattered broadcast in the ditches, or else are wandering hopelessly about on foot, in search of their lost chargers. The hounds are going at a tremendous pace; a good many horses show signs of flagging; while the brave old fox still holds well his own.

Taffy came to signal grief half an hour ago, but now reappears triumphant and unplucked, splashed from head to heel, but game for any amount still. Mrs.

Steyne in front a-fighting hard for the brush, while Lilian every moment is creeping closer to her on the bonny brown mare that carries her like a bird over hedges and rails. Sir Guy is out of sight, having just vanished down the slope of the hill, only to reappear again a second later. Archibald is apparently nowhere, and Miss Chesney is almost beginning to picture him to herself bathed in his own gore, when raising her head she sees him coming toward her at a rattling pace, his horse, which is scarcely up to his weight, well in hand.

Before him rises an enormous fence, beneath which gleams like a silver streak a good bit of running water. It is an awkward jump, the more so that from the other side it is almost impossible for the rider to gauge its dangers properly.

Lilian makes a faint sign to him to hold back, which he either does not or will not see. Bringing his horse up to the fence at a rather wild pace, he lifts him. The good brute rises obediently, springs forward, but jumps too short, and in another second horse and rider are rolling together in a confused mass upon the sward beyond.

The horse, half in and half out of the water, recovers himself quickly, and, scrambling to his feet, stands quietly ashamed, trembling in every limb, at a little distance from his master.

But Archibald never stirs; he lies motionless, with his arms flung carelessly above his head, and his face turned upward to the clouded sky,—a brilliant speck of crimson upon the green grass.

Lilian, with a sickening feeling of fear, and a suppressed scream, gallops to his side, and, springing to the ground, kneels down close to him, and lifts his head upon her knee.

His face is deadly pale, a small spot of blood upon his right cheek rendering even more ghastly its excessive pallor. A frantic horror lest he be dead fills her mind and heart. Like funeral bells his words return and smite cruelly upon her brain: "If I am killed blame yourself." *Is* she to blame? Oh, how harshly she spoke to him! With what bitterness did she rebuke—when he—when he was only telling her of his great love for her!

Was ever woman so devoid of tender feeling? to goad and rail at a man only because she had made conquest of his heart! And to choose this day of all others to slight and wound him, when, had she not been hatefully, unpardonably blind, she might have seen he was bent upon his own destruction.

How awfully white he is! Has death indeed sealed his lips forever? Oh, that he might say one word, if only to forgive her! With one hand she smooths back his dark crisp hair from his forehead, and tries to wipe away with her handkerchief the terrible blood-stain from his poor cheek.

"Archie, Archie," she whispers to him, piteously, bending her face so close to his that any one might deem the action a caress, "speak to me: will you not hear me, when I tell you how passionately I regret my words?"

But no faintest flicker of intelligence crosses the face lying so mute and cold upon her knees. For the first time he is stone deaf to the voice of her entreaty.

Perhaps some foolish hope that her call might rouse him had taken possession of her; for now, seeing how nothing but deepest silence answers her, she lets a groan escape her. Will nobody ever come? Lifting in fierce impatience a face white as the senseless man's beneath her, she encounters Guy's eyes fixed upon her, who has by chance seen the catastrophe, and has hastened to her aid.

"Do something for him,—something," she cries, trembling; "give him brandy! it will, it *must* do him good."

Guy, kneeling down beside Chesney, places his hand beneath his coat, and feels for his heart intently.

"He is not dead!" murmurs Lilian, in an almost inaudible tone: "say he is alive. I told him never to speak to me again: but I did not dream I should be so terribly obeyed. Archie, Archie!"

Her manner is impassioned. Remorse and terror, working together, produce in her all the appearance, of despairing anguish. She bears herself as a woman might who gazes at the dead body of him she holds dearest on earth; and Guy, looking silently upon her, lets a fear greater than her own, a more intolerable anguish, enter his heart even then.

"He is not dead," he says, quietly, forcing himself to be calm. Whereupon Lilian bursts into a storm of tears.

"Are you sure?" cries she; "is there no mistake? He looks so—so—*like* death," with a shuddering sigh. "Oh, what should I have done had he been killed?"

"Be happy, he is alive," says Guy, between his dry lips, misery making his tones cold. All his worst fears are realized. In spite of pretended indifference, it is plain

to him that all her wayward heart has been given to her cousin. Her intense agitation, her pale agonized face, seem to him easy to read, impossible to misunderstand. As he rises from his knees, he leaves all hope behind him in possession of his wounded rival.

"Stay with him until I bring help: I shan't be a minute," he says, not looking at her, and presently returning with some rough contrivance that does duty for a stretcher, and a couple of laborers. They convey him home to Chetwoode, where they lay him, still insensible, upon his bed, quiet and cold as one utterly bereft of life.

Then the little doctor arrives, and the door of Chesney's chamber is closed upon him and Guy, and for the next half-hour those outside—listening, watching, hoping, fearing—have a very bad time of it.

At last, as the sick-room door opens, and Guy comes into the corridor, a little figure, that for all those miserable thirty minutes has sat crouching in a dark corner, rises and runs swiftly toward him.

It is Lilian: she is trembling visibly, and the face she upraises to his is pale—nay, gray—with dread suspense. Her white lips try to form a syllable, but fail. She lays one hand upon his arm beseechingly, and gazes at him in eloquent silence.

"Do not look like that," says Guy, shocked at her expression. He speaks more warmly than he feels, but he quietly removes his arm so that her hand perforce drops from it. "He is better; much better than at first we dared hope. He will get well. There is no immediate danger. Do you understand, Lilian?"

A little dry sob breaks from her. The relief is almost too intense; all through her dreary waiting she had expected to hear nothing but that he was in truth—as he appeared in her eyes—dead. She staggers slightly, and would have fallen but that Chetwoode most unwillingly places his arm round her.

"There is no occasion for all this—nervousness," he says, half savagely, as she lays her head against his shoulder and cries as though her heart would break. At this supreme moment she scarcely remembers Guy's presence, and would have cried just as comfortably with her head upon old Parkins's shoulder. Perhaps he understands this, and therefore fails to realize the rapture he should know at having her so unresistingly within his arms. As it is, his expression is bored to the last degree: his eyebrows are drawn upward until all his forehead lies in little wrinkles. With a determination worthy of a better cause he has fixed his eyes

upon the wall opposite, and refuses to notice the lovely golden head of her who is weeping so confidingly upon his breast.

It is a touching scene, but fails to impress Guy, who cannot blind himself to (what he believes to be) the fact that all these pearly tears are flowing for another,—and that a rival. With his tall figure drawn to its fullest height, so as to preclude all idea of tenderness, he says, sharply:

"One would imagine I had brought you bad news. You could not possibly appear more inconsolable if you had heard of his death. Do try to rouse yourself, and be reasonable: he is all right, and as likely to live as you are."

At this he gives her a mild but undeniable shake, that has the desired effect of reducing her to calmness. She checks her sobs, and, moving away from him, prepares to wipe away all remaining signs of her agitation.

"You certainly are not very sympathetic," she says, with a last faint sob, casting a reproachful glance at him out of two drowned but still beautiful eyes.

"I certainly am not," stiffly: "I can't 'weep my spirit from my eyes' because I hear a fellow is better, if you mean that."

"You seem to be absolutely grieved at his chance of recovery," viciously.

"I have no doubt I seem to you all that is vilest and worst. I learned your opinion of me long ago."

"Well,"—scornfully—"I think you need scarcely choose either this time, or place, for one of your stand-up fights. When you remember what you have just said,—that you are actually *sorry* poor dear Archie is alive,—I think you ought to go away and feel very much ashamed of yourself."

"Did I say that?" indignantly.

"Oh, I don't know," indifferently,—as though his denial now cannot possibly alter the original fact; "something very like it, at all events."

"How can you so malign me, Lilian?" angrily. "No one can be more heartily sorry for poor Chesney than I am, or more pleased at his escape from death. You willfully misunderstand every word I utter. For the future,—as all I say seems to annoy,—I beg you will not trouble yourself to address me at all."

"I shall speak to you just whenever I choose," replies Miss Chesney, with superb

defiance.

At this thrilling instant Chesney's door is again opened wide, and Dr. Bland comes out, treading softly, and looking all importance.

"You, my dear Miss Chesney!" he says, approaching her lightly; "the very young lady of all others I most wished to see. Not that there is anything very curious about that fact," with his cozy chuckle; "but your cousin is asking for you, and really, you know, upon my word, he is so very excitable, I think perhaps—eh?—under the circumstances, you know, it would be well to gratify his pardonable desire to see you—eh?"

"The circumstances" refer to the rooted conviction, that for weeks has been planted in the doctor's breast, of Miss Chesney's engagement to her cousin.

"To see me?" says Lilian, shrinking away involuntarily, and turning very red. Both the tone and the blush are "confirmation strong" of the doctor's opinion. And Guy, watching her silently, feels, if possible, even more certain than before of her affection for Chesney.

"To be sure, my dear; and why not?" says the kindly little doctor, patting her encouragingly on the shoulder. He deals in pats and smiles. They are both part of his medicine. So,—under the circumstances,—through force of habit, would he have patted the Queen of England or a lowly milkmaid alike,—with perhaps an additional pat to the milkmaid, should she chance to be pretty. Lilian, being rich in nature's charms, is a special favorite of his.

"But—" says Lilian, still hesitating. To tell the truth, she is hardly ambitious of entering Archibald's room, considering their last stormy parting; and, besides, she is feeling sadly nervous and out of sorts. The ready tears spring again to her eyes; once more the tell-tale blood springs hotly to her cheeks. Guy's fixed gaze—he is watching her with a half sneer upon his face—disconcerts her still further. Good Dr. Bland entirely mistakes the meaning of her confusion.

"Now, my dear child, if I give you leave to see this reckless cousin, we must be cautious, *very* cautious, and quiet, *extremely* quiet, eh? That is essential, you know. And mind, no tears. There is nothing so injurious on these occasions as tears! Reminds one invariably of last farewells and funeral services, and coffins, and all such uncomfortable matters. I don't half like granting these interviews myself, but he appears bent on seeing you, and, as I have said before, he is impetuous,—*very* impetuous."

"You think, then," stammers Lilian, making one last faint effort at escape from the dreaded ordeal,—"you think——"

"I don't think," smiling good-naturedly, "I *know* you must not stay with him longer than five minutes."

"Good doctor, make it three," is on the point of Lilian's tongue, but, ashamed to refuse this small request of poor wounded Archibald, she follows Dr. Bland into his room.

On the bed, lying pale and exhausted, is Archibald, his lips white, his eyes supernaturally large and dark. They grow even larger and much brighter as they rest on Lilian, who slowly, but—now that she again sees him so weak and prostrate—full of pity, approaches his side.

"You have come, Lilian," he says, faintly: "it is very good of you,—more than I deserve. I vexed you terribly this morning, did I not? But you will forgive me now I have come to grief," with a wan smile.

"I have nothing to forgive," says Lilian, tremulously, gazing down upon him pityingly through two big violet eyes so overcharged with tears as makes one wonder how they can keep the kindly drops from running down her cheeks. "But you have. Oh, Archie, let me tell you how deeply I deplore having spoken so harshly to you to-day. If"—with a shudder—"you had indeed been killed, I should never have been happy again."

"I was unmanly," says Chesney, holding out his hand feebly for hers, which is instantly given. "I am afraid I almost threatened you. I am thoroughly ashamed of myself."

"Oh, hush! I am sure you are speaking too much; and Dr. Bland says you must not excite yourself. Are you suffering much pain?" very tenderly.

"Not much;" but the drawn expression of his face belies his assertion. "To look at you"—softly—"gives me ease."

"I wonder you don't hate me," says Lilian, in a distressed tone, fighting hard to suppress the nervous sob that is rising so rebelliously in her throat. Almost at this moment—so sorry is she for his hopeless infatuation for her—she wishes he did hate her. "Yet I am not altogether to blame, and I have suffered more than I can tell you since you got that terrible fall!" This assurance is very sweet to him. "When I saw you lying motionless,—when I laid your head upon my knees and

tried to call you back to life, and you never answered me, I thought—"

"You!" interrupts he, hastily; "did your hands succor me?"

"Yes," coloring warmly; "though it was very little good I could do you, I was so frightened. You looked so cold,—so still. I thought then, 'suppose it was my cross words had induced him to take that fence?' But"—nervously—"it wasn't: that was a foolish, a conceited thought, with no truth in it."

"Some little truth, I think," sadly. "When you told me 'never to speak to you again,'—you recollect?—there came a strange hard look into your usually kind eyes—" pressing her hand gently to take somewhat from the sting of his words —"that cut me to the heart. Your indifference seemed in that one moment to have turned to hatred, and I think I lost my head a little. Forgive me, sweetheart, if I could not then help thinking that death could not be much worse than life."

"Archie,"—gravely,—"promise me you will never think that again."

"I promise."

There is a short pause. It is growing almost dark. The wintry day, sad and weakly from its birth, is dying fast. All the house is silent, hushed, full of expectancy; only a little irrepressible clock in the next room ticks its loudest, as though defying pain or sorrow to affect it in any way.

"Is it your arm?" asks Lilian, gently, his other hand being hidden beneath the sheet, "or——"

"No; two of my ribs, I believe, and my head aches a good deal."

"I am tormenting you with my foolish chatter," rising remorsefully, as though to quit the room.

"No, no," eagerly; "I tell you it makes me easier to see you; it dulls the pain." Slowly, painfully he draws her hand upward to his lips, and kisses it softly. "We are friends again?" he whispers.

"Yes,—always friends," tightening her fingers sympathetically over his. "If"—very earnestly—"you would only try to make up your mind never to speak to me again as you did—last night, I believe another unpleasant word would never pass between us."

"Do not fear," he says, slowly: "I have quite made up my mind. Rather than risk

bringing again into your eyes the look I saw there to-day, I would keep silence forever."

Here Dr. Bland puts his head inside the door, and beckons Lilian to withdraw.

"The five minutes are up," he says, warningly, consulting the golden turnip he usually keeps concealed somewhere about his person, though where, so large is it, has been for years a matter of speculation with his numerous patients.

"I must go," says Lilian, rising: the door is open, and all that goes on within the chamber can be distinctly heard in the corridor outside. "Now try to sleep, will you not? and don't worry, and don't even think if you can help it."

"Must you go?" wistfully.

"I fear I must."

"You will come again to-morrow, very early?"

"I will come to-morrow, certainly, as early as I can. Good-night."

"Good-night."

Closing the door softly behind her, she advances into the corridor, where she still finds Guy and Dr. Bland conversing earnestly. Perhaps they have been waiting for her coming.

"So you have persuaded him to go to sleep?" asks the doctor, beaming kindly upon "pretty Miss Chesney," that being the title given to her long ago by the country generally.

"Yes. I think he will sleep now," Lilian answers. "He looks very white, poor, poor fellow, but not so badly as I expected."

"I suppose your presence did him good. Well, I will take a last look at him before leaving," moving toward the closed door.

"Can I do anything for you?" asks Guy, following him, glad of any excuse that makes him quit Lilian's side.

"Yes,"—smiling,—"you can, indeed. Take your ward down-stairs and give her a glass of wine. She is too pale for my fancy. I shall be having her on my hands next if you don't take care." So saying, he disappears.

Guy turns coldly to Lilian.

"Will you come down, or shall I send something up to you?" he asks, icily.

Lilian's fears have subsided; consequently her spirits have risen to such a degree that they threaten to overflow every instant. A desire for mischief makes her heart glow.

"I shall go with you," she says, with a charming grimace. "I might blame myself in after years if I ever willingly failed to cultivate every second spent in your agreeable society."

So saying, she trips down-stairs gayly beside him, a lovely, though rather naughty, smile upon her lips.

CHAPTER _XXVII.

"*Claud.*—In mine eye, she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on."—*Much Ado About Nothing.*

Because of Archibald's accident, and because of much harassing secret thought, Christmas is a failure this year at Chetwoode. Tom Steyne and his wife and their adorable baby come to them for a week, it is true, and try by every means in their power to lighten the gloom that hangs over the house, but in vain.

Guy is obstinately *distrait*, not to say ill-tempered; Lilian is fitful,—now full of the wildest spirits, and anon capricious and overflowing with little imperious whims; Archibald, though rapidly mending, is of course invisible, and a complete dead letter; while Cyril, usually the most genial fellow in the world and devoid of moods, is at this particular time consumed with anxiety, having at last made up his mind to reveal to his mother his engagement to Cecilia and ask her consent to their speedy marriage. Yet another full month elapses, and already the first glad thought of spring is filling every breast, before he really brings himself to speak upon the dreaded subject.

His disclosure he knows by instinct will be received ungraciously and with disapprobation, not only by Lady Chetwoode, but by Sir Guy, who has all through proved himself an enemy to the cause. His determined opposition will undoubtedly increase the difficulties of the situation, as Lady Chetwoode is in all matters entirely ruled by her eldest son.

Taking Lilian into his confidence, Cyril happens to mention to her this latter sure drawback to the success of his suit, whereupon she generously declares herself both able and willing to take Sir Guy in hand and compel him to be not only non-combative on the occasion, but an actual partisan.

At these valiant words Cyril is so transported with hope and gratitude that, without allowing himself time for reflection, he suddenly and very warmly embraces his pretty colleague, calling her, as "Traddles" might have done, "the dearest girl in the world," and vowing to her that but for one other she is indeed "the only woman he ever loved."

Having recovered from the astonishment caused by this outbreak on the part of

the generally nonchalant Cyril, Miss Chesney draws her breath slowly, and wends her way toward Sir Guy's private den, where she knows he is at present sure to be found.

"Are you busy?" she asks, showing her face in the doorway, but not advancing.

"Not to you," courteously. They are now on friendly though somewhat constrained speaking terms.

"Will you give me, then, a little of your time? It is something very important."

"Certainly," replies he, surprised both at the solemnity of her manner and at the request generally. "Come in and shut the door."

