REDMOND O'DONNELL

OR,

LE CHASSEUR D'AFRIQUE.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.—CONTINUED.

"Papa!" She half rose, the color vivid now on the clear, pale cheeks.

"And again papa! I speak the truth, do I not, my dear? You are a coquette born, as I have said, and knowing you possessed of pride enough and common-sense enough to let no man one inch nearer t an it was your will he should come, I have up to the present in no way interfered with your favorite sport. But the time has come to change all that. Sir Arthur Tregenna is coming, and I warn you your customary amusement won't do here. You have had your day—you may safely withdraw from the fray where you have been conqueress long, and rest on your laurels."

She rose up, and stood stately, and beautiful, and haughty before him.

"Papa, you speak as if Arthur Tregenna had power, had authority over me. He has none—none. He has no claim—no shadow of claim upon me."

"You mistake, Lady Cecil," the cool, keen, steel-gray eyes of the earl met the indignant brown ones full—"or you forget Sir Arthur Tregenna is your affianced husband."

"My affianced husband! A man who has never spoken one word to me in his life beyond the most ordinary civilities of common acquaintance!"

"And whose fault is that, Queenie? Not his, poor fellow certainly. Carry your mind back three years—to your first season—your presentation. He spent that season in London, only waiting for one word, one look of encouragement for you to speak. That word never came. You flirted desperately with *Lennox*, of the Scotch Greys, and when he proposed, threw him over. He exchanged into an Indian regiment, and was shot through the heart by a Sepoy bullet, just one week after he became Lord Glenallan. Not a pleasant recollection for you, I should think, Lady Cecil; but as I said before. I don't wish to reproach you. You are to marry Sir Arthur—that is as fixed as fate."

And looking in his face, she knew it. She sank back in her seat, and hid her face in her hands with a sob, more like a child than the bright, invincible La Reine Blanche.

"Papa," you are unkind—you are cruel. I don't care for Sir Arthur; he doesn't care for me."

"Who is to tell us that? He will differ greatly from most of his kind if he find the lesson a hard one to learn. And you don't care for him? My Lady Cecil do you ever—have you ever realized what you are—an earl's daughter and a—beggar?"

She did not lift her face. He looked at her grimly, and went on:

"A beggar—literally that—without a farthing of allowance—without a roof you can call your own—without a penny of portion. Do you know Lady Cecil, that I lost two thousand on this year's Derby—my all! Learn it now at least. We sit here this June morning, paupers—with title and name, and the best blood of the realm—paupers! Sir Peter Dangerfield, the most pitiful little miser on earth, pays for the bread you eat, for the roof that shelters you, for the carriage you drive in, the opera box you sit in, the servants who wait upon you. He pays for them because the Salic law has exploded in England, anp he is under petticoat government. He is afraid of his wife, and his wife is your cousin. That pink silk and point-lace trimming you wear is excessively becoming, my dear, imported from Worth, was it not? Take care of it; Queenie; there isn't a farthing in the Ruysland exchequer to buy another when that's worn. And I am—unkind, cruel. My dear, I shall never force you to call me that again. Don't marry Sir Arthur Tregenna. You play very nicely, sing very nicely, draw very nicely, and waltz exquisitely—what is to hinder you turning these accomplishments to account? Earl's daughter's have been governesses before now, and may again. I advise you though, to write out your advertisement and send it to the *Times* at once, while I have still a half guinea left for its insertion." He drew out his watch—a hunting watch, the case sparkling with diamonds; "I will not keep you up longer—it is nearly five o'clock."

She rose to her feet and confronted him. The flush had all faded out. She was whiter than the roses in her hair.

"This is all true you have been telling me, papa? We are so poor, so dependent as this—hopelessly and irretrievably ruined?"

"Hopelessly and irretrievably ruined."

He spoke with perfect calmness. Ruined beyond all hope—ruin wrought by his own hand—and he faced her without falter or blanch.

She stood a moment silent, her eyes fixed upon the letter—pale, proud, and cold. Then she spoke:

"What is it you wish me to do?"