"It is just a question I would ask of you," says Lilian, uncomfortably, now she has come to the point, finding an extraordinary difficulty about proceeding. At length, with a desperate effort she raises her head, and, looking full at him, says, distinctly:

"Sir Guy, when two people love each other very dearly, don't you think they ought to marry?"

This startling interrogation has the effect of filling Chetwoode with dismay. He turns white in spite of his vigorous attempt at self-control, and involuntarily lays his hand upon the nearest chair to steady himself. Has she come here to tell him of her affection for her cousin?

"There must be something more," he says, presently, regarding her fixedly.

"Yes, but answer me first. Don't you think they ought?"

"I suppose so,"—unwillingly,—"unless there should be some insuperable difficulty in the way."

"He suspects me; he knows my errand," thinks Lilian, letting her eyes seek the carpet, which gives her all the appearance of feeling a very natural confusion. "He hopes to entangle me. His 'difficulty' is poor dear Cecilia's very disreputable papa."

"No difficulty should stand in the way of love," she argues, severely. "Besides, what is an 'insuperable difficulty'? Supposing one of them should be unhappily less—less respectable than the other: would that be it?"

Sir Guy opens his eyes. Is it not, then, the cousin? and if not, who? "Less respectable." He runs through the long list of all the young men of questionable morals with whom he is acquainted, but can come to no satisfactory conclusion. Has she possibly heard of certain lawless doings of Archibald in earlier days, and does she fear perhaps that he, her guardian, will refuse consent to her marriage because of them? At this thought he freezes.

"I think all unsuitable marriages a crime," he says, coldly. "Sooner or later they lead to the bitterest of all repentance. To marry one one cannot respect! Surely such an act carries with it its own punishment. It is a hateful thought. But then ____"

"You do not understand," pleads Lilian, rising in her eagerness, and going nearer to him, while her large eyes read his face nervously as she trembles for the success of her undertaking. "There is no question of 'respect.' It is not that I mean. These two of whom I speak will never repent, because they love each other so entirely."

"What a stress you lay on the word love!" he says, in a half-mocking, wholly bitter tone. "Do you believe in it?"

"I do, indeed. I cannot think there is anything in this world half so good as it," replies she, with conviction, while reddening painfully beneath his gaze. "Is it not our greatest happiness?"

"I think it is our greatest curse."

"How can you say that?" with soft reproach. "Can you not see for yourself how it redeems all the misery of life for some people?"

"Those two fortunate beings of whom you are speaking, for instance," with a sneer. "All people are not happy in their attachment. What is to become of those miserable wretches who love, but love in vain? Did you never hear of a homely proverb that tells you 'one man's meat is another man's poison'?"

"You are cynical to-day. But to return; the two to whom I allude have no poison to contend with. They love so well that it is misery to them to be apart,—so devotedly that they know no great joy except when they are together. Could such love cool? I am sure not. And is it not cruel to keep them asunder?"

Her voice has grown positively plaintive; she is evidently terribly in earnest.

"Are you speaking of yourself?" asks Guy, huskily, turning with sudden vehemence to lay his hand upon her arm and scan her features with intense, nay, feverish anxiety.

"Of myself?" recoiling. "No! What can you mean? What is it that I should say of myself?" Her cheeks are burning, her eyes are shamed and perplexed, but they have not fallen before his: she is evidently full of secret wonder. "It is for Cyril I plead, and for Cecilia," she says, after a strange pause.

"Cyril!" exclaims he, the most excessive relief in tone and gesture. "Does he want to marry Mrs. Arlington?"

"Yes. I know you have a prejudice against her,"—earnestly,—"but that is because you do not know her. She is the sweetest woman I ever met."

"This has been going on for a long time?"

"I think so. Cyril wished to marry her long ago, but she would not listen to him without auntie's consent. Was not that good of her? If I was in her place, I do not believe I should wait for any one's consent."

"I am sure"—dryly—"you would not."

"No, not even for my guardian's," replies she, provokingly; then, with a lapse into her former earnestness, "I want you to be good to her. She is proud, prouder than auntie even, and would not forgive a slight. And if her engagement to Cyril came to an end, he would never be happy again. Think of it."

"I do," thoughtfully. "I think it is most unfortunate. And she a widow, too!"

"But such a widow!" enthusiastically. "A perfect darling of a widow! I am not sure, after all,"—with rank hypocrisy,—"that widows are not to be preferred before mere silly foolish girls, who don't know their own minds half the time."

"Is that a description of yourself?" with an irrepressible smile.

"Don't be rude! No 'mere silly girl' would dare to beard a stern guardian in his den as I am doing! But am I to plead in vain? Dear Sir Guy, do not be hard. What could be dearer than her refusing to marry Cyril if it should grieve auntie? 'She would not separate him from his mother,' she said. Surely you must admire her in that one instance at least. Think of it all again. They love each other, and they are unhappy; and you can turn their sorrow into joy."

"Now they love, of course; but will it last? Cyril's habits are very expensive, and he has not much money. Do you ever think you may be promoting a marriage that by and by will prove a failure? The day may come when they will hate you for having helped to bring them together."

"No," says Lilian, stoutly, shaking her *blonde* head emphatically; "I have no such unhealthy thoughts or fancies. They suit each other; they are happy in each other's society; they will never repent their marriage."

"Is that your experience?" he asks, half amused.

"I have no experience," returns she, coloring and smiling: "I am like the Miller of the Dee; I care for nobody, no, not I,—for nobody cares for me."

"You forget your cousin." The words escape him almost without his consent.

Miss Chesney starts perceptibly, but a second later answers his taunt with admirable composure.

"What? Archie? Oh! he don't count; cousins are privileged beings. Or did you perhaps mean Taffy? But answer me, Sir Guy: you have not yet said you will help me. And I am bent on making Cecilia happy. I am honestly fond of her; I cannot bear to see you think contemptuously of her; while I would gladly welcome her as a sister."

"I do not see how her marrying Cyril can make her your sister," replies he, idly; and then he remembers what he has said, and the same thought striking them both at the same moment, they let their eyes meet uneasily, and both blush scarlet.

Guy, sauntering to the window, takes an elaborate survey of the dismal landscape outside; Lilian coughs gently, and begins to count industriously all the embroidered lilies in the initial that graces the corner of her handkerchief. One—two—three——

"They might as well have put in four," she says out loud, abstractedly.

"What?" turning from the window to watch the lovely *mignonne* face still bent in contemplation of the lilies.

"Nothing," mildly: "did I say anything?"

"Something about 'four,' I thought."

"Perhaps"—demurely—"I was thinking I had asked you four times to be good-natured, and you had not deigned to grant my request. When Lady Chetwoode speaks to you of Cyril and Cecilia, say you will be on their side. Do not vote against them. Promise."

He hesitates.

"Not when *I* ask you?" murmurs she, in her softest tones, going a little nearer to him, and uplifting her luminous blue eyes to his.

Still he hesitates.

Miss Chesney takes one step more in his direction, which is necessarily the last, unless she wishes to walk through him. Her eyes, now full of wistful entreaty, and suspiciously bright, are still fixed reproachfully upon his. With a light persuasive gesture she lays five white, slender fingers upon his arm, and whispers, in plaintive tones:

"I feel sure I am going to cry."

"I promise," says Sir Guy, instantly, laughing in spite of himself, and letting his own hand close with unconscious force over hers for a moment. Whereupon Miss Chesney's lachrymose expression vanishes as if by magic, while a smile bright and triumphant illuminates her face in its stead.

"Thank you," she says, delightedly, and trips toward the door eager to impart her good news. Upon the threshold, however, she pauses, and glances back at him coquettishly, perhaps a trifle maliciously, from under her long heavily-fringed lids.

"I knew I should win the day," she says, teasingly, "although you don't believe in love. Nevertheless, I thank you again, and"—raising her head, and holding out one hand to him with a sweet *bizarre* grace all her own—"I would have you know I don't think you half such a bad old guardy after all!"

* * * * * * *

Almost at this moment Cyril enters his mother's boudoir, where, to his astonishment, he finds her without companions.

"All alone, Madre?" he says, airily, putting on his gayest manner and his most fetching smile to hide the perturbation that in reality he is feeling. His heart is in

his boots, but he wears a very gallant exterior.

"Yes," replies Lady Chetwoode, looking up from her work, "and very dull company I find myself. Have you come to enliven me a little? I hope so: I have been *gêne* to the last degree for quite an hour."

"Where is the inevitable Florence?"

"In the drawing-room, with Mr. Boer. I can't think what she sees in him, but she appears to value his society highly. To-day he has brought her some more church music to try over, and I really wish he wouldn't. Anything more afflicting than chants tried over and over again upon the piano I can't conceive. They are very bad upon the organ, but on the piano! And sometimes he *will* insist on singing them with her!"

Here two or three wailing notes from down-stairs are wafted, weeping into the room, setting the hearers' teeth on edge. To even an incorrect ear it might occur that Mr. Boer's stentorian notes are not always in tune!

"My dear, my dear," exclaims Lady Chetwoode, in a voice of agony, "shut the door close; *closer*, my dear Cyril, they are at it again!"

"It's a disease," says Cyril, solemnly. "A great many curates have it. We should count ourselves lucky that laymen don't usually catch it."

"I really think it is. I can't bear that sort of young man myself," says Lady Chetwoode, regretfully, who feels some gentle grief that she cannot bring herself to admire Mr. Boer; "but I am sure we should all make allowances; none of us are perfect; and Mrs. Boileau assures me he is very earnest and extremely zealous. Still, I wish he could try to speak differently: I think his mother very much to blame for bringing him up with such a voice."

"She was much to blame for bringing him up at all. He should have been strangled at his birth!" Cyril says this slowly, moodily, with every appearance of really meaning what he says. He is, however, unaware of the blood-thirsty expression he has assumed, as though in support of his words, being in fact miles away in thought from Mr. Boer and his Gregorian music. He is secretly rehearsing a coming conversation with his mother, in which Cecilia's name is to be delicately introduced.

"That is going rather far, is it not?" Lady Chetwoode says, laughing.

"A man is not an automaton. He cannot always successfully stifle his feelings," says Cyril, still more moodily, *àpropos* of his own thoughts; which second most uncalled-for remark induces his mother to examine him closely.

"There is something on your mind," she says, gently. "You are not now thinking of either me or Mr. Boer. Sit down, dear boy, and tell me all about it."

"I will tell you standing," says Cyril, who feels it would be taking advantage of her ignorance to accept a chair until his disclosure is made. Then the private rehearsal becomes public, and presently Lady Chetwoode knows all about his "infatuation," as she terms it, for the widow, and is quite as much distressed about it as even he had expected.

"It is terrible!" she says, presently, when she has somewhat recovered from the first shock caused by his intelligence; "and only last spring you promised me to think seriously of Lady Fanny Stapleton."

"My dear mother, who could think seriously of Lady Fanny? Why, with her short nose, and her shorter neck, and her anything but sylph-like form, she has long ago degenerated into one vast joke."

"She has money," in a rather stifled tone.

"And would you have me sacrifice my whole life for mere money?" reproachfully. "Would money console you afterward, when you saw me wretched?"

"But why should you be wretched?" Then, quickly, "Are you so very sure this Mrs. Arlington will make you happy?"

"Utterly positive!" in a radiant tone.

"And are you ready to sacrifice every comfort for mere beauty?" retorts she. "Ah, Cyril, beware: you do not understand yet what it is to be hampered for want of money. And there are other things: when one marries out of one's own sphere, one always repents it."

"One cannot marry higher than a lady," flushing. "She is not a countess, or an honorable, or even Lady Fanny; but she is of good family, and she is very sweet, and very gentle, and very womanly. I shall never again see any one so good in my eyes. I entreat you, dear mother, not to refuse your consent."

"I shall certainly say nothing until I see Guy," says Lady Chetwoode, tearfully, making a last faint stand.

"Then let us send for him, and get it over," Cyril says, with gentle impatience, who is very pale, but determined to finish the subject one way or the other, now and forever.

Almost as he says it, Guy enters; and Lady Chetwoode, rising, explains the situation to him in a few agitated words. True to his promise to Lilian, and more perhaps because a glance at his brother's quiet face tells him opposition will be vain, Guy says a few things in favor of the engagement. But though the words are kind, they are cold; and, having said them, he beats an instantaneous retreat, leaving Cyril, by his well-timed support, master of the field.

"Marry her, then, as you are all against me," says Lady Chetwoode, the tears running down her cheeks. It is very bitter to her to remember how Lady Fanny's precious thousands have been literally flung away. All women, even the best and the sweetest, are mercenary where their sons are concerned.

"And you will call upon her?" says Cyril, after a few minutes spent in an effort to console her have gone by.

"Call!" repeats poor Lady Chetwoode, with some indignation, "upon that woman who absolutely declined to receive me when first she came! I have a little pride still remaining, Cyril, though indeed you have humbled a good deal of it to-day," with keen reproach.

"When first she came,"—apologetically,—"she was in great grief and distress of mind."

"Grief for her husband?" demands she; which is perhaps the bitterest thing Lady Chetwoode ever said in her life to either of her "boys."

"No," coldly; "I think I told you she had never any affection for him." Then his voice changes, and going over to her he takes her hand entreatingly, and passes one arm over her shoulder. "Can you not be kind to her for my sake?" he implores. "Dearest mother, I cannot bear to hear you speak of her as 'that woman,' when I love her so devotedly."

"I suppose when one is married one may without insult be called a woman," turning rather aside from his caress.

"But then she was so little married, and she looks quite a girl. You will go to see her, and judge for yourself?"

"I suppose there is nothing else left for me to do. I would not have all the county see how utterly you have disappointed me. I have been a good mother to you, Cyril,"—tremulously,—"and this is how you requite me."

"It cuts me to the heart to grieve you so much,"—tenderly,—"you, my own mother. But I—I have been a good son to you, too, have I not, dear Madre?"

"You have indeed," says Lady Chetwoode; and then she cries a little behind her handkerchief.

"How old is she?" with quivering lips.

"Twenty-two or twenty-three, I am not sure which," in a subdued tone.

"In manner is she quiet?"

"Very. Tranquil is the word that best expresses her. When you see her you will acknowledge I have not erred in taste."

Lady Chetwoode with a sigh lays down her arms, and when Cyril stoops his face to hers she does not refuse the kiss he silently demands, so that with a lightened conscience he leaves the room to hurry on the wings of love to Cecilia's bower.

All the way there he seems to tread on air. His heart is beating, he is full of happiest exultation. The day is bright and joyous; already one begins to think of winter kindly as a thing of the past. All nature seems in unison with his exalted mood.

Reaching the garden he knows so well and loves so fondly, he walks with eager, longing steps toward a side path where usually she he seeks is to be found. Now standing still, he looks round anxiously for Cecilia.

But Cecilia is not there!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"*Lys.*—How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?
Her.—Belike, for want of rain, which I could well
Between them from the tempest of mine eyes."

—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Up in her chamber sits Cecilia, speechless, spell-bound, fighting with a misery too great for tears. Upon her knee lies an open letter from which an enclosure has slipped and fallen to the ground. And on this last her eyes, scorched and distended, are fixed hopelessly.

The letter itself is from Colonel Trant: it was posted yesterday, and received by her late last night, though were you now to tell her a whole year has elapsed since first she read its fatal contents, I do not think she would evince much doubt or surprise. It was evidently hastily penned, the characters being rough and uneven, and runs as follows:

"Austen Holm. Friday.

"MY DEAR GIRL,—The attempt to break bad news to any one has always seemed to me so vain, and so unsatisfactory a proceeding, and one so likely to render even heavier the blow it means to soften, that here I refrain from it altogether. Yet I would entreat you when reading what I now enclose not to quite believe in its truth until further proofs be procured. I shall remain at my present address for three days longer: if I do not by then hear from you, I shall come to The Cottage. Whatever happens, I know you will remember it is my only happiness to serve you, and that I am ever your faithful friend,

"GEORGE TRANT."

When Cecilia had read so far, she raised the enclosure, though without any very great misgivings, and, seeing it was from some unknown friend of Trant's, at present in Russia, skimmed lightly through the earlier portion of it, until at length a paragraph chained her attention and killed at a stroke all life and joy and happy love within her.

"By the bye," ran this fatal page, "did you not know a man named Arlington?—tall, rather stout, and dark; you used to think him dead. He is not, however, as I fell against him yesterday by chance and learned his name and all about him. He didn't seem half such a dissipated card as you described him, so I hope traveling

has improved his morals. I asked him if he knew any one called Trant, and he said, 'Yes, several.' I had only a minute or two to speak to him, and, as he never drew breath himself during that time, I had not much scope for questioning. He appears possessed of many advantages,—pretty wife at home, no end of money, nice place, unlimited swagger. Bad form all through, but genial. You will see him shortly in the old land, as he is starting for England almost immediately."

And so on, and on, and on. But Cecilia, then or afterward, never read another line.

Her first thought was certainly not of Cyril. It was abject, cowering fear,—a horror of any return to the old loathed life,—a crushing dread lest any chance should fling her again into her husband's power. Then she drew her breath a little hard, and thought of Trant, and then of Cyril; and *then* she told herself, with a strange sense of relief, that at least one can die.

But this last thought passed away as did the others, and she knew that death seldom comes to those who seek it; and to command it,—who should dare do that? Hope dies hard in some breasts! In Cecilia's the little fond flame barely flickered, so quickly did it fade away and vanish altogether before the fierce blast that had assailed it. Not for one moment did she doubt the truth of the statement lying before her. She was too happy, too certain; she should have remembered that some are born to misfortune as the sparks fly upward. "She had lived, she had loved," and here was the end of it all!

All night long she had not slept. She had indeed lain upon her bed, her pillow had known the impress of her head, but through every minute of the lonely, silent awesome hours of gloom, her great eyes had been wide open, watching for the dawn.

At last it came. A glorious dawn; a very flush of happy youth; the sweeter that it bespoke a warm and early spring. At first it showed pale pink with expectation, then rosy with glad hope. From out the east faint rays of gold rushed tremulously, and, entering the casement, cast around Cecilia's head a tender halo.