"Sir Arthur Tregenna is worth thirty thousand a year. I wish you to marry Sir Arthur."

"What am I to do?" she repeated, still proudly, still coldly.

"He has never spoken one word to me, never written one word that even a vainer woman than I am could construe into love-making; and as I am a pauper, and he worth thirty thousand a year, it is not to be supposed he marries me from interested motives. Does he say here," touching the letter, "that he wishes me to become his wife?"

"He does not. But he is man of honor, and your name has long been linked with his. To have her name linked with that of any man compromises any woman, unless it end in marriage. He knows this. He is the soul of honor; he is coming here with no other intention than that of asking you to be his wife?"

A flush of pain—of shame—of humiliation, passed over the exquisite face of the earl's daughter.

"It is rather hard on Sir Arthur that he should be obliged to marry me whether or no, and a little hard also on me. And this marriage will save you from ruin—will it, papa?"

"It will save me from ruin—from disgrace—from exile for life. It will give me a house wherein to end my days; it will make those last days happy. I desire it more strongly than I ever desired anything in my life. I do not deny, Cecil, that I have been reckless and prodigal; but all that is past and done with. I don't want to see the daughter of whom I have been so proud—the toast of the clubs, the belle of the ball-rooms, the beauty of London—eating the bitter bread of dependence. Cecil, it is of no use struggling against destiny, and your destiny has written you down Lady Cecil Tregenna. When Sir Arthur speaks, your answer will be Yes."

"It—will be Yes."

She said it with a sort of gasp! No young queen upon her throne had ever been prouder or purer, for all her flirting than La Reine Blanche; and what it cost her to make this concession, her own humbled soul alone knew.

"Thank you, Queenie;" her father drew her to him, and touched his lips to her cheek for perhaps the third time in their existence. "You never disappointed me in your life; I knew you would not now. It is the dearest desire of my heart, child. You will be the wealthiest and most brilliant woman in England. You have made me happy. Once more, thanks very much, and good-morning."

He threw open the door, bowed her out with most Chesterfieldian politeness, and watched the tall, graceful figure, in its rose-silk, its rich laces, its perfumed flowers, its gleaming jewels from sight. Then he smiled to himself:

"'It's a very fine thing to be father-in-law
To a very magnificent three-tailed bashaw.'

"She has promised, and all is safe. I know her well—The thumbscrews of the holy office could not make either break a pledge once given. Ah, my lady! I wonder if you would have promised, even with penury staring you in the face, if you had seen, as I did, Redmond O'Donnell looking at you at the opera?"

Lady Cecil went slowly up to her rooms trailing her ball draperies after her, a violet and gold boudoir, a sleeping-room adjoining, all white and blue. And seated in the boudoir, atill wearing her amber silk, her Spanish laces, and opals, sat the mistress of the mansion, Sir Peter Dangerfield's wife.

"What an endless age you've been away, Queenie," Lady Dangerfield said, peevishly. "What on earth could Uncle Raoul have to say to you at this blessed hour of the morning?"

Lady Cecil stood beside her a touch of weariness on her pale face,

"He told me Sir Arthur Tregenna was coming—would be here next week."

"Ah!" my lady said, looking at her quickly, "at last! To marry you, Queenie?"

She stood silent—pained—shamed—humbled beyond expression.

"You don't speak, and you look vexed. Queenie," with energy, "you don't mean to say—you never will be so silly—so stupidly silly—as to refuse him if he asks?"

"If he asks!" Lady Cecil repeated, with inexpressible bitterness. "Oh, Ginevra! don't let us talk about it. I am to be sold, it seems, if this rich Cornishman chooses to buy me. What choice have I in the matter—what choice had you? We are like the lilies of the field, who toil not neither do they spin—as fair, perhaps, and as useless. When our masters come for us we go—until then we run the round of Vanity Fair and wait. Ginevra, I wonder what it is like to be poor?"