When happiness lies within our grasp, when all that earth can give us (alas! how little!) is within our keeping, how good is the coming of another day,—a long, perfect day, in which to revel, and laugh, and sing, as though care were a thing unknown! But when trouble falls upon us, and this same terrible care is our only portion, with what horror, what heart-sinking, do we turn our faces from the light and wish with all the fervor of a vain wish that it were night!

The holy dawn brought but anguish to Cecilia. She did not turn with impatience from its smiling beauty, but heavy tears gathered slowly, and grew within her sorrowful gray eyes, until at length (large as was their home) they burst their bounds and ran quickly down her cheeks, as though glad to escape from what should never have been their resting-place. Swiftly, silently, ran the little pearly drops, ashamed of having dimmed the lustre of those lovely eyes that only yester morning were so glad with smiles.

Sitting now in her bedroom, forlorn and desolate, with the cruel words that have traveled all the way across a continent to slay her peace throbbing through her brain, she hears Cyril's well-known step upon the gravel outside, and, springing to her feet as though stabbed, shrinks backward until the wall yields her a support. A second later, ashamed of her own weakness, she straightens herself, smooths back her ruffled hair from her forehead, and, with a heavy sigh and colorless face, walks down-stairs to him who from henceforth must be no more counted as a lover. Slowly, with lingering steps that betray a broken heart, she draws nigh to him.

Seeing her, he comes quickly forward to greet her, still glad with the joy that has been his during all his walk through the budding woods, a smile upon his lips. But the smile soon dies. The new blankness, the terrible change, he sees in the beloved face sobers him immediately. It is vivid enough even at a first glance to fill him with apprehension: hastening to her as though eager to succor her from any harm that may be threatening, he would have taken her in his arms, but she, with a little quick shudder, putting up her hands, prevents him.

"No," she says, in a low changed tone; "not again!"

"Something terrible has happened," Cyril says, with conviction, "or you would not so repulse me. Darling, what is it?"

"I don't know how to tell you," replies she, her tone cold with the curious calmness of despair.

"It cannot be so very bad," nervously; "nothing can signify greatly, unless it separates you from me."

A mournful bitter laugh breaks from Cecilia, a laugh that ends swiftly, tunelessly, as it began.

"How nearly you have touched upon the truth!" she says, miserably; and then, in

a clear, hard voice, "My husband is alive."

A dead silence. No sound to disturb the utter stillness, save the sighing of the early spring wind, the faint twitter of the birds among the budding branches as already they seek to tune their slender throats to the warblings of love, and the lowing of the brown-eyed oxen in the fields far, far below them.

Then Cyril says, with slow emphasis:

"I don't believe it. It's a lie! It is impossible!"

"It is true. I feel it so. Something told me my happiness was too great to last, and now it has come to an end. Alas! alas! how short a time it has continued with me! Oh, Cyril!"—smiting her hands together passionately,—"what shall I do? what shall I do? If he finds me he will kill me, as he often threatened. How shall I escape?"

"It is untrue," repeats Cyril, doggedly, hardly noting her terror and despair. His determined disbelief restores her to calmness.

"Do you think I would believe except on certain grounds?" she says. "Colonel Trant wrote me the evil tidings."

"Trant is interested; he might be glad to delay our marriage," he says, with a want of generosity unworthy of him.

"No, no, *no*. You wrong him. And how should he seek to delay a marriage that was yet far distant?"

"Not so very distant. I have yet to tell you"—with a strange smile—"my chief reason for being here to-day: to ask you to receive my mother to-morrow, who is coming to welcome you as a daughter. How well Fate planned this tragedy! to have our crowning misfortune fall straight into the lap of our newly-born content! Cecilia,"—vehemently,—"there must still be a grain of hope somewhere. Do not let us quite despair. I cannot so tamely accept the death to all life's joys that must follow on belief."

"You shall see for yourself," replies she, handing to him the letter that all this time has lain crumbled beneath her nerveless fingers.

When he has read it, he drops it with a groan, and covers his face with his hands. To him, too, the evidence seems clear and convincing.

"I told you to avoid me. I warned you," she says, presently, with a wan smile. "I am born to ill-luck; I bring it even to all those who come near me—especially, it seems, to the few who are unhappy enough to love me. Go, Cyril, while there is yet time."

"There is not time," desperately: "it is already too late." He moves away from her, and in deep agitation paces up and down the secluded garden-path; while she, standing alone with drooping head and dry miserable eyes, scarcely cares to watch his movements, so dead within her have all youth and energy grown.

"Cecilia," he says, suddenly, stopping before her, and speaking in a low tone, that, though perfectly clear, still betrays inward hesitation, while his eyes carefully avoid hers, "listen to me. What is he to you, this man that they say is still alive, that you should give up your whole life for him? He deserted you, scorned you, left you for another woman. For two long years you have believed him dead. Why should you now think him living? Let him be dead still and buried in your memory; there are other lands,"—slowly, and still with averted eyes,—"other homes: why should we not make one for ourselves? Cecilia,"—coming up to her, white but earnest, and holding out his arms to her,—"come with me, and let us find our happiness in each other!"

Cecilia, after one swift glance at him, moves back hastily.

"How dare you use such words to me?" she says, in a horror-stricken voice; "how dare you tempt me? you, *you* who said you loved me!" Then the little burst of passion dies; her head droops still lower upon her breast; her hands coming together fall loosely before her in an attitude descriptive of the deepest despondency. "I believed in you," she says, "I trusted you. I did not think *you* would have been the one to inflict the bitterest pang of all." She breathes these last words in accents of the saddest reproach.

"Nor will I!" cries he, with keen contrition, kneeling down before her, and hiding his face in a fold of her gown. "Never again, my darling, my life! I forgot,—I forgot you are as high above all other women as the sun is above the earth. Cecilia, forgive me."

"Nay, there is nothing to forgive," she says. "But, Cyril,"—unsteadily,—"you will go abroad at once, for a little while, until I have time to decide where in the future I shall hide my head."

"Must I?"

"You must."

"And you,—where will you go?"

"It matters very little. You will have had time to forget me before ever I trust myself to see you again."

"Then I shall never see you again," replies he, mournfully, "if you wait for that. 'My true love hath my heart, and I have hers.' How can I forget you while it beats warm within my breast?"

"Be it so," she answers, with a sigh: "it is a foolish fancy, yet it gladdens me. I would not be altogether displaced from your mind."

So she lays her hand upon his head as he still kneels before her, and gently smooths and caresses it with her light loving fingers. He trembles a little, and a heavy dry sob breaks from him. This parting is as the bitterness of death. To them it *is* death, because it is forever.

He brings the dear hand down to his lips, and kisses it softly, tenderly.

"Dearest," she murmurs, brokenly, "be comforted."

"What comfort can I find, when I am losing you?"

"You can think of me."

"That would only increase my sorrow."

"Is it so with you? For me I am thankful, very thankful, for the great joy that has been mine for months, the knowledge that you loved me. Even now, when desolation has come upon us, the one bright spot in all my misery is the thought that at least I may remember you, and call to mind your words, your face, your voice, without sin."

"If ever you need me," he says, when a few minutes have elapsed, "you have only to write, 'Cyril, I want you,' and though the whole world should lie between us, I shall surely come. O my best beloved! how shall I live without you?"

"Don't,—do not speak like that," entreats she, faintly. "It is too hard already: do not make it worse." Then, recovering herself by a supreme effort, she says, "Let us part now, here, while we have courage. I think the few arrangements we can make have been made, and George Trant will write, if—if there is anything to

write about."

They are standing with their hands locked together reading each other's faces for the last time.

"To-morrow you will leave Chetwoode?" she says, regarding him fixedly.

"To-morrow! I could almost wish there was no to-morrow for either you or me," replies he.

"Cyril," she says, with sudden fear, "you will take care of yourself, you will not go into any danger? Darling,"—with a sob,—"you will always remember that some day, when this is quite forgotten, I shall want to see again the face of my dearest friend."

"I shall come back to you," he says quietly. He is so quiet that she tells herself now is a fitting time to break away from him; she forces herself to take the first step that shall part them remorselessly.

"Good-bye," she says, in faltering tones.

"Good-bye," returns he, mechanically. With the slow reluctant tears that spring from a broken heart running down her pale cheeks, she presses her lips fervently to his hands, and moves slowly away. When she has gone a few steps, frightened at the terrible silence that seems to have enwrapped him, benumbing his very senses, she turns to regard him once more.

He has never stirred; he scarcely seems to breathe, so motionless is his attitude; as though some spell were on him, he stands silently gazing after her, his eyes full of dumb agony. There is something so utterly lonely in the whole scene that Cecilia bursts into tears. Her sobs rouse him.

"Cecilia!" he cries, in a voice of mingled passion and despair that thrills through her. Once more he holds out to her his arms. She runs to him, and flings herself for the time into his embrace. He strains her passionately to his heart. Her sobs break upon the silent air. Once again their white lips form the word "farewell." There is a last embrace, a last lingering kiss.

All is over.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay
Tempts and then flies.
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright."—SHELLEY.

At Chetwoode they are all assembled in the drawing-room,—except Archibald, who is still confined to his room,—waiting for dinner: Cyril alone is absent.

"What can be keeping him?" says his mother, at last, losing patience as she pictures him dallying with his betrothed at The Cottage while the soup is spoiling and the cook is gradually verging toward hysterics. She suffers an aggrieved expression to grow within her eyes as she speaks from the depths of the softest arm-chair the room contains, in which it is her custom to ensconce herself.

"Nothing very dreadful, I dare say," replies Florence, in tones a degree less even than usual, her appetite having got the better of her self-control.

Almost as she says the words the door is thrown open, and Cyril enters. He is in morning costume, his hair is a little rough, his face pale, his lips bloodless. Walking straight up to his mother, without looking either to the right or to the left, he says, in a low constrained voice that betrays a desperate effort to be calm:

"Be satisfied, mother: you have won the day. Your wish is fulfilled: I shall never marry Mrs. Arlington: you need not have made such a difficulty about giving your consent this morning, as now it is useless."

"Cyril, what has happened?" says Lady Chetwoode, rising to her feet alarmed, a distinct pallor overspreading her features. She puts out one jeweled hand as though to draw him nearer to her, but for the first time in all his life he shrinks from her gentle touch, and moving backward, stands in the middle of the room. Lilian, going up to him, compels him with loving violence to turn toward her.

"Why don't you speak?" she asks, sharply. "Have you and Cecilia quarreled?"

"No: it is no lovers' quarrel," with an odd change of expression: "we have had little time for quarreling, she and I: our days for love-making were so short, so sweet!"

There is a pause: then in a clear harsh voice, in which no faintest particle of feeling can be traced, he goes on: "Her husband is alive; he is coming home. After all,"—with a short unlovely laugh, sad through its very bitterness,—"we worried ourselves unnecessarily, as she was not, what we so feared, a widow."

"Cyril!" exclaims Lilian; she is trembling visibly, and gazes at him as though fearing he may have lost his senses.

"I would not have troubled you about this matter," continues Cyril, not heeding the interruption, and addressing the room generally, without permitting himself to look at any one, "but that it is a fact that must be known sooner or later; I thought the sooner the better, as it will end your anxiety and convince you that this *mesalliance* you so dreaded,"—with a sneer,—"can never take place."

Guy, who has come close to him, here lays his hand upon his arm.

"Do not speak to us as though we could not feel for you," he says, gently, pain and remorse struggling in his tone, "believe me——"

But Cyril thrusts him back.

"I want neither sympathy nor kind words now," he says, fiercely: "you failed me when I most required them, when they might have made *her* happy. I have spoken on this subject now once for all. From this moment let no one dare broach it to me again."

Guy is silent, repentant. No one speaks; the tears are running down Lilian's cheeks.

"May not I?" she asks, in a distressed whisper. "Oh, my dear! do not shut yourself up alone with your grief. Have I not been your friend? Have not I, too, loved her? poor darling! Cyril, let me speak to you of her sometimes."

"Not yet; not now," replies he, in the softest tone he has yet used, a gleam of anguish flashing across his face. "Yes, you were always true to her, my good little Lilian!" Then, sinking his voice, "I am leaving home, perhaps for years; do

not forsake her. Try to console, to comfort——" He breaks down hopelessly; raising her hand to his lips, he kisses it fervently, and a second later has left the room.

For quite two minutes after the door had closed upon him, no one stirs, no one utters a word. Guy is still standing with downcast eyes upon the spot that witnessed his repulse. Lilian is crying. Lady Chetwoode is also dissolved in tears. It is this particular moment Florence chooses to make the first remark that has passed her lips since Cyril's abrupt entrance.

"Could anything be more fortunate?" she says, in a measured, congratulatory way. "Could anything have happened more opportunely? Here is this objectionable marriage irretrievably prevented without any trouble on our parts. I really think we owe a debt of gratitude to this very unpleasant husband."

"Florence," cries Lady Chetwoode, with vehement reproach, stung to the quick, "how can you see cause for rejoicing in the poor boy's misery! Do you not think of him?" After which she subsides again, with an audible sob, into her cambric. But Lilian is not so easily satisfied.

"How dare you speak so?" she says, turning upon Florence with wet eyes that flash fire through their tears. "You are a cold and heartless woman. How should *you* understand what he is feeling,—poor, poor Cyril!" This ebullition of wrath seems to do her good. Kneeling down by her auntie, she places her arms round her, and has another honest comfortable cry upon her bosom.

Florence draws herself up to her full height, which is not inconsiderable, and follows her movements with slow, supercilious wonder. She half closes her white lids, and lets her mouth take a slightly disdainful curve,—not too great a curve, but just enough to be becoming and show the proper disgust she feels at the terrible exhibition of ill-breeding that has just taken place.

But as neither Lilian nor Lady Chetwoode can see her, and as Guy has turned to the fire and is staring into its depths with an expression of stern disapproval upon his handsome face, she presently finds she is posing to no effect, and gives it up.

Letting a rather vindictive look cover her features, she sweeps out of the drawing-room up to her own chamber, and gets rid of her bad temper so satisfactorily that after ten minutes her maid gives warning, and is ready to curse the day she was born.

The next morning, long before any one is up, Cyril takes his departure by the early train, and for many days his home knows him no more.

* * * * * * *

A mighty compassion for Cecilia fills the hearts of all at Chetwoode—all, that is, except Miss Beauchamp, who privately considers it extremely low and wretched form, to possess a heart at all.

Lady Chetwoode, eager and anxious to atone for past unkind thought, goes down to The Cottage in person and insists on seeing its sad tenant,—when so tender and sympathetic is she, that, the ice being broken and pride vanquished, the younger woman gives way, and, laying her head upon the gentle bosom near her, has a hearty cry there, that eases even while it pains her. I have frequently noticed that when one person falls to weeping in the arms of another, that other person maintains a *tendresse* for her for a considerable time afterward. Cecilia's lucky rain of tears on this occasion softens her companion wonderfully, so that Lady Chetwoode, who only came to pity, goes away admiring.

There is an indescribable charm about Cecilia, impossible to resist. Perhaps it is her beauty, perhaps her exquisite womanliness, combined with the dignity that sits so sweetly on her. Lady Chetwoode succumbs to it, and by degrees grows not only sympathetic toward her, but really attached to her society,—"now, when it is too late," as poor Cecilia tells herself, with a bitter pang. Yet the friendship of Cyril's mother is dear to her, and helps to lighten the dreary days that must elapse before the news of her husband's return to life is circumstantially confirmed. They have all entreated her to make The Cottage still her home, until such unwelcome news arrives.

Colonel Trant's friend has again written from Russia, but without being able to add another link to the chain of evidence. "He had not seen Arlington since. He had changed his quarters, so they had missed, and he had had no opportunity of cross-examining him as to his antecedents; but he himself had small doubt he was the man they had so often discussed together. He heard he had gone south, through Turkey, meaning to make his voyage home by sea; he had mentioned something about preferring that mode of traveling to any other. He could, of course, easily ascertain the exact time he meant to return to England, and would let Trant know without delay," etc.

All this is eminently unsatisfactory, and suspense preying upon Cecilia commits terrible ravages upon both face and form. Her large eyes look at one full of a

settled melancholy; her cheeks grow more hollow daily; her once elastic step has grown slow and fearful, as though she dreads to overtake misfortune. Every morning and evening, as the post hour draws nigh, she suffers mental agony, through her excessive fear of what a letter may reveal to her, sharper than any mere physical pain.

Cyril has gone abroad; twice Lilian has received a line from him, but of his movements or his feelings they know nothing. Cecilia has managed to get both these curt letters into her possession, and no doubt treasures them, and weeps over them, poor soul, as a saint might over a relic.

Archibald, now almost recovered, has left them reluctantly for change of air, in happy ignorance of the sad events that have been starting up among them since his accident, as all those aware of the circumstances naturally shrink from speaking of them, and show a united desire to prevent the unhappy story from spreading further.

So day succeeds day, until at length matters come to a crisis, and hopes and fears are at an end.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Love laid his sleepless head
On a thorny rose bed;
And his eyes with tears were red
And pale his lips as the dead.

"And fear, and sorrow, and scorn,
Kept watch by his head forlorn,
Till the night was overworn,
And the world was merry with morn.

"And joy came up with the day,
And kissed love's lips as he lay,
And the watchers, ghostly and gray,
Sped from his pillow away.

"And his eyes at the dawn grew bright
And his lips waxed ruddy as light:
Sorrow may reign for a night,
But day shall bring back delight."

—SWINBURNE.

The strong old winter is dead. He has died slowly, painfully, with many a desperate struggle, many a hard fight to reassert his power; but now at last he's safely buried, pushed out of sight by all the soft little armies of green leaves that have risen up in battle against him. Above his grave the sweet, brave young grasses are springing, the myriad flowers are bursting into fuller beauty, the birds, not now in twos or threes, but in countless thousands, are singing melodiously among the as yet half-opened leaves, making all the woods merry with their tender madrigals. The whole land is awake and astir, crying, "Welcome" to the flower-crowned spring, as she flies with winged feet over field, and brook, and upland.

It is the first week in March, a wonderfully soft and lamb-like March even at this early stage of its existence. Archibald has again returned to Chetwoode, strong and well, having been pressed to do so by Lady Chetwoode, who has by this

time brought herself, most reluctantly, to believe his presence necessary to Lilian's happiness.

Taffy has also turned up quite unexpectedly, which makes his welcome perhaps a degree more cordial. Indeed, the amount of leave Mr. Musgrave contrives to get, and the scornful manner in which he regards it, raise within the bosoms of his numerous friends feelings of admiration the most intense.

"Now, will you tell me what is the good of giving one a miserable fortnight here, and a contemptible fortnight there?" he asks, pathetically, in tones replete with unlimited disgust. "Why can't they give a fellow a decent three months at once, and let him enjoy himself? it's beastly mean, that's what it is! keeping a man grinding at hard duty morning, noon, and night."

"It is more than that in your case: it is absolutely foolish," retorts Miss Chesney, promptly. "It shows an utter disregard for their own personal comfort. Your colonel can't be half a one; were I he, I should give you six months' leave twice every year, if only to get rid of you."

"With what rapture would I hail your presence in the British army!" replies Mr. Musgrave, totally unabashed.

* * * * * * *

To-day is Tuesday. To-morrow, after long waiting that has worn her to a shadow, Cecilia is to learn her fate. To-morrow the steamer that is bringing to England the man named Arlington is expected to arrive; and Colonel Trant, as nervous and passionately anxious for Cecilia's sake as she can be for her own, has promised to meet it, to go on board, see the man face to face, so as to end all doubt, and telegraph instant word of what he will learn.

Lilian, alone of them all, clings wildly and obstinately to the hope that this Arlington may not be *the* Arlington; but she is the only one who dares place faith in this barren suggestion.

At The Cottage, like one distracted, Cecilia has locked herself into her own room, and is pacing restlessly up and down the apartment, as though unable to sit, or know quiet, until the dreaded morrow comes.

At Chetwoode they are scarcely less uneasy. An air of impatient expectation pervades the house. The very servants (who, it is needless to say, know all about it, down to the very lightest detail) seem to walk on tiptoe, and wear solemnly

the dejected expression they usually reserve for their pew in church.

Lady Chetwoode has fretted herself into one of her bad headaches, and is quite prostrate; lying on her bed, she torments herself, piling the agony ever higher, as she pictures Cyril's increased despair and misery should their worst fears be confirmed,—forgetting that Cyril, being without hope, can no longer fear.

Lilian, unable to work or read, wanders aimlessly through the house, hardly knowing how to hide her growing depression from her cousins, who alone remain quite ignorant of the impending trouble. Mr. Musgrave, indeed, is so utterly unaware of the tragedy going on around him, that he chooses this particular day to be especially lively, not to say larky, and overpowers Lilian with his attentions; which so distracts her that, watching her opportunity, she finally effects her escape through the drawing-room window, and, running swiftly through the plantations, turns in the direction of the wood.

She eludes one cousin, however, only to throw herself into the arms of another. Half-way to The Cottage she meets Archibald coming leisurely toward her.

"Take me for a walk," he says, with humble entreaty; and Lilian, who, as a rule, is kind to every one except her guardian, tells him, after an unflattering pause, he may accompany her to such and such a distance, but no farther.

"I am going to The Cottage," she says.

"To see this Lady of Shalott, this mysterious Mariana in her moated grange?" asks Chesney, lightly.

Odd as it may sound, he has never yet been face to face with Cecilia. Her determined seclusion and her habit of frequenting the parish church in the next village, which is but a short distance from her, has left her a stranger to almost every one in the neighborhood. Archibald is indeed aware that The Cottage owns a tenant, and that her name is Arlington, but nothing more. The fact of her never being named at Chetwoode has prevented his asking any idle questions and thereby making any discoveries.

When they have come to the rising mound that half overlooks The Cottage garden, Lilian comes to a standstill.

"Now you must leave me," she says, imperatively.

"Why? We are quite a day's journey from The Cottage yet. Let me see you to the

gate."

"How tiresome you are!" says Miss Chesney; "just like a big baby, only not half so nice: you always want more than you are promised."

As Chesney makes no reply to this sally, she glances at him, and, following the direction of his eyes, sees Cecilia, who has come out for a moment or two to breathe the sweet spring air, walking to and fro among the garden paths. It is a very pale and changed Cecilia upon whom they look.

"Why," exclaims Chesney, in a tone of rapt surprise, "surely that is Miss Duncan!"

"No,"—amazed,—"it is Mrs. Arlington, Sir Guy's tenant."

"True,"—slowly,—"I believe she did marry that fellow afterward. But I never knew her except as Miss Duncan."

"You knew her?"

"Very slightly,"—still with his eyes fixed upon Cecilia, as she paces mournfully up and down in the garden below them, with bent head and slow, languid movements. "Once I spoke to her, but I knew her well by sight; she was, she *is*, one of the loveliest women I ever saw. But how changed she is! how altered, how white her face appears! or can it be the distance makes me think so? I remember her such a merry girl—almost a child—when she married Arlington."

"Yes? She does not look merry now," says Lilian, the warm tears rising in her eyes: "poor darling, no wonder she looks depressed!"

"Why?"

"Oh," says Lilian, hesitating, "something about her husband, you know."

"You don't mean to say she is wearing sackcloth and the willow, and all that sort of thing, for Arlington all this time?" in a tone of astonishment largely flavored with contempt. "I knew him uncommonly well before he married, and I should think his death would have been a cause for rejoicing to his wife, above all others."

"Ah! that is just it," says Lilian, consumed with a desire to tell: she sinks her voice mysteriously, and sighs a heavy sigh tinctured with melancholy.

"Just so," unsympathetically. "Some women, I believe, are hopeless idiots."

"They are not," indignantly; "Cecilia is not an idiot; she is miserable because he is—alive! *Now* what do you think?"

"Alive!" incredulously.

"Exactly so," with all the air of a triumphant *raconteur*. "And when she had believed him dead, too, for so long! is it not hard upon her, poor thing! to have him come to life again so disagreeably without a word of warning? I really think it is quite enough to kill her."

"Well, I never!" says Mr. Chesney, staring at her. It isn't an elegant remark, but it is full of animated surprise, and satisfies Lilian.

"Is it not a tragedy?" she says, growing more and more pitiful every moment. "All was going on well (it doesn't matter what), when suddenly some one wrote to Colonel Trant to say he had seen this odious Mr. Arlington alive and well in Russia, and that he was on his way home. I shall always"—viciously—"hate the man who wrote it: one would think he had nothing else to write about, stupid creature! but is it not shocking for her, poor thing?"

At this, seemingly without rhyme or reason (except a depraved delight in other people's sufferings), Mr. Chesney bursts into a loud enjoyable laugh, and continues it for some seconds. He might perhaps have continued it until now, did not Lilian see fit to wither his mirth in the bud.

"Is it a cause for laughter?" she asks, wrathfully; "but it is *just like you*! I don't believe you have an atom of feeling. Positively I think you would laugh if *auntie*, who is almost a mother to you, was *dead*!"

"No, I should not," declares Archibald, subsiding from amusement to the very lowest depths of sulk: "pardon me for contradicting you, but I should not even *smile* were Lady Chetwoode dead. She is perhaps the one woman in the world whose death would cause me unutterable sorrow."

"Then why did you laugh just now?"

"Because if you had seen a man lie dead and had attended his funeral, even *you* might consider it a joke to hear he was 'alive and well.'"

"You saw him dead!"

"Yes, as dead as Julius Cæsar," morosely. "It so happened I knew him uncommonly well years ago: 'birds of a feather,' you know,"—bitterly,—"'flock together.' We flocked for a considerable time. Then I lost sight of him, and rather forgot all about him than otherwise, until I met him again in Vienna, more than two years ago. I saw him stabbed,—I had been dining with him that night,—and helped to carry him home; it seemed a slight affair, and I left him in the hands of a very skillful physician, believing him out of danger. Next morning, when I called, he was dead."

"Archie,"—in a low awe-struck whisper,—"is it all true?"

"Perfectly true."

"You could not by any possibility be mistaken?"

"Not by any."

"Then, Archie," says Lilian, solemnly, "you are a *darling*!"

"Am I?" grimly. "I thought I was a demon who could laugh at the demise of his best friend."

"Nonsense!" tucking her hand genially beneath his arm; "I only said that out of vexation. Think as little about it as I do. I know for a fact you are not half a bad boy. Come now with me to The Cottage, that I may tell this extraordinary, this delightful story to Cecilia."

"Is Cecilia Miss Duncan?"

"No, Mrs. Arlington. Archie,"—seriously,—"you are quite, utterly sure you know all about it?"

"Do you imagine I dreamed it? Of course I am sure. But if you think I am going down there to endure hysterics, and be made damp with tears, you are much mistaken. I won't go, Lilian; you needn't think it; I—I should be afraid."

"Console yourself; I shan't require your assistance," calmly. "I only want you to stay outside while I break the good news to her, lest she should wish to ask you a question. I only hope, Archie, you are telling me the exact truth,"—severely, —"that you are not drawing on your imagination, and that it was no other man of the same name you saw lying dead?"

"Perhaps it was," replies he, huffily, turning away as they reach the wicket gate.

"Do not stir from where you are now," says she, imperiously: "I may want you at any moment."

So Archibald, who does not dare disobey her commands, strays idly up and down outside the hedge, awaiting his summons. It is rather long in coming, so that his small stock of patience is nearly exhausted when he receives a message begging him to come in-doors.

As he enters the drawing-room, however, he is so struck with compassion at the sight of Cecilia's large, half-frightened eyes turned upon him that he loses all his ill humor and grows full of sympathy. She is very unlike the happy Cecilia of a month ago, still more unlike the calm, dignified Cecilia who first came to Chetwoode. She is pale as the early blossoms that lie here and there in soft wanton luxuriance upon her tables; her whole face is eager and expectant. She is trembling perceptibly from head to foot.

"What is it you would tell me, sir?" she asks, with deep entreaty. It is as though she longs yet fears to believe.

"I would tell you, madam," replies Chesney, respect and pity in his tone, taking and holding the hand she extends to him, while Lilian retains the other and watches her anxiously, "that fears are groundless. A most gross mistake has, I understand, caused you extreme uneasiness. I would have you dismiss this trouble from your mind. I happened to know Jasper Arlington well: I was at Vienna the year he was there; we met often. I witnessed the impromptu duel that caused his death; I saw him stabbed; I myself helped to carry him to his rooms; next morning he was dead. Forgive me, madam, that I speak so brusquely. It is best, I think, to be plain, to mention bare facts."

Here he pauses, and Cecilia's breath comes quickly; involuntarily her fingers close round his; a question she hardly dares to ask trembles on her lips. Archibald reads it in the silent agony of her eyes.

"I saw him dead," he says, softly, and is rewarded by a grateful glance from Lilian.

Cecilia's eyes close; a dry, painful sob comes from between her pallid lips.

"She will faint," cries Lilian, placing her arms round her.

"No, I shall not." By a great effort Cecilia overcomes the insensibility fast creeping over her. "I thank you, sir," she says to Archibald: "your words sound

like truth. I would I dared believe them! but I have been so often——" she stops, half choked with emotion. "What must you think me but inhuman?" she says, sobbingly. "All women except me mourn their husband's death; I mourn, in that I fear him living."

"Madam," replies Archibald, scarcely knowing what to say, "I too knew Jasper Arlington; for me, therefore, it would be impossible to judge you harshly in this matter. Were you, or any other living soul, to pretend regret for him, pardon me if I say I should deem you a hypocrite."

"You must believe what he has told you," says Lilian, emphatically: "it admits of no denial. But, to-morrow, at all events, will bring you news from Colonel Trant that will compel you to acknowledge its truth."

"Yes, yes. Oh, that to-morrow was here!" murmurs Cecilia, faintly. And Lilian understands that not until Trant's letter is within her hands will she allow herself to entertain hope.

Silently Lilian embraces her, and she and Archibald return home.

* * * * * * *

At Chetwoode very intense relief and pleasure are felt as Lilian relates her wonderful story. Every one is only too willing to place credence in it. Chesney confesses to some sensations of shame.

"Somehow," he says, "it never occurred to me your tenant might be Jasper Arlington's wife and the pretty Miss Duncan who tore my heart into fritters some years ago. And I knew nothing of all this terrible story about her husband's supposed resuscitation until to-day. It is a 'comedy of errors.' I feel inclined to sink into the ground when I remember how I have walked about here among you all, with full proof of what would have set you all at rest in no time, carefully locked up in my breast. Although innocent, Lady Chetwoode, I feel I ought to apologize."

"I shall go down and make her come up to Chetwoode," says her ladyship, warmly. "Poor girl! it is far too lonely for her to be down there by herself, especially just now when she must be so unstrung. As soon as I hear she has had that letter from George Trant, I shall persuade her to come to us."

The next evening brings a letter from Trant that falls like a little warm seal of certainty upon the good news of yesterday.

"Going down to the landing-place," writes he, "I found the steamer had really arrived, and went on board instantly. With my heart beating to suffocation I walked up to the captain, and asked him if any gentleman named Arlington had come with him. He said, 'Yes, he was here just now,' and looking round, pointed to a tall man bending over some luggage. 'There he is,' he said. I went up to the tall man. I could see he was a good height, and that his hair was black. As I noted this last fact my blood froze in my veins. When I was quite close to him he raised himself, turned, and looked full at me! And once more my blood ran warmly, comfortably. It was *not* the man I had feared to see. I drew my breath quickly, and to make assurance doubly sure, determined to ask his name.

"'Sir,' I said, bluntly, forgetful of etiquette, 'is your name Arlington?'

"'Sir,' replied he, regarding me with calm surprise, 'it is.' At this moment I confess I lost my head. I became once more eighteen, and impulsive. I grasped his hands; I wrung them affectionately, not to say violently.

"'Then, my dear sir,' I exclaimed, rapturously, 'I owe you a debt of gratitude. I thank you with all my heart. Had you not been born an Arlington, I might now be one of the most miserable men alive; as it is, I am one of the happiest.'

"My new friend stared. Then he gave way to an irrepressible laugh, and shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"'My good fellow,' said he, 'be reasonable. Take yourself back again to the excellent asylum from which you have escaped, and don't make further fuss about it. With your genial disposition you are sure to be caught.'

"At this I thought it better to offer him some slight explanation, which so amused him that he insisted on carrying me off with him to his hotel, where we dined, and where I found him a very excellent fellow indeed."

In this wise runs his letter. Cecilia reads it until each comforting assertion is shrined within her heart and doubt is no longer possible. Then an intense gratitude fills her whole being; her eyes grow dim with tears; clasping her hands earnestly, she falls upon her knees.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen,
What old December's bareness everywhere!"

—SHAKESPEARE.

So Lady Chetwoode goes down to The Cottage in her carriage, and insists upon carrying Cecilia back with her,—to which, after a slight demur, Cecilia gladly assents.

"But how to get Cyril," says practical Lilian, who is with them.

"He is in Amsterdam," answers Cecilia, with some hesitation. "Colonel Trant told me so in his letter."

"Colonel Trant is the most wonderful man I know," says Lilian; "but Amsterdam of all places! What on earth can any one want in Amsterdam?"

At this they all laugh, partly because they are still somewhat nervously inclined, and partly because (though why, I cannot explain) they seem to find something amusing in the mere thought of Amsterdam.

"I hope he won't bring back with him a fat *vrouw*," says Miss Chesney. And then she runs up-stairs to tell Kate to get ready to accompany her mistress.

Turning rather timidly toward Lady Chetwoode, Cecilia says:

"When Cyril returns, then,—you will not—you do not——"

"When he returns, my dear, you must marry him at once, if only to make amends for all the misery the poor boy has been enduring. But,"—kindly—"you must study economy, child; remember you are not marrying a rich man."

"He is rich enough for me," smiling; "though indeed it need not signify, as I have money enough for both. I never spoke of it until now, because I wished to keep it as a little surprise for him on—on our wedding-day, but at Mr. Arlington's death I inherited all his fortune. He never altered the will made before our marriage, and it is nearly four thousand a year, I think," simply: "Colonel Trant knows the exact amount, because he is a trustee."

Lady Chetwoode colors deeply. This woman, whom she had termed

"adventuress," is in reality possessed of a far larger fortune than the son she would have guarded from her at all hazards; proves to be an heiress, still further enriched by the priceless gifts of grace and beauty!

To say the very least of it, Lady Chetwoode feels small. But, pride coming to her rescue, she says, somewhat stiffly, while the pleasant smile of a moment since dies from her face:

"I had no idea you were so—so—in fact, I believed you almost portionless. I was led—how I know not—but I certainly was led to think so. What you say is a surprise. With so much money you should hesitate before taking any final step. The world is before you,—you are young, and very charming. I will ask you to forgive an old woman's bluntness; but remember, there is always something desirable in a title. I would have you therefore consider. My son is no match for you where *money* is concerned." This last emphatically and very proudly.

Cecilia flushes, and grows distressed.

"Dear Lady Chetwoode," she says, taking her hand forcibly. "I entreat you not to speak to me so. Do not make me again unhappy. This money, which up to the present I have scarcely touched, so hateful has it been to me, has of late become almost precious to my sight. I please myself with the thought that the giving of it to—to Cyril—may be some small return to him for all the tenderness he has lavished upon me. Do not be angry with me that I cherish, and find such intense gratification in this idea. It is so sweet to give to those we love!"

"You have a generous heart," Lady Chetwoode answers, moved by her generous manner, and pleased too, for money, like music, "hath charms." "If I have seemed ungracious, forget it. Extreme wonder makes us at times careless of courtesy, and we did not suspect one who could choose to live in such a quiet spot as this of being an heiress."

"You will keep my secret?" anxiously.

"I promise. You shall be the first to tell it to your husband upon your wedding-day. I think," says the elder lady, gracefully, "he is too blessed. Surely you possessed treasure enough in your own person!"

* * * * * * *

So Cecilia goes to Chetwoode, and shortly afterward Lady Chetwoode conceives a little plot that pleases her intensely, and which she relates with such evident

gusto that Lilian tells her she is an *intrigante* of the deepest dye, and that positively for the future she shall feel quite afraid of her.