"It is like misery—it is like torture—it is like death!" Lady Dangerfield burst out passionately. "I was poor once. Wretchedly, miserably poor, and I tell you I would rather die a thousand times than undergo penury again. You may know how horrible poverty is, when it is more horrible than marrying Peter Dangerfield. I abhor both, but I abhor poverty most. No need to look at me like that. Queenie; I mean what I say. You never supposed I cared for that odious little monster, did you?"

"Ginevra," Lady Cecil said, falling back wearily into an easy chair, "I begin to think they are right in those heathen countries—India—China—Japan—where is it—where they destroy female children as soon as they are born? It is miserable, it is degrading, it is horrible—the lives we lead, the marriages we make. I hate myself, scorn myself to-night."

Lady Dangerfield shrugged her shoulders.

"Strong language, my dear, and strong language is bad 'form' always. Has La Reine Blanche found her Darnley at last?"

"If Mary, Queen of Scots, lived in these days, she would never have lost her great, brave heart to so poor a creature as Henry Darnley. "No, Ginevra; no Darnley exists for the men are all alike in eighteen hundred and sixty—all talk with the same drawl, all stare out of the same club windows, all part their hair down the middle, and do nothing. Are you going?"

"Time to go at five o'clock, is it not? I only stepped in here to tell you we go down to Scarswood in three days. Send for Desiree, Queenie, and go to bed. Even your complexion will not stand such horrible late hours.

And then, yawning very much, Lady Dangerfield went away to bed, and Lady Cecil was left alone.

It was late certainly but the Earl of Ruysland's daughter did not take her cousin's advice and go to bed. On the contrary, she sat where she had left her for over an hour, never once moving—lost in thought. Then she slowly arose, crossed over to where a writing-case, all gold and ebony, stood upon an inlaid table, took a tiny golden key from her chatelaine and unlocked it. It contained many drawers. One of these opening with a spring, she drew out, removed its contents, and stood with a smile half sad, half mocking on her lips, gazing upon them. Relics evidently. A branch of clematis, dry and colorless, but sweet still, a short curl of dark, crisp hair, a pencil sketch of a frank, manly, boyish face, and a note—that was all. The note was yellow with time, the ink faded, and this is what it contained, in a big, bold hand:

"Dear Lady Cecil:—I rode to Ballynahaggart yesterday, and got the book and the music you wanted. I shall fetch them over when I come at the usual hour to-day.

"Respectfully, R."

She read it over, still with that half-smile on her lips.

"When I come at the usual hour" she repeated, "and he never came It was the strangest thing—I wonder at it to this day. It was so unlike papa to hurry off abruptly in that way—never even want to say good-by. And I used to think—but I was only sixteen and a little fool. One outlives all that when they grow up. Still fools suffer, I suppose, as greatly as wiser people. Some of the old pain comes back now as I look at these things. How different he was—poor, impetuous boy—from the men I meet now. And I am to marry Sir Arthur Tregenna to do me the honor of taking me. I have kept my relics long enough—it is time I threw them out of the window.

She made a step forward, as if to follow the word by the deed; then stopped, irresolute.

"As Sir Arthur has not asked me yet, what can it matter? As I have kept them so long, I will keep them until he does."

She replaced them, closed and locked the writing-case, and rang for her maid. The French woman came, sleep and blinking, and Lady Cecil sat like a statue under her hands, being disrobed and robed again for rest.

But she was in the breakfast parlor a good half hour before either her father and cousin. She was looking over a book of water-color sketches when Lady Dangerfield entered, looking at one long, intently, wistfully—a sunrise on the sea. The baronet's wife came softly up behind the Earl's daughter, and glanced over her shoulder

"A pretty scene enough, Queenie, but nothing to make you wear that pensive face. Of what are you thinking so deeply, as you sit there and gaze?"

Lady Cecil lifted her dreamy eyes.

"Of Ireland. I have often seen the sun rise out of the sea like this, on the Ulster coast. And I was thinking of the days, Ginevra, that can never come again."

CHAPTER II.

MISS HERNCASTLE.