"I never heard anything so artful," says Taffy, who has with much perseverance wormed himself into their confidence. In fact, after administering various rebuffs they all lose heart, and confess to him the whole truth out of utter desperation. "Downright artful!" repeats Mr. Musgrave, severely. "I shouldn't have believed you capable of it."

But Cecilia says it is a charming scheme, and sighs for its accomplishment. Whereupon a telegram is written and sent to Cyril. It is carefully worded, and, though strictly truthful in letter, rather suggests the idea that his instant return to Chetwoode will be the only means of saving his entire family from asphyxiation. It is a thrilling telegram, almost bound to bring him back without delay, had he but one grain of humanity left in his composition.

It evokes an answer that tells them he has started on receipt of their message, and names the day and hour they may expect him, wind and weather permitting.

* * * * * * *

It is night,—a rather damp, decidedly unlovely night. The little station at Truston is almost deserted: only the station-master and two melancholy porters represent life in its most dejected aspect. Outside the railings stands the Chetwoode carriage, the horses foaming and champing their bits in eager impatience to return again to their comfortable stables.

Guy, with a cigar between his lips, is pacing up and down, indifferent alike to the weather or the delay. One of the melancholy porters, who is evidently in the final stage of depression, tells him the train was due five minutes ago, and hopes dismally there has been no accident higher up on the line. Guy, who is lost in thought, hopes so too, and instantly offers the man a cigar, through force of habit, which the moody one takes sadly, and deposits in a half-hearted fashion in one of his numerous rambling pockets to show to his children when he gets home.

"If ever I *do* get home," he says to himself, hopelessly, taking out and lighting an honest clay that has seen considerable service.

Then a shrill whistle rings through the air, the train steams lazily into the station, and Guy, casting a hasty glance at the closed blinds of the carriage outside,

hastens forward to meet Cyril, who is the only passenger for Truston to-night.

"Has anything happened?" he asks, anxiously, advancing to greet Sir Guy.

"Yes, but nothing to make you uneasy. Do not ask me any questions now: you will hear all when you get home."

"Our mother is well?"

"Quite well. Are you ready? What a beastly objectionable night it is! Have you seen to everything, Buckley? Get in, Cyril. I am going outside to finish my cigar."

When Guy chooses, he is energetic. Cyril is not, and allows himself to be pushed unresistingly in the direction of the carriage.

"Hurry, man: the night is freezing," says Guy, giving him a final touch. "Home, Buckley."

Guy springs up in front. Cyril finds himself in the brougham, and in another instant they are beyond the station railings, rolling along the road leading to Chetwoode.

As Cyril closes the door and turns round, the light of the lamps outside reveals to him the outline of a dark figure seated beside him.

"Is it you, Lilian?" he asks, surprised; and then the dark figure leans forward, throws back a furred hood, and Cecilia's face, pale, but full of a glad triumph, smiles upon him.

"You!" exclaims he, unsteadily, unable through utter amazement to say anything more, while with his eyes he gathers in hungrily each delicate beauty in that "sweetest face to him in all this world."

Whereupon Cecilia nods almost saucily, though the tears are thick within her lovely eyes, and answers him:

"Yes, it is even I. Are you glad or sorry, that you stare so rudely at me? and never a word of greeting! Shame, then! Have you left all your manners behind you in Amsterdam? I have come all this way, this cold night, to bid you welcome and bring you home to Chetwoode, and yet—— Oh, Cyril!" suddenly flinging herself into his longing arms, "it is all right at last, my dear—dear—*dear*, and you may love me again as much as ever you like!"

When explanations have come to an end, and they are somewhat calmer, Cyril says:

"But how is it that you are here with Guy, and going to Chetwoode?"

"I am staying at Chetwoode. Your mother came herself, and brought me back with her. How kind she is, how sweet! Even had I never known you, I should have loved her dearly."

This last assurance from the lips of his beloved makes up the sum of Cyril's content.

"Tell me more, sweetheart," he says, contented only to listen. With his arms round her, with her face so close to his, with both their hearts beating in happy unison, he hardly cares to question, but is well pleased to keep silence, and listen to the soft, loving babble that issues from her lips. Her very words seem to him, who has so long wearied for them, set to tenderest music. "Like flakes of feathered snow, they melted as they fell."

"I have so much to tell, I scarcely know where to begin. Do you know you are to escort me to a ball at Mrs. Steyne's next week? No? why, you know nothing; so much for sojourning in Amsterdam. Then I suppose you are ignorant of the fact that I have ordered the most delicious dress you ever beheld to grace the occasion and save myself from disgracing you. And you are to be very proud of me, and to admire me immensely, or I shall never forgive you."

"I am pretty certain not to deserve condign punishment on that score," fondly. "Darling, can it be really true that we are together again, that all the late horrible hopelessness is at an end? Cecilia, if this should prove a dream, and I awoke now, it would kill me."

"Nay, it is no dream," softly. Turning up her perfect face, until the lips are close to his, she whispers, "Kiss me, and be convinced."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"How hard it is to hide the sparks of nature!"
—*Cymbeline.*

"No, truly, Ursula, she is too disdainful
I know, her spirits are as coy and wild
As haggards of the rock.
* * * * * * *
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on."
—*Much Ado About Nothing.*

"Sir Guy," says Miss Chesney, two days later, bursting into his private sanctum as "the eve is declining," in a rather stormy fashion, "I must ask you to speak to your groom Buckley: he has been exceedingly rude to me."

"Rude? Buckley?" exclaims Sir Guy, with a frown, throwing down the paper he has been trying to read in the fast growing gloom. It is dusk, but the red light of the fire flickers full upon his face, betraying the anger that is gathering there. A looker-on would have readily understood by it that Buckley's hours for grooming at Chetwoode are few.

"Yes. I told him to have Saracen saddled for me to-morrow morning, as the meet is at Ryston, and I expect a good run; and he said he should not do it without your permission, or orders, or something equally impertinent."

"Saracen!" returns Chetwoode, aghast, losing sight of Buckley's miserable behavior, or rather condoning it on the spot; "you don't mean to tell me that for one moment you dreamed of riding Saracen?"

"Certainly I did. And why not?" preparing for battle.

"Because the idea is simply absurd. You could not possibly ride him. He is not half trained."

"Archibald rode him last week, and says he is perfect, and quite safe. I have decided on trying him to-morrow."

"I wish Chesney would not put such thoughts into your head. He is *not* safe, and he has never been ridden by a woman."

"That is just why I fancy him: I have often before now ridden horses that had never had a lady on their backs until I rode them. And to-morrow I feel sure will be a good day, besides being probably my last meet for the season."

"My dear child, I think it would indeed be your last meet were you to ride that brute: his temper is thoroughly uncertain."

"You told me a few days ago my hand could make any horse's mouth, and now ——"

"I told you then what I tell you again now, that you are one of the best woman riders I ever saw. But for all that, you would find it impossible to manage Saracen."

"You refuse him to me, then?" with an ominous gleam in her eyes.

"I wish you would not look at it in that light: I merely cannot consent to let you break your neck. If your own mare does not please you, you can take my mount, or any other in the entire stables."

"No, thank you, I only want that one."

"But, my dear Lilian, pray be reasonable!" entreats Chetwoode, warmly, and just a trifle impatiently: "do you think I would be doing my duty by you if I sanctioned such a rash proceeding?"

"Your duty?" unpleasantly, and with a certain scornful uplifting of her small Grecian nose.

"Just so," coldly; "I am your guardian, remember."

"Oh, pray do not perpetually seek to remind me of that detestable fact," says Miss Chesney, vindictively; whereupon Sir Guy freezes, and subsides into dead and angry silence. Lilian, sweeping over to the darkening window, commences upon the pane a most disheartening tattoo, that makes the listener long for death. When Chetwoode can stand it no longer, he breaks the oppressive stillness.

"Perhaps you are not aware," he says, angrily, "that a noise of that description is intensely irritating."

"No. *I* like it," retorts Miss Chesney, tattooing louder than ever.

"If you go on much longer, you will drive me out of my mind," remarks Guy, distractedly.

"Oh, don't let it come to that," calmly; "let me drive you out of the room first."

"As to my guardianship," says Chetwoode, in a chilling tone, "console yourself with the reflection that it cannot last forever. Time is never at a standstill, and your twenty-first birthday will restore you to freedom. You can then ride as many wild animals and kill yourself as quickly as you please, without asking any one's consent."

"I can do that now too, and probably shall. I have quite made up my mind to ride Saracen to-morrow!"

"Then the sooner you unmake that mind the better."

"Well,"—turning upon him as though fully prepared to crush him with her coming speech,—"if I don't ride him I shall stay at home altogether: there!"

"I think that will be by far the wiser plan of the two," returns he, coolly.

"What! and lose all my day!" cries Lilian, overwhelmed by the atrocity of this remark, "while you and all the others go and enjoy yourselves! How hatefully selfish you can be! But I won't be tyrannized over in this fashion. I shall go, and on Saracen too."

"You shall not," firmly.

Miss Chesney has come close up to where he is standing on the hearth-rug. The fire-light dances and crackles merrily, casting its rays, now yellow, now deep crimson, over their angry faces, as though drawing keen enjoyment from the deadly duel going on so near to it. One pale gleam lingers lovingly upon Lilian's sunny head, throwing over it yet another shade, if possible richer and more golden than its fellows; another lights up her white hands, rather defiantly clinched, one small foot in its high-heeled shoe that has advanced beyond her gown, and two blue eyes large with indignant astonishment.

Guy is returning her gaze with almost equal indignation, being angrily remindful of certain looks and scenes that of late have passed between them.

"You defy me?" says Lilian, slowly.

"I do."

"You *refuse* me?" as though not quite believing the evidence of her senses.

"I do. I forbid you to ride that one horse."

"Forbid me!" exclaims she passionately, tears starting to her eyes. "You are fond of forbidding, as it seems to me. Recollect, sir, that, though unhappily your ward, I am neither your child nor your wife."

"I assure you I had never the presumption to imagine you in the latter character," he answers, haughtily, turning very pale, but speaking steadily and in a tone eminently uncomplimentary.

"Your voice says more than your words," exclaims Lilian, too angry to weigh consequences. "Am I to understand"—with an unlovely laugh—"you think me unworthy to fill so exalted a position?"

"As you press me for the truth," says Chetwoode, who has lost his temper completely, "I confess I should hardly care to live out my life with such a——"

"Yes, go on; 'with such a—' shrew, is it? or perhaps virago?"

"As you wish it," with a contemptuous shrug; "either will suit, but I was going to say 'flirt.'"

"Were you?" cries she, tears of mortification and rage dimming her eyes, all the spoiled child within her rising in arms. "Flirt, am I? and shrew? Well, I will not have the name of it without the gain of it. I hate you, hate you, *hate* you!"

With the last word she raises her hand suddenly and administers to him a sound and wholesome box upon the ear.

The effect is electric. Sir Guy starts back as though stunned. Never in all his life has he been so utterly taken aback, routed with such deadly slaughter. The dark, hot color flames into his cheeks. Shame for her—a sort of horror that she should have been guilty of such an act—overpowers him. Involuntarily he puts one hand up to the cheek her slender fingers, now hanging so listlessly at her side, have wounded, while regarding her with silent amazement largely mixed with reproach.

As for Lilian, the deed once done, she would have given worlds to recall it,—that is, secretly,—but in this life, unfortunately, facts accomplished cannot be

undone. Outwardly she is as defiant as ever, and, though extremely white, steadily and unflinchingly returns his gaze.

Yet after a little, a very little while, her eyes fall before his, her pretty, proud head droops somewhat, a small remnant of grace springs up in the very middle of all her passion and disdain. She is frightened, nervous, contrite.

When the silence has become absolutely unbearable, Guy says, in a low tone that betrays not the faintest feeling:

"I am afraid I must have said something to annoy you terribly. I confess I lost my temper, and otherwise behaved as a gentleman should not. I beg your pardon."

His voice is that of a stranger; it is so altered she scarcely knows it. Never in their worst disputes has he so spoken to her. With a little sickening feeling of despair and terror at her heart, she turns away and moves toward the door.

"Are you going? Pray take care. The room is very dark where the fire-light does not penetrate," says Guy, still in the same curiously changed voice, so full of quiet indifference, so replete with the cold courtesy we accord to those who are outside and beyond our affections.

He opens the door for her, and bows very slightly as she passes through, and then closes it again calmly, while she, with weary, listless footsteps, drags herself up-stairs and throws herself upon her bed.

Lying there with dry and open eyes, not daring to think, she hardly cares to analyze her own feelings. She knows she is miserable, and obstinately tries to persuade herself it is because she has been thwarted in her desire to ride Saracen, but in vain. After a struggle with her better thoughts, she gives in, and acknowledges her soreness of heart arises from the conviction that she has forever disgraced herself in her guardian's eyes. She will never be able to look at him again, though in truth that need scarcely signify, as surely in the future he will not care to see where she may be looking. It is all over. He is done with her. Instinctively she understands from his altered manner how he has made up his mind never again to exercise his right over her as guardian, never again to concern himself about either her weal or her woe. She is too wretched to cry, and lies prostrate, her pulses throbbing, her brain on fire.

"What is it, my bird?" asks nurse, entering, and bending solicitously over her. "Are you not well? Does your head ache?"

"It is not my head," plaintively.

"Your side, my lamb?"

"Yes, it is my side," says Lilian, laying her hand pathetically upon her heart; and then, overcome by the weight of her own sorrows, she buries her head in her pillows and bursts into tears.

"Eh, hinny, don't cry," says nurse, fondly. "We must all have pains there at times, an' we must just learn to bear them as best we may. Come, look up, my bairn; I will put on a good mustard blister to-night, and to-morrow I tell you it won't magnify at all," winds up nurse, fluently, who rather prides herself upon her management of the Queen's English, and would scorn to acknowledge the misplacement of a word here and there; and indeed, after all, when one comes to think of it, it does *not* "magnify" very much.

But Lilian sobs on disconsolately. And next morning she has fresh cause to bewail her evil conduct. For the day breaks and continues through all its short life so wet, so wild, so stormy, that neither Saracen nor any other horse can leave the stables. Hunting is out of the question, and with a fresh pang, that through its severity is punishment enough for her fault, she knows all her temper of the night before was displayed for naught.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Meanwhile the day sinks fast, the sun is set,
And in the lighted hall the guests are met;
The beautiful looked lovelier in the light
Of love, and admiration, and delight
Reflected from a thousand hearts and eyes,
Kindling a momentary paradise."

—SHELLEY: *Ginevra*.

It is the night of Mabel Steyne's ball. In the library at Chetwoode they are almost every one assembled, except Lilian, and Florence Beauchamp, and Mr. Musgrave, whose dressing occupies a considerable part of his life, and who is still sufficiently young to find pleasure in it.

Lady Chetwoode in gray satin is looking charming; Cecilia, lovely, in the palest shade of blue. She is standing at a table somewhat apart, conversing with Cyril, who is fastening a bracelet upon one of her arms. Guy and Archibald are carrying on a desultory conversation.

And now the door opens, and Lilian comes in. For the first time for a whole year she has quite discarded mourning to-night, and is dressed in pure white. Some snowdrops are thrown carelessly among the folds of the tulle that covers and softens her silk gown; a tiny spray of the same flower lies nestling in her hair.

She appears more fairy-like, more child-like and sweeter than ever, as she advances into the room, with a pretty consciousness of her own beauty, that sits charmingly upon her. She is a perfect little vision of loveliness, and is tenderly aware of the fact. Her neck is fair, her shoulders rounded and kissable as an infant's; her eyes are gleaming, her lips apart and smiling; her sunny hair, that is never quite as smooth as other people's, lies in rippling coils upon her head, while across her forehead a few short rebellious love-locks wander.

Seeing her, Sir Guy and Chesney are filled with a simultaneous longing to take her in their arms and embrace her then and there.

Sweeping past Sir Guy, as though he is invisible, she goes on, happy, radiant toward Lady Chetwoode. She is in her airiest mood, and has evidently cast

behind her all petty *désagréments*, being bent on enjoying life to its fullest for this one night at least.

"Is not my dress charming, auntie? does it not become me?" she asks, with the utmost *naïveté*, casting a backward glance over her shoulder at her snowy train.

"It does, indeed. Let me congratulate you, darling," says Lady Chetwoode to her favorite: "it is really exquisite."

"Lovely as its wearer," says Archibald, with a suppressed sigh.

"Pouf!" says Lilian, gayly: "what a simile! It is a rudeness; who dares compare me with a paltry gown? A tenth part as lovely, you mean. How refractory this button is!" holding out to him a rounded arm to have the twelfth button of her glove fastened; "try can you do it for me?"

Here Taffy enters, and is apparently struck with exaggerated admiration as he beholds her.

"Ma conscience!" he says, in the words of the famous Dominie, "what a little swell we are! Titania, my dear, permit me to compliment you on the success you are sure to have. Monsieur Worth has excelled himself! Really, you are very nearly pretty. You'll have a good time of it to-night, I shouldn't wonder."

"I hope so," gladly; "I can hardly keep my feet quiet, I do so long to dance. And so you admire me?"

"Intensely. As a tribute to your beauty, I think I shall give you a kiss."

"Not for worlds," exclaims she, retreating hastily. "I know your embraces of old. Do let me take my flowers and tulle uncrushed to Mabel's, or I shall complain of you to her, and so spoil your evening."

"I am glad to see you have recovered your usual spirits," maliciously: "this morning you were nowhere. I could not get a word out of you. Ever since yesterday, when you were disappointed about your run, you have been in 'doleful dumps.' All day you looked as though you thought there was 'nothing so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.' You seemed to revel in it."

"Perhaps I was afraid to encourage you. Once set going, you know you cannot stop," says Lilian, laughing, while two red spots, caused by his random remark, rise and burn in her cheeks.

"We are late, are we not?" says Florence, entering at this moment; and as Florence never errs, Archibald instantly gives his arm to Lady Chetwoode and takes her down to the carriage. Taffy, who has already opened an animated conversation with Miss Beauchamp on the horrors of square dances, accompanies her; Cyril disappears with Cecilia, and Lilian is left alone in the library with Sir Guy.

Curving her body gracefully, Lilian gathers up with slow nonchalance her long train, and, without bestowing a glance upon Guy, who is silently waiting to escort her to the smaller brougham, goes up to a mirror to take a last lingering survey of her own bewitching image. Then she calmly smooths down her glove, then refastens a bracelet that has come undone, while he, with a bored expression on his face, waits impatiently.

By this, Archibald, who has had ample time to put Lady Chetwoode in her carriage and come all the way back to find a fan forgotten by Miss Beauchamp, re-enters the room.

Lilian beams upon him directly.

"Good Archie," she says, sweetly, "you have returned just in time. There was positively nobody to take poor little me to the brougham." She slips her hand beneath his arm, and walks past Sir Guy composedly, with laughing friendly eyes uplifted to her cousin's.

* * * * * * *

The ball is at its height. The first small hour of morning has sounded. The band is playing dreamily, sweetly; flowers are nodding everywhere, some emitting a dying fragrance, others still fresh and sweet as when first plucked. Afar off the faint splashing of the fountains in the conservatories echoes tremulously, full of cool imaginings, through the warm air. Music and laughter and mirth—real and unreal—are mixed together in one harmonious whole.

Mrs. Steyne has now an unaffected smile upon her face, being assured her ball is an undeniable success, and is allowing herself to be amused by Taffy, who is standing close beside her.

Tom Steyne, who, like Sir Charles Coldstream, is "thirty-three and used up," is in a corner, silently miserable, suffering himself to be flirted at by a gay young thing of forty. He has been making despairing signs to Taffy to come to his

assistance, for the past five minutes, which signals of distress that young gentleman basely declines to see.

Every one is busy asking who Mrs. Arlington can be, and, as nobody knows, everybody undertakes to tell his or her neighbor "all about her." And by this time every one is aware she is enormously rich, the widow of an Indian nabob, from whom she was divorced on account of some "fi-fi story, my dear, that is never mentioned now," and that she is ever so many years older than she really looks; "painting is brought to such perfection nowadays!"

All night long Sir Guy has not asked Lilian to dance; he has held himself aloof from her, never even allowing his glance to stray in her direction, although no smallest grace, no faintest coquetry, of hers has escaped his notice. To him the whole evening has been a miserable failure. He has danced, laughed, flirted a good deal, "as is his nature to,"—more particularly with Florence,—but he has been systematically wretched all through.

Lilian and Archibald have been inseparable. She has danced with him, in defiance of all decent rules, dance after dance, even throwing over some engagements to continue her mad encouragement of him. She has noted Sir Guy's attention to his cousin, and, noting (although in her heart she scarcely believes in it), has grown a little reckless as to what judgment people may form of her evident appreciation of Chesney's society.

There is indeed a memorable five minutes when she absolutely deliberates as to whether she will or will not accept her cousin's hand, and so give herself a way to escape from Sir Guy's dreaded displeasure. But, while deliberating, she quite forgets the terrible disappointment she is laying up in store for him, who has neither thought, nor eyes, nor words, for any one but her. Being the undisputed belle of the evening, she naturally comes in for a heavy share of attention, and, be sure, does not altogether escape unkind comment.

"Oh, poor Tom! Do look at Tom and that fearful Miss Dumaresque," says Mrs. Steyne, who just at this moment discovers the corner where Tom is doing his utmost to "suffer and be strong." It is, however, a miserable attempt, as he is visibly depressed and plainly on the point of giving way altogether. "Somebody must go to his succor," says Mabel, with decision: "the question is, who? You, my dear Taffy, I think."

"Not I," says Taffy; "please, dear Mrs. Steyne, do not afflict me so far. I couldn't, indeed. I am very dreadfully afraid of Miss Dumaresque; besides, I never pity

Tom even when in his worst scrapes. We all know"—sentimentally—"he is the happiest man alive; when he does fall in for his bad quarter of an hour, why not let him endure it like another? And he is rather in a hat, now, isn't he?" taking an evident keen delight in Mr. Steyne's misfortunes. "I wouldn't be in his shoes for a good deal. He looks as if he was going to cry. The fact is, the gods have pampered him so much, that it is a shame not to let him know for a few minutes what real distress means."

"But what if he *should* die!" reproachfully: "one so unaccustomed to adversity as Tom would be very likely to sink under it. He looks half dead already! Mark the hunted expression in his poor dear eyes."

"I wish you would mark the forlorn and dejected expression in other people's eyes," in an injured tone; "but all that, of course, goes for nothing."

"In yours, do you mean?" with exaggerated sympathy. "My dear boy, have you a secret sorrow? Does concealment, like that nasty worm, prey upon you? I should be unhappy forever if I could bring myself to think so."

"Then don't think so; come, let us finish this waltz, and forget that lucky fellow in the corner."

"What! you would have me trip it on the light fantastic toe while Tom is enduring torment? Never! Whatever I may do in prosperity, in adversity I 'never will desert Mr. Micawber.'"

"I vow I think you are jealous of that antiquated though still frisky damsel," says Taffy, ready to explode with laughter at the bare idea, as he watches the frisky one's attempt at subjugating the hapless Tom.

"You have discovered my hidden fear," replies Mabel, laughing, too: "forgive my weakness. There are moments when even the strongest break down! Wait here patiently for me, and I have no doubt with a little skill I shall be able to deliver him."

At one side of the ball-room, close to an upper window, is a recess, dimly lit, and partially curtained, in which it is possible for two or three to stand without letting outsiders be aware of their vicinity: into this nook Lilian and Archibald have just withdrawn, she having confessed to a faint sense of fatigue. The sweet lingering notes of the waltz "Geliebt und Verloren" are saddening the air; now they swell, now faint, now almost die out altogether, only to rise again full of

pathetic meaning.

"How charming it is to be here!" says Lilian, sinking into a cushioned seat with a sigh of relief, "apart from every one, and yet so near; to watch their different expressions, and speculate upon their secret feelings, without appearing rude: do you not think so? Do you like being here?"

"Yes, I like being here with you,"—or anywhere else, he might have added, without deviating from the truth.

At this moment Guy, who is not dancing, happens to saunter up, and lean against the curtains of the window close to their hiding-place, totally unconscious of their presence. From where she is sitting Lilian can distinctly see him, herself unseen. He looks moody, and is evidently enchanted with the flavor of his blonde moustache. He is scarcely noticeable from where he stands, so that when two men come leisurely up to the very mouth of the retreat, and dispose of themselves luxuriously by leaning all their weight upon the frail pillars against which the curtains hang, they do not perceive him.

One is Harry Bellair, who has apparently been having a good many suppers; the other is his friend.

Mr. Bellair's friend is not as handsome as he might be. There is a want of jaw, and a general lightness about him (not of demeanor: far be it from me to hint at that!) that at a first glance is positively startling. One hardly knows where his flesh ends or his hair begins, while his eyes are a marvel in themselves, making the beholder wonder how much paler they *can* get without becoming pure white. His moustache is of the vaguest tints, so vague that until acquaintance ripens one is unaware of its existence. Altogether, he is excellently bleached.

To-night, to add to his manifold attractions, he appears all shirt-front and white tie, with very little waistcoat to speak of. In his left and palest optic is the inevitable eyeglass, in which he is supposed by his intimates to sleep, as never yet has human being (except perhaps his mamma in the earlier scenes of his existence) seen him without it. In spite of all this, however, he looks mild, and very harmless.

"She is awfully lovely," says Mr. Bellair, evidently continuing a conversation, and saying it with an audible sigh; "quite too lovely for me."

"You seem fetched," says his friend, directing a pale but feeling ray upon him

through the beloved glass.

"I am, I confess it," says Mr. Bellair, effusively; "I adore her, and that's a fact: but she would not look at me. She's in love with her cousin,—Chesney, you know,—and they're to be married straight off the reel, next month, I think—or that."

"Hah!" says the friend. "She's good to look at, do you know, and rather uncommon style, in spite of her yellow hair. She's a ward of Chetwoode's, isn't she? Always heard he was awfully *épris* there."

By this time Lilian is crimson, and Archibald hardly less so, though he is distinctly conscious of a desire to laugh; Lilian's eyes are riveted on Sir Guy, who has grown very pale and has turned a frowning brow upon these luckless young men.

"Not a bit of it," says Mr. Bellair, "at least now. He was, I believe, but she bowled him over in a couple of months and laughed at him afterward. No, Chesney is the white-headed boy with her. Not that I see much in him myself," discontentedly.

"Sour-looking beggar," rejoins the friend, with kind sympathy.

It is growing tremendously jolly for the listeners. Lilian turns a pained, beseeching glance upon Archibald, who returns the glance, but declares by gesture his inability to do anything. He is still secretly amused, and not being able from his point of vantage to see Chetwoode, is scarcely as confused as Lilian. Should he now stir, and walk out of his place of concealment with Miss Chesney, he would only cover with shame the unsuspecting gossips and make two enemies for life, without doing any good.

Chetwoode is in the same condition, but though angry and bitterly stung by their words, hardly cares to resent them, being utterly unaware of Lilian's eyes, which are bent upon him. He waits impatiently for the moment when Mr. Bellair and his "fat friend" may choose to move on. Did he know who was so close to him, watching every expression of his face, impatience might have passed all bounds. As it is, a few chance remarks matter little to him.

But Mr. Bellair's friend has yet something else to say.

"Fine girl, Miss Beauchamp," says this youth, languidly; "immensely good form, and that. Looks like a goddess."

"There's a lot of her, if you mean that. But she's too nosy," says Mr. Bellair, grumpily, a sense of injury full upon him. His own nose is of the charming curt and simple order: his "friends in council" (who might be more select) are wont to call it playfully a "spud." "Far too nosy! I hate a woman all nose! makes her look so like a mope."

"You've been getting a snubbing there," says his friend, this time unfeelingly and with an inhuman chuckle.

"I have," valiantly: "she has too much of the goddess about her for my fancy: choke-full of dignity and airs, you know, and all that sort of rubbish. It don't go down, I take it, in the long run. It's as much as she can do to say 'how d'ye do' to you, and she looks a fellow up and down half a dozen times before she gives him a waltz. You don't catch me inviting her to the 'mazy dance' again in a hurry. I hate affectation. I wouldn't marry that girl for untold gold."

"She wouldn't have you," says his friend, with a repetition of the unpleasant chuckle.

"Maybe she wouldn't," replies Mr. Bellair, rather hurt. "Anyhow, she is not to be named in the same day with Miss Chesney. I suppose you know she is engaged to Chetwoode, so you needn't get spoony on her," viciously; "it is quite an old affair, begun in the cradle, I believe, and kept up ever since: never can understand that sort of thing myself; would quite as soon marry my sister. But all men aren't alike."

"No, they aren't," says the friend, with conviction. "Why don't he marry her, though? He must be tired of looking at her."

"He funks it, that's what it is," says Mr. Bellair, "and no wonder; after seeing Miss Chesney he must feel rather discontented with his choice. Ah!"—with a sigh warranted to blow out the largest wax candle,—"there's a girl for you if you like!"

"Don't weep over it, old boy, at least here; you'll be seen," says his friend, jovially, with odious want of sympathy; after which they are pleased to remove themselves and their opinions to another part of the room.

When they have gone, Lilian, who has been turning white and red at intervals all through the discussion, remains motionless, her eyes still fixed on Chetwoode. She does not heed Archibald's remark, so earnestly is she regarding her guardian.

Can it be true what they have just said, that he, Sir Guy, has been for years engaged to Florence? At certain moments such a thought has crossed her own mind, but never until to-night has she heard it spoken of.

Chetwoode, who has moved, comes a little nearer to where she is standing, and pauses there, compelled to it by a pressure in the crowd.

"With what taste do they accredit me!" he says, half aloud, with a rather pale smile and a slight curl of his short upper lip, discernible even beneath his drooping moustache. His eyes are directed toward Florence, who is standing, carrying on a lifeless flirtation at a little distance from him; there is distaste in every line of his face, and Lilian, marking it, draws a long breath, and lets the smile return to her mobile lips.

"Was Chetwoode there all the time?" asks Archibald, aghast.

"Yes: was it not horrible?" replies she, half laughing. "Poor Mr. Bellair! I had no idea I had done so much mischief."

The hours are growing older, Lady Chetwoode is growing tired. Already with the utmost craftiness has she concealed five distinct yawns, and begins to think with lingering fondness of eider-down and bedroom fires.

Florence, too, who is sitting near her, and who is ever careful not to overdo the thing, is longing for home, being always anxious to husband as far as possible her waning youth and beauty.

"Lilian, dearest, I think you must come home now," Lady Chetwoode says, tapping the girl's white arms, as she stops close to her in the interval of a dance.

"So soon, auntie!" says Lilian, with dismay.

She is dancing with a very good-looking guardsman, who early in the evening did homage to her charms, and who ever since has been growing worse and worse; by this time he is very bad indeed, and scorns to look at any one in the room except Miss Chesney, who, to confess the truth, has been coquetting with him unremittingly for the past half-hour, without noticing, or at least appearing to notice, Archibald's black looks or Sir Guy's averted ones.

At Lady Chetwoode's words, the devoted guardsman turns an imploring glance upon his lovely partner, that fills her (she is kind-hearted) with the liveliest compassion. Yes, she will make one last effort, if only to save him from mental

suicide.

"Dear auntie, if you love me, 'fly not yet,'" she says, pathetically. "It is so long since I have danced, and"—with the faintest, fleetest glance at the guardsman—"I am enjoying myself so much."

"Lady Chetwoode, it can't be done," interposes Tom Steyne, who is standing by: "Miss Chesney has promised me the next dance, and I am living in the expectation of it. At my time of life I have noticed a tendency on the part of beauty to rather shun my attentions; Miss Chesney's condescension, therefore, has filled me with joy. She must wait a little longer: I refuse to resign my dance with the *belle* of the evening."

"Go and finish your dance, child: I will arrange with auntie," says Mabel, kindly; whereupon Lilian floats away gladly in the arms of her warrior, leaving Mrs. Steyne to settle matters.

"You shall go home, dear, with Florence, because you are tired, and Cyril and his exceedingly beautiful *fiancée* shall go with you; leave the small night brougham for Lilian, and Guy can take her home. I shan't keep her beyond another hour, and I shall see that she is well wrapped up."

So it arranges itself; and by and by, when an hour has passed away, Lilian and Guy discover to their horror they are in for a *tête-à-tête* drive to Chetwoode.

They bid good-bye to the unconscious Mabel, and, silently entering the brougham, are presently driving swiftly through the fresh cool air.

"Are you quite comfortable?" Guy asks, as in duty bound, very stiffly.

"Quite, thank you," replies she, even more stiffly; after which outbreak of politeness "silence reigns supreme."

When a good half-mile has been traversed, Guy, who is secretly filled with wonder at the extreme taciturnity of his usually lively companion, so far descends from his pedestal of pride as to turn his head cautiously in her direction: to his utter amazement, he finds she has fallen fast asleep!

The excitement and fatigue of dancing, to which she has been so long unaccustomed, have overpowered her, and, like a tired child as she is, she has given way to restful slumber. Her pale blue cashmere has fallen a little to one side so that a white arm, soft and round as a baby's, can be seen in all the

abandon of sleep, naked beside her, the hand half closed like a little curled shell.

Not yet quite convinced that her slumber is real, Guy lays his hand gently upon hers, but at the touch she makes no movement: no smallest ripple of consciousness crosses her face. In the faint light of the lamp he regards her curiously, and wonders, with a pang, how the little fury of a few hours ago can look so angelic now. At this moment, as he watches her, all the anger that has lain in his heart for her melts, vanishes, never to return.

Then he sees her attitude is uncomfortable: her face is very pale, her head is thrown too much back, a little troubled sigh escapes her. He thinks, or at least tries to think,—let not me be the one to judge him,—she will have unhappy dreams if she continues much longer in her present position. Poor child! she is quite worn out. Perhaps he could manage to raise her in a degree, without disturbing her reviving repose.

Slipping his arm gently round her, he lifts her a little, and draws her somewhat nearer to him. So gently does he move her, that Lilian, who is indeed fatigued, and absolutely tired out with her exertions of the evening, never awakes, but lets her heavy, sleepy little head drop over to the other side, down upon Chetwoode's shoulder.

Guy does not stir. After all, what does it matter? she is easier so, and it can hurt neither of them; she never has been, she never will be, anything to him; in all probability she will marry her cousin. At this point he stops and thinks about her treatment of that handsome guardsman, and meditates deeply thereon. To him she is a mystery, a lovely riddle yet unsolved; but with his arm round her, and her face so near his own, he is conscious of feeling an irrepressible gladness. A thrill of happiness, the only touch of it he has known for many days, fills his heart, while with it is a bitter regret that chills it at its birth.

The carriage rattles over some unusually large stone, and Lilian awakes. At first an excessive sense of drowsiness dulls her perception, and then, all at once, it flashes across her mind that she has been asleep, and that now she is encircled, supported by Guy's arm. Even in the friendly darkness a warm flush suffuses her face, born half of quick indignation, half of shame. Raising herself hastily, she draws back from his embrace, and glances up at him with open surprise.

"You are awake?" says Guy, quietly; he has relaxed his hold, but still has not altogether withdrawn his support. As their eyes meet in the uncertain flickering light that comes to them from outside, she sees so much sadness, so much

tenderness in his, that her anger is instantly disarmed. Still, she moves yet a little farther from him, while forgetting to make any reply.

"Are you uncomfortable?" asks he, slowly, as though there is nothing out of the common in his sitting thus with his arm round her, and as though a mere sense of discomfort can be the only reason for her objection to it. He does not make the slightest effort to detain her, but still lets her feel his nearness.

"No," replies Miss Chesney, somewhat troubled; "it is not that, only——"

"Then I think you had better stay as you are. You are very tired, I can see, and this carriage is not the easiest in the world."

With gentle boldness he replaces the offending arm in its old position, and wisely refrains from further speech.

Lilian is confounded. She makes no effort to release herself, being filled with amazement at the extraordinary change in his manner, and, perhaps, wholly glad of it. Has he forgiven her? Has he repented him of his stern looks and cold avoidance? All night long he has shunned her persistently, has apparently been unaware of her presence; and now there is something in his tone, in his touch, that betrays to her what sets her heart beating treacherously.

Presently Guy becomes aware of this fact, and finding encouragement in the thought that she has not again repulsed him, says, softly:

"Were you frightened when you awoke?"

"Yes, a little."

"You are not frightened now?"

"No, not now. At first, on waking, I started to find myself here."

"Here," may mean the carriage, or her resting-place, or anything.

After a short pause:

"Sir Guy,"—tremulously.

"Yes."

"You remember all that happened the night before last?"

"I do," slowly.

"I have wanted ever since to tell you how sorry I am for it all, to beg your pardon, to ask you to——" she stops, afraid to trust her voice further, because of some little troublesome thing that rises in her throat and threatens to make itself heard.

"I don't want you to beg my pardon," says Guy, hastily, in a pained tone. "If I had not provoked you, it would never have happened. Lilian, promise me you will think no more about it."

"Think about it! I shall never cease thinking about it. It was horrible, it was shameful of me. I must have gone mad, I think. Even now, to remember it makes me blush afresh. I am glad it is dark,"—with a little nervous laugh,—"because you cannot see my face. It is burning."

"Is it?" tenderly. With gentle fingers he touches her soft cheek, and finds it is indeed, as she has said, "burning." He discovers something else also,—tears quite wet upon it.

"You are crying, child," he says, startled, distressed.

"Am I? No wonder. I *ought* to suffer for my hateful conduct toward you. I shall never forgive myself."

"Nonsense!" angrily. "Why should you cry about such a trifle? I won't have it. It makes me miserable to know any thought of me can cause you a tear."

"I cry"—with a heavy sob—"because I fear you will never think well of me again. I have lost your good opinion, if indeed"—sadly—"I ever had it. You *must* think badly of me."

"I do not," returns he, with an accent that is almost regret. "I wish I could. It matters little what you do, I shall never think of you but as the dearest and sweetest girl I ever met. In that"—with a sigh—"lies my misfortune."

"Not think badly of me! and yet you called me a flirt! Am I a flirt?"

Chetwoode hesitates, but only for a minute; then he says, decidedly, though gently:

"Perhaps not a flirt, but certainly a coquette. Do not be angry with me for saying so. Think how you passed this one evening. First remember the earlier part of it,

and then your cruel encouragement of the luckless guardsman."

"But the people I wanted to dance with wouldn't ask me to dance," says Lilian, reproachfully, "and what was I to do? I did not care for that stupid Captain Monk: he was handsome, but insufferably slow, and—and—I don't believe I cared for *any one*."

"What! not even for——" He pauses. Not now, not at this moment, when for a sweet though perhaps mad time she seems so near to him in thought and feeling, can he introduce his rival's name. Unconsciously he tightens his arm round her, and, emboldened by the softness of her manner, smooths back from her forehead the few golden hairs that have wandered there without their mistress's will.

Lilian is silent, and strangely, unutterably happy.

"I wish we could be always friends," she says, wistfully, after a little eloquent pause.

"So do I,"—mournfully,—"but I know we never shall be."

"That is a very unkind speech, is it not? At least"—slipping five warm little fingers into his disengaged hand—"*I* shall always be a friend of *yours*, and glad of every smallest thing that may give you happiness."

"You say all this now, and yet to-morrow,"—bending to look at her in the ungenerous light,—"to-morrow you may tell me again that you 'hate me.'"

"If I do,"—quickly,—"you must not believe me. I have a wretched temper, and I lost it completely when I said that the other night. I did not mean it. I do not hate you, Guy: you know that, do you not?" Her voice falls a little, trembles, and softens. It is the first time she has ever called him by his Christian name without its prefix, and Guy's pulses begin to throb a little wildly.

"If you do not hate me, what then?" he asks.

"I like you."

"Only that?" rather unsteadily.

"To like honestly is perhaps best of all."

"It may be, but it does not satisfy me. One *likes* many people."

Lilian is silent. She is almost positive now that he loves her, and while longing to

hear him say so, shrinks from saying what will surely bring forth the avowal. And yet if she now answers him coldly, carelessly——

"If I say I am fond of you," she says, in a tone so low, so nervous, as to be almost unheard, "will that do?"

The carriage some time since has turned in the avenue gate.

They are approaching the house swiftly; already the lights from the windows begin to twinkle through the leafy branches of the trees: their time is short. Guy forgets all about Chesney, all about everything except the girlish face so close to his own.

"*Are* you fond of me, Lilian?" he asks, entreatingly. There is no reply: he stoops, eager to read his fate in her expression. His head touches hers; still lower, and his moustache brushes her cheek; Lilian trembles a little, but her pale lips refuse to answer; another instant, and his lips meet hers. He kisses her warmly, passionately, and fancies—is it fancy?—that she returns his caress faintly.

Then the carriage stops. The men alight. Sir Guy steps out, and Miss Chesney lays her hand in his as he helps her to descend. He presses it warmly, but fails in his anxious attempt to make her eyes meet his: moving quickly past him into the house, she crosses the hall, and has her foot upon the first step of the stairs, when his voice arrests her.

"Good-night, Lilian," he says, rather nervously, addressing her from a few yards' distance. He is thinking of a certain night long ago when he incurred her anger, and trembles for the consequences of his last act.

Lilian hesitates. Then she turns partly toward him, though still keeping half her face averted. Her cheeks are crimson; her eyes, shamed and full of tears, are bent upon the ground. For one swift instant she raises them and lets a soft, shy glance meet his.

"Good-night," she whispers, timidly holding out to him her hand.

Guy takes it gladly, reverently. "Good-night, my own darling," answers he, in a voice choked with emotion.

Then she goes up-stairs, and is lost in her own chamber. But for Guy there is neither rest nor sleep.

Flinging off his coat and waistcoat, he paces incessantly up and down his room, half mad with doubt and fear.

Does she love him? That is the whole burden and refrain of his thoughts; does she? Surely her manner has implied it, and yet—— A terrible misgiving oppresses him, as he remembers the open dislike that of late she has shown to his society, the unconcealed animosity she has so liberally displayed toward him.

Can it be that he has only afforded her amusement for the passing hour? Surely this child, with her soft innocent face and truthful eyes, cannot be old in the wiles and witcheries of the practiced flirt. She has let her head rest upon his shoulder, has let his fingers wander caressingly over her hair, has let tears lie wet upon her cheeks for him; and then he thinks of the closing scene, of how he has kissed her, as a lover might, unrebuked.

But then her manner toward Chesney; true, she had discarded his attentions toward the close of the night, and accepted willingly those of the guardsman, but this piece of seeming fickleness might have arisen out of a lover's quarrel. What if during all their memorable drive home she has been merely trifling with him, —if now, this instant, while he is miserable because of his love for her and the uncertainty belonging to it, she should be laughing at his folly, and thinking composedly of her coming marriage with her cousin! Why then, he tells himself savagely, he is well rid of her, and that he envies no man her possession!

But at the thought he draws his breath hard; his handsome face grows set and stern, a haggard look comes into his blue eyes and lingers round his mouth. Flinging open the window, he leans out to feel the cold air beat upon him, and watches the coming of the morn.

"Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east."

Guy watches its coming, yet scarcely notes its beauty, so full of dark forebodings are his thoughts. Yet it brings him determination and courage to face his fate. To-day he will end this intolerable doubt, and learn what fortune has in store for him, be it good or bad; of this he is finally resolved. She shall declare herself in one of two characters, either as his affianced wife, or as the very vilest coquette the world contains.

And yet her tears!—Again he holds her in his arms. Again his lips meet hers. Again he feels the light pressure of her little tired head upon his shoulder, hears her soft regular breathing. With a groan he rouses himself from these recollections that torture him by their very sweetness.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Thou art my life, my love, my heart,
The very eyes of me,
And hast command of every part,
To live and die for thee."—R. HERRICK.

The next morning comes, but no Lilian appears at breakfast. Florence alone of the gentler members of the family puts in an appearance; she is as properly composed, as carefully attired, as delicately tinted, as though the ball of the night before was unknown to her. Lilian, on the contrary,—lazy little thing!—is still lying in her bed, with her arms flung above her graceful head, dreaming happy idle dreams.

Miss Beauchamp, behind the urn, is presiding with unimpeachable elegance of deportment over the cups and saucers; while pouring out the tea, she makes a running commentary on the events of the night before, dropping into each cup, with the sugar,—perhaps with a view to modulating its sweetness,—a sarcastic remark or two about her friends' and acquaintances' manners and dress. Into Guy's cup she lets fall a few words about Lilian, likely, as she vainly hopes, to damage her in his estimation; not that she much fears her as a rival after witnessing Chetwoode's careful avoidance of her on the previous evening; nevertheless, under such circumstances, it is always well to put in a bad word when you can.

She has most of the conversation to herself (Guy and Archibald being gloomy to a painful degree, and Cyril consumed with a desire to know when Cecilia may be reasonably expected to leave her room), until Mr. Musgrave enters, who appears as fresh as a daisy, and "uncommon fit," as he informs them gratuitously, with an air of the utmost *bonhommie*.

He instantly catches and keeps up the conversational ball, sustaining it proudly, and never letting it touch the ground, until his friends, rising simultaneously, check him cruelly in the very midst of a charming anecdote. Even then he is not daunted, but, following Cyril to the stables (finding him the most genial of the party), takes up there a fresh line, and expresses his opinions as cheerfully and fluently on the subject of "The Horse," as though he had been debarred from

speaking for a month and has only just now recovered the use of the organ of speech.

* * * * * * *

It is half-past one. A soft spring sun is smiling on the earth, and Lilian, who rather shrinks from the thought of meeting Sir Guy again, and has made a rapid descent from her own room into the garden, is walking there leisurely to and fro, gathering such "pallid blossoms" as she likes best: a few late snowdrops, "winter's timid children," some early lilies, "a host of daffodils," a little handful of the "happy and beautiful crocuses," now "gayly arrayed in their yellow and green," all these go to fill the basket that hangs upon her arm.

As she wanders through the garden, inhaling its earliest perfumes, and with her own heart throbbing rather tumultuously as she dreams again of each tender word and look that passed between her and Guy last night, a great longing and gladness is hers; at this moment the beauty and sweetness of life, all the joy to be found everywhere for those who, with a thankful spirit, seek for it, makes itself felt within her.

George Herbert's lovely lines rise to her mind, and half unconsciously, as she walks from bed to bed, she repeats them to herself aloud.

"How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
  Are thy returns! ev'n as the flow'rs in spring;
To which, besides their own demean,
  The late past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away like snow in May,
  As if there were no such cold thing."

Surely *her* grief has melted away, and, with it, distrust and angry feeling.

Having arranged her bouquet of all such tender plants as do now "upraise their loaded stems," she walks toward the library window, and, finding it open, steps in. It is a bow-window, and the sun has been making love to her eyes, so that not until she has advanced a yard or two, does she discover she is not alone; she then stops short, and blushes painfully.

At the other end of the room stand Guy and Chesney, evidently in earnest conversation. Archibald is talking; Guy, with his eyes upon the ground, is pale as death, and silent. As they see Lilian, both men start guiltily, and fall somewhat

farther apart: a heavy sense of impending trouble makes itself felt by all three.

Then Guy, regaining self-possession, raises his head and looks full at Lilian.

"Lilian is here, let her speak for herself," he says, in a forced tone of composure, addressing Chesney, but with his eyes riveted upon her.

"What is it?" asks Lilian, white as the snowdrops in her trembling hand.

"Your cousin asked me—He wishes to marry you," returns Guy, unsteadily, a look of such mute agony and entreaty in his eyes as touches Lilian to the quick. "He has spoken to me as your guardian. He says he has some hope; he would have me plead for him, but that is impossible." He has spoken so far with difficulty; now in a clear tone he goes on, "Speak, Lilian: let your answer come from your own lips."

His voice is wonderfully steady, but there is always the same searching look of entreaty on his face.

"Dear Archie," says Lilian, trembling perceptibly, while all the poor spring blossoms fall unheeded to her feet, and lie there still and dead, as some offering laid on the shrine of Venus, "how can I speak to you? I *cannot* marry you. I love you,—you are my dear cousin, and my friend, but,—but——"

"It is enough," says Chesney, quietly. "Hope is at an end. Forgive me my persistency. You shall not have to complain of it again."

Sadly, with a certain dignity, he reaches the door, opens it, and, going out, closes it gently behind him. Hope with him, indeed, is dead! Never again will it spring within his breast.

When he has gone, an awful silence ensues. There is a minute that is longer than an hour; there is an hour that may be shorter than any minute. Happy are they that have enjoyed this latter. The particular minute that follows on Archibald's retreat seems to contain a whole day-ful of hours, so terrible is its length to the two he leaves behind.

Lilian's eyes are fastened upon, literally bound to, a little sprig of myrtle that lies among the ill-fated flowers at her feet. Not until many days have passed can she again look upon a myrtle spray without feeling a nervous beating at her heart; she is oppressed with fear; she has at this moment but one longing, and that is to escape. A conviction that her longing is a vain one only adds to her discomfiture;

she lacks the courage to lift her head and encounter the eyes she knows are fixed upon her.

At length, unable longer to endure the dreadful stillness, she moves, and compels herself to meet Chetwoode's gaze. The spell is broken.

"Lilian, will you marry—*me*?" asks he, desperately, making a movement toward her.

A quick, painful blush covers Lilian's face, lingers a moment, then dies away, leaving her pale, motionless as a little marble statue,—perfect, but lifeless. Almost as it fades it reappears again, so sudden is the transition, changing her once more into very lovable flesh and blood.

"Will you marry me?" repeats Guy, coming still closer to her. His face is white with anxiety. He does not attempt to touch her, but with folded arms stands gazing down in an agony of suspense upon the lips that in another instant will seal his fate for good or evil.

"I have half a mind to say no," whispers Miss Chesney, in a low, compressed voice. Her head is drooping; her fingers are nervously intertwined. A flicker, the very faintest tremble of the old merry smile, hovers round her mouth as she speaks, then vanishes away.

"Lilian,"—in a tone full of vehement reproach,—"do not trifle with me—now. Answer me: why do you so speak to me?"

"Because—I think—you ought to have asked me long ago!" returns she, casting a half-shy, half-tender glance at him upward from the azure eyes that are absolutely drowned in tears.

Then, without a word of warning, she bursts out crying, and, Guy catching her passionately in his arms, she sobs away all her nervous gladness upon his heart.

"My darling,—my sweet,—do you really love me?" asks Guy, after a few moments given up to such ecstasy as may be known once in a lifetime,—not oftener.

"What a question!" says Lilian, smiling through eyes that are still wet. "I have not once asked it of you. I look into your eyes and I see love written there in great big letters, and I am satisfied. Can you not see the same in mine? Look closely,—very closely, and try if you cannot."

"Dear eyes!" says Guy, kissing them separately. "Lilian, if indeed you love me, why have you made life so odious to me for the last three months?"

"Because I wasn't going to be civil to people who were over-attentive to other people," says Lilian, in her most lucid manner. "And—sometimes—I thought you liked Florence."

"Florence? Pshaw! Who could like Florence, having once seen you?"

"Mr. Boer could, I'm sure. He has seen me,—as seldom as I could manage, certainly,—but still enough to mark the wide difference between us."

"Boer is a lunatic," says Guy, with conviction,—"quite unaccountable. But I think I could forgive him all his peccadilloes if he would promise to marry Florence and remove her. I can stand almost anything—except single chants as performed by her."

"Then all my jealousy was for nothing?" with a slight smile.

"All. But what of mine? What of Chesney?" He regards her earnestly as he asks the question.

"Poor Archie," she says, with a pang of real sorrow and regret, as she remembers everything. And then follows a conversation confined exclusively to Archibald,—being filled with all the heart-burnings and despair caused by that unhappy young man's mistaken attentions. When the subject has exhausted itself, and they are once more silent, they find themselves thoughtful, perhaps a little sad. A sigh escapes Lilian. Raising her head, she looks at her lover anxiously.

"Guy," she says, rather tremulously, "you have never said one reproachful word to me about what happened the other night—in the library. I am thinking of it now. When I call to mind my wretched temper I feel frightened. Perhaps—perhaps—I shall not make you happy."

"I defy you to make me unhappy so long as you can tell me honestly you love me. Do not take advantage of it"—with a light laugh—"if I confess to you I would rather have a box on the ear from you than a kiss from any other woman. But such is the degrading truth. Nevertheless"—teasingly—"next time I would ask you, as a favor, not to do it *quite* so hard!"

"Ah, Guy," tearfully, and with a hot blush, "do not jest about it."

"How can I do anything else to-day?" Then, tenderly, "Still sad, my own? Take that little pucker off your brow. Do you imagine any act of yours could look badly in my eyes? 'You are my life—my love—my heart.' When I recollect how miserable I was yesterday, I can hardly believe in my happiness of to-day."

"Dearest," says Lilian, her voice faltering, "you are too good to me." Then, turning to him, of her own sweet will, she throws her arms around his neck, and lays her soft flushed cheek to his. "I shall never be bad to you again, Guy," she whispers; "believe that; never, never, never!"

* * * * * * *

Coming into the hall a little later, they encounter her ladyship's maid, and stop to speak to her.

"Is Lady Chetwoode's head better?" asks Lilian. "Can I see her, Hardy?"

"Yes, Miss Chesney. She is much better; she has had a little sleep, and has asked for you several times since she awoke. I could not find you anywhere."

"I will go to her now," says Lilian, and she and Guy, going up-stairs, make their way to Lady Chetwoode's room.

"Better, auntie?" asks Lilian, bending over her, as she sits in her comfortable arm-chair.

"Rather better, darling," returns auntie, who is now feeling as well as possible (though it is yet too soon to admit it even to herself), and who has just finished a cutlet, and a glass of the rare old port so strongly recommended by Dr. Bland. "Guy, bring over that chair for Lilian. Sitting up late at night always upsets me."

"It was a horrible ball," says Miss Lilian, ungratefully. "I didn't enjoy it one bit."

"No?" in amazement. "My dear, you surprise me. I thought I had never seen you look so joyous in my life."

"It was all forced gayety," with a little laugh. "My heart was slowly breaking all the time. I wanted to dance with one person, who obstinately refused to ask me, and so spoiled my entire evening. Was it not cruel of that 'one person'?"

"The fact is," says Guy, addressing his mother, "she behaved so infamously, and flirted so disgracefully, all night, that the 'one person' was quite afraid to approach her."

"I fear you did flirt a little," says Lady Chetwoode, gentle reproof in her tone; "that handsome young man you were dancing with just before I left—and who seemed so devoted—hardly went home heart-whole. That was naughty, darling, wasn't it? You should think of—of—other people's feelings." It is palpable to both her hearers she is alluding to Chesney.

"Auntie," says Miss Chesney, promptly, and with the utmost *naïveté*, "if you scold me, I feel sure you will bring on that nasty headache again."

She is bending over the back of Lady Chetwoode's chair, where she cannot be seen, and is tenderly smoothing as much of her pretty gray hair as can be seen beneath the lace cap that adorns her auntie's head.

Sir Guy laughs.

"Ah! I shall never make you a good child, so long as your guardian encourages you in your wickedness," says Lady Chetwoode, smiling too.

"Do I encourage her? Surely that is a libel," says Guy: "she herself will bear me witness how frequently—though vainly—I have reasoned with her on her conduct. I hardly know what is to be done with her, unless——" here he pauses, and looks at Lilian, who declines to meet his glance, but lets her hand slip from Lady Chetwoode's head down to her shoulder, where it rests nervously—"unless I take her myself, and marry her out of hand, before she has time to say 'no.'"

"Perhaps—even did you allow me time—I should not say 'no,'" says Lilian, with astonishing meekness, her face like the heart of a "red, red rose."

Something in her son's eyes, something in Lilian's tone, rouses Lady Chetwoode to comprehension.

"What is it?" she asks, quickly, and with agitation. "Lilian, why do you stand there? Come here, that I may look at you? Can It be possible? Have you two ——"

"We have," replies Lilian, interrupting her gently, and suddenly going down on her knees, she places her arms round her. "Are you sorry, auntie? Am I very unworthy? Won't you have me for your daughter after all?"

"Sorry!" says Lady Chetwoode, and, had she spoken volumes, she could not have expressed more unfeigned joy. "And has all your quarreling ended so?" she asks, presently, with an amused laugh.

"Yes, just so," replies Guy, taking Lilian's hand, and raising it to his lips. "We have got it all over before our marriage, so as to have none afterward. Is it not so, Lilian?"

She smiles assent, and there is something in the smile so sweet, so adorable, that, in spite of his mother "and a'," Guy kisses her on the spot.

"I am so relieved," says Lady Chetwoode, regarding her new daughter with much fondness, "and just as I had given up all hope. Many times I wished for a girl, when I found myself with only two troublesome boys, and now at last I have one,—a real daughter."

"And I a mother. Though I think my name for you will always be the one by which I learned to love you,—Auntie," returns Lilian, tenderly.

At this moment Cecilia opens the door cautiously, and, stepping very lightly, enters the room, followed by Cyril, also on tiptoe. Seeing Lady Chetwoode, however, standing close to Lilian and looking quite animated and not in the least invalided, they brighten up, and advance more briskly.

"Dear Madre," says Cecilia, who has adopted Cyril's name for his mother, "I am glad to see you so much better. Is your headache quite gone?"

"Quite, my dear. Lilian has cured it. She is the most wonderful physician."

And then the new-comers are told the delightful story, and Lilian receives two more caresses, and gets through three or four blushes very beautifully. They are still asking many questions, and uttering pretty speeches, when a step upon the corridor outside attracts their attention.

It is a jaunty step, and undoubtedly belongs to Mr. Musgrave, who is informing the household generally, at the top of his fresh young voice, that he is "ragged and torn," and that he rather enjoys it than otherwise. Coming close to the door, however, he moderates his transports, and, losing sight of the vagabond, degenerates once more into that very inferior creature, a decently-clothed and well-combed young gentleman.

Opening the door with praiseworthy carefulness, he says, in the meekest and most sympathetic voice possible:

"I hope your headache is better, Lady Chetwoode?"

By this time he has his head quite inside the door, and becomes pleasantly conscious that there is something festive in the air within. The properly lachrymose expression he has assumed vanishes as if by magic, while his usual debonair smile returns to his lips.

"Oh, I say—then it was all a swindle on the part of Hardy, was it?" he asks. "Dear Lady Chetwoode, it makes me feel positively young again to see you looking so well. Your woman hinted to me you were at the point of death."

"Come in, Taffy. You too shall hear what has revived me," says her ladyship, smiling, and thereupon unfolds her tale to him, over which he beams, and looks blessings on all around.

"I knew it," he says; "could have told everybody all about it months ago! couldn't I, Lil? Remember the day I bet you a fiver he would propose to you in six months?"

"I remember nothing of the kind," says Miss Chesney, horribly shocked. "Taffy, how can you say such a thing?"

"Tell us all about it, Taffy," entreats Cyril, languidly, from the depths of an arm-chair. "I feel so done up with all I have gone through this morning, that I long for a wholesome exciting little tale to rouse me a bit. Go on."

"Oh, it was only that day at Mrs. Boileau's last autumn," begins Taffy.

"Taffy, I desire you to be silent," says Lilian, going up to him and looking very determined. "Do not attempt to speak when I tell you not to do so."

"Was the betting even, Taffy?" asks Cyril.

"No. She said——"

"*Taffy!*"

"She said he had as much idea of proposing to her as she had of——"

"Taffy!"

"Marrying him, even should he ask her," winds up Mr. Musgrave, exploding with joy over his discomfiting disclosure.

"No one believes you," says Lilian, in despair, while they all laugh heartily, and Cyril tells her not to make bad bets in future.

"Not one," says Sir Guy, supporting her as in duty bound; "but I really think you ought to give him that five pounds."

"Certainly I shall not," says Miss Chesney, hotly. "It is all a fabrication from beginning to end. I never made a bet in my life. And, besides, the time he named was the end of the year, and *not* in six months."

At this avowal they all roar, and Guy declares he must take her out for a walk, lest she should commit herself any further.

* * * * * * *

The happy day at length is drawing to a close. Already it is evening, though still the dying light lingers, as if loath to go. Archibald Chesney, after a hurried private interview with Lady Chetwoode, has taken his departure, not to return again to Chetwoode until time has grown into years. In her own room Lilian, even in the midst of her new-born gladness, has wept bitterly for him, and sorrowed honestly over the remembrance of his grief and disappointment.

Of all the household Florence alone is still in ignorance of the wonderful event that has taken place since morning. Her aunt has declared her intention of being the one to impart the good news to her, for which all the others are devoutly thankful. She—Miss Beauchamp—has been out driving all the afternoon for the benefit of her dear complexion; has visited the schools, and there succeeded in irritating almost to the verge of murder the unhappy teacher and all the wretched little children; has had an interview with Mr. Boer, who showed himself on the occasion even more *empressé* than usual; has returned, and is now once more seated at her work in the drawing-room, covered with wools and glory.

Near her sits Lilian, absently winding a tiny ball of wool. Having finished her task, she hands it to Florence with a heavy sigh indicative of relief.

"Thanks. Will you do another?" asks Florence.

"No,—oh, no," hastily. Then, laughing, "You mustn't think me uncivil," she says, "but I am really not equal to winding up another, of these interminable balls. My head goes round as fast as the wool, if not faster."

"And are you going to sit there doing nothing?" asks Florence, glancing at her with ill-concealed disapproval, as the young lady proceeds to ensconce herself in the coziest depths of the coziest chair the room contains, as close to the fire as

prudence will permit.

"I am almost sure of it," she answers, complacently, horrifying the proper Florence being one of her chief joys. "I am never really happy until I feel myself thoroughly idle. I detest being useful. I love doing 'nothing,' as you call it. I have always looked upon Dr. Watts's bee as a tiresome lunatic."

"Do you never think it necessary to try to—improve your mind?"

"Does crewel-work improve the mind?" opening her eyes for an instant lazily.

"Certainly; in so far that it leaves time for reflection. There is something soothing about it that assists the mind. While one works one can reflect."

"Can one?" naughtily: "I couldn't. I can do any number of things, but I am almost positive I couldn't reflect. It means—doesn't it?—going over and over and over again disagreeable scenes, and remembering how much prettier one might have behaved under such and such circumstances. I call that not only wearying but unpleasant. No, I feel sure I am right. I shall never, if I can help it, reflect."

"Then you are content to be a mere butterfly—an idler on the face of the earth all your days?" asks Florence, severely, taking the high and moral tone she has been successfully cultivating ever since her acquaintance with Mr. Boer.

"As long as I can. Surely when I marry it will be time enough to grow 'useful,' and go in for work generally. You see one can't avoid it then. Keeping one's husband in order, I have been always told, is an onerous job."

"You intend marrying, then?" Something in the other's tone has roused Florence to curiosity. She sits up and looks faintly interested.

"Yes."

"Soon?"

"Perhaps."

"You are serious?"

"Quite serious."

"Ah!"

A pause. Miss Beauchamp takes up two shades of wool and examines them critically. They are so exactly alike that it can make little difference which she chooses. But she is methodical, and would die rather than make one false stitch in a whole acre of canvas. Having made her choice of the two shades, she returns to the attack.

"I had no idea you liked your cousin so much," she says.

"So much! How much?" says Lilian, quickly turning very red. Her cousin is a sore subject with her just now. "I do not think we are speaking of Archibald."

"No; but I thought you said——"

"Nothing of him, I am sure," still hastily.

"Oh! I beg your pardon. I quite fancied——" Here she pauses, somewhat mystified. Then, "You and he are very good friends, are you not?"

"Very," coldly.

"And yet," with an elephantine attempt at playfulness, "I certainly did think last night some quarrel had arisen between you. He looked so savage when you were dancing with Captain Monk. His eyes are handsome, but at times I have noticed a gleam in them that might safely be termed dangerous."

"Have you? I have not."

"No? How strange! But no doubt when with you—— For my own part, I confess I should be quite afraid of him,—of annoying him, I mean."

"I have never yet felt afraid of any one," returns Lilian, absently.

"How I do admire your courage,—your pluck, if I may so call it," says Florence, hesitating properly over the unlady-like word. "Now, *I* am so different. I am painfully nervous with some people. Guy, for instance, quite tyrannizes over me," with the little conscious laugh that makes the old disgust rise warmly in Lilian's breast. "I should be so afraid to contradict Guy."

"And why?"

"I don't know. He looks so—so—— I really can hardly explain; but some sympathetic understanding between us makes me know he would not like it. He has a great desire for his own way."

"Most people have,"—dryly. "I never feel those sympathetic sensations you speak of myself, but I could guess so much."

"Another reason why I should refrain from thwarting his wishes is this," says Florence, sorting her colors carefully, "I fancy, indeed I *know*, he could actually dislike any one who systematically contradicted him."

"Do you think so? I contradict him when I choose."

"Yes," blandly: "that exactly illustrates my idea."

"You think, then, he dislikes me?" says Lilian, raising herself the better to examine her companion's features, while a sense of thorough amusement makes itself felt within her.

"Dislike"—apologetically—"is a hard word. And yet at times I think so. Surely you must have noticed how he avoids you, how he declines to carry out any argument commenced by you."

"I blush for my want of sensibility," says Lilian, meekly. "No, I have not noticed it."

"Have you not?" with exaggerated surprise. "I have."

At this most inopportune moment Guy enters the room.

"Ah, Guy," says Lilian, quietly, "come here. I want to tell you something."

He comes over obediently, gladly, and stands by her chair. It is a low one, and he leans his arm upon the back of it.

"Florence has just said you hate being contradicted," she murmurs, in her softest tones.

"If she did, there was a great deal of truth in the remark," he answers, with an amused laugh, while Florence glances up triumphantly. "Most fellows do, eh?"

"And that I am the one that generally contradicts you."

"That is only half a truth. If she had said who *always* contradicts me, it would have been a whole one."

Lilian rises. She places her hand lightly on his arm.

"She also said that for that reason you dislike me." The words are uttered quietly, but somehow tears have gathered in the violet eyes.

"Dislike!" exclaims her lover, the very faint symptoms of distress upon his darling's face causing him instant pain. "Lilian! how absurd you are! How could such a word come to be used between us? Surely Florence must know—has not my mother told you?" he asks, turning to Miss Beauchamp a look full of surprise.

"I know nothing," replies she, growing a shade paler. At this moment she does know, and determines finally to accept, when next offered, the devotion Mr. Boer has been showering upon her for the past two months. Yes, she will take him for better, for worse, voice, low-church tendencies, and all. The latter may be altered, the former silenced. "I know nothing," she says; "what is it?"

"Merely this, that Lilian and I are going to be married this summer. Lilian, of your goodness do not contradict me, in this one matter at least," bending a tender smile upon his betrothed, who returns it shyly.

"I confess you surprise me," says Florence, with the utmost self-possession, though her lips are still a trifle white. "I have never been so astonished in my life. You seem to me so unsuited—so—but that only shows how impossible it is to judge rightly in such a case. Had I been asked to name the feeling I believed you two entertained for each other, I should unhesitatingly have called it hatred!"

"How we have deceived the British Public!" says Guy, laughing, although at her words a warm color has crept into his face. "For the future we must not 'dissemble.' Now that we have shown ourselves up in our true colors, Florence, you will, I hope, wish us joy."

"Certainly, with all my heart," in a tone impossible to translate: "my only regret is, that mere wishing will not insure it to you."

Here a servant opening the door informs Miss Beauchamp that Lady Chetwoode wishes to see her for a few minutes.

"Say I shall be with her directly," returns Florence, and, rising leisurely, she sweeps, without the smallest appearance of haste, from the room.

Then Lilian turns to Sir Guy:

"How curiously she uttered that last speech!—almost as though she hoped we

should not be happy, I am sure I am right; she does not want you to marry me."

"She was not enthusiastic in her congratulations, I admit. But that need not affect us. I am not proud. So long as *you* want to marry me, I shall be quite content."

Lilian's reply, being wordless, need not be recorded here.

"Spiteful thing," remarks she, presently, *à propos* of the spotless Florence.

"Poor, Boer!" replies he.

"You think she will marry *him*?" heavily, and most unflatteringly, emphasized.

"I do."

"Poor Florence!" returns she. "When I think that, I can forgive her all her sins. Dreadful man! I do hope she will make his life a burden to him."

"I am sure you will live to see one hope fulfilled. Though I dare say he has a better chance of peace in the years to come than I have: Florence, at all events, does not go about boxing people's——"

"Guy," says Miss Chesney, imperatively, laying her hand upon his lips, "if you dare to finish that sentence, or if you ever refer to that horrible scene again, I shall most positively refuse to marry—— Oh! here is Mr. Boer. Talk of somebody! Look, it is he, is it not?" Standing on tiptoe, she cranes her neck eagerly, and rather flattens her pretty nose against the window-pane in a wild endeavor to catch a glimpse of Mr. Boer's long-tailed coat, which "hangs" very much "down behind," before it quite disappears in a curve of the avenue. Presently it comes to view again from behind the huge laurustinus bush, and they are now quite convinced it is indeed the amorous parson.

"Yes, it is he," says Guy, staring over his betrothed's head, as he catches the first glimpse. "And evidently full of purpose. Mark the fell determination in his clerical stride."

"She saw him this morning at the schools,—she told me so,—and here he is again!" says Lilian, in an awe-struck tone. "There must be something in it. As you say, he really seems bent on business of some sort; perhaps he is come——"

"With a new chant, as I'm a sinner," says Chetwoode, with a groan. "Let us go into the library: the baize and that large screen stifles sound."

"No, to propose! I mean: there is a curious look about him as if, if——"

"He was going to execution?"

"No, to Florence."

"That is quite the same thing."

"I hear his step," says Lilian, hurriedly, flinging open the window, "and hers too! She must have seen him coming, and run to meet him with open arms. Not for worlds would I spoil sport, or put them in a 'tender taking.' Let us fly." Stepping out on the balcony, she turns to glance back at him. "Will you follow me?" she asks, a certain arch sweetness in her eyes.

"To the end of the world!" returns he, eagerly, and together, hand in hand, they pass out of sight.

THE END.

End of the Project Gutenberg EBook of Airy Fairy Lilian, by
Margaret Wolfe Hamilton (AKA Duchess)

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AIRY FAIRY LILIAN ***

***** This file should be named 35228-h.htm or 35228-h.zip *****
This and all associated files of various formats will be found in:
        http://www.gutenberg.org/3/5/2/2/35228/

Produced by Barbara Tozier, Bill Tozier, Martin Pettit and
the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at
http://www.pgdp.net

Updated editions will replace the previous one--the old editions
will be renamed.

Creating the works from public domain print editions means that no
one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation
(and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without
permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules,
set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to
copying and distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works to
protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm concept and trademark. Project
Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you
charge for the eBooks, unless you receive specific permission. If you
do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the

rules is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. They may be modified and printed and given away--you may do practically ANYTHING with public domain eBooks. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

*** START: FULL LICENSE ***

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg-tm License (available with this file or online at http://gutenberg.org/license).

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is in the public domain in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg-tm works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg-tm name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg-tm License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in

a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg-tm work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country outside the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg-tm License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg-tm work (any work on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is derived from the public domain (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg-tm License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg-tm License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg-tm License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg-tm work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg-tm License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works

unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works provided that

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and Michael Hart, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread public domain works in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE

TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS' WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTIBILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need, are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation web page at http://www.pglaf.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Its 501(c)(3) letter is posted at http://pglaf.org/fundraising. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is located at 4557 Melan Dr. S. Fairbanks, AK, 99712., but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887, email business@pglaf.org. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at http://pglaf.org

For additional contact information:
Dr. Gregory B. Newby
Chief Executive and Director
gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit http://pglaf.org

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: http://pglaf.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart is the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared

with anyone. For thirty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as Public Domain in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility:

http://www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-tm, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.