"Ginevra," Lord Ruysland said, in his blandest tone, and all his tones were bland, "how soon do we go down to Sussex? I say we, of course; for impoverished mendicants, like myself and Cecil, must throw ourselves on the bounty of our more fortunate relatives, until our empty coffers are replenished. How soon do we go—next week?"

"Next Monday," responded Lady Dangerfield; "in three days. Sir Peter writes me, Scarswood has been rejuvenated, re-hung, re-carpeted, re-furnished, quite ready. We go on Monday; very many have gone already. Parliament closes so delightfully early this year. I don't pretend to go into ecstasies over the country, like Cecil here, for instance; but really, London is not habitable after the last week of June."

"Ah! next Monday—so soon? Then we shall not meet Tregenna in town, as I had supposed? Still—Ginevra I write to Sir Arthur Tregenna to-day—you remember Tregenna, of course. He is in Paris at present, and on his way to us; may I trespass so far upon your hospitality my dear, as to invite him to Scarswood?"

They were still seated, a family party of three, around the breakfast table. Lady Dangerfield glanced across at her cousin. Lady Cecil sat listlessly back in her chair, offering her little curly King Charles a chicken wing; she held the tit bit temptingly over Bijou's wrinkled nose, now laughing, as he leaped up angrily, while all his tiny silver bells rang, not once lifting her eyes.

"Certainly, Uncle Raoul, invite him by all means. Scarswood is big enough to hold even the great Cornish baronet. I remember Sir Arthur very well; indeed, I was mortally afraid of him in those frivolous by-gone days, and thought him a horrid prig; but of course that was all my lack of judgment. Present my compliments and remembrances, and say we shall be delighted to see him at Sussex."

"Thanks, my dear; I knew I might count upon you: Sir Peter, now—"

"Sir Peter will do precisely as I see fit," Sir Peter's wife answered, decisively; "let Sir Peter keep to his beetles and butterflies. Did you know his latest hobby was turning naturalist, and impaling horribly crawling things upon pins? Let him keep to the beetles, and leave the amenities of civilized life to civilized beings. Queenie, do let Bijou alone; his bells and his barking agonize my poor nerves. Have you no message to send to Sir Arthur?"

"I think not. Take your chicken, Bijou, and run away with Tompkins, for your morning airing in the square. Half-past twelve. Ginevra, do we dress for the flower show at Cheswick, or the morning party at Kew?"

"The morning party at Kew. I promised Lady Chantilly not to fail her a week ago. But first, Cecil, the children's governess comes to-day, and I want you to see her and help me to decide. I advertised, as you know, and out of the troops of applicants, this one—what's her name, again?—Miss Herncastle—seems to suit her best. And her terms are so moderate, and she plays so very nicely, and her manner is so very quiet, and everything, that I as good as told her yesterday that I would take her. She comes at two for her final answer, and I should like you to tell me what you think of her."

"And I shall go and write my letter—your compliments and kind remembrances, Ginevra, and a cordial invitation to Scarswood from Sir Peter and yourself. And you tell me Sir Peter has become a naturalist? Ah! poor, little Sir Peter!"

And, with a smile on his lip and a sneer in his eye, the Earl of Ruysland arose and wended his way to his study.

Poor, little Sir Peter, indeed!

Within nine months of his accession to the throne of Scarswood, Sir Peter Dangerfield, Baronet, had led to the "hymeneal altar," as the *Morning Post* told you, Ginevra, only surviving daughter of the late Honorable Thomas Clive, and relict of Cosmo Dalrymple, Esq. She was a niece of the Earl of Ruysland, she was petite, plump, pretty, poor; she was *nine-and-twenty*; she had twin daughters and not a farthing to bless herself. At the mature age of twenty-four she had eloped with a clerk in the Treasury, three years younger than herself, a name as old as her own, a purse as empty, and they were cast off at once and forever by their families on both sides. Their united fortunes kept them in Paris until the honeymoon ended, and then poverty stalked grimly in at the door, and love flew out of the window in disgust, and never came back. They starved and they grubbed in every Continental city and cheap watering-place; they bickered, they quarreled, they reproached and recriminated; and one dark and desperate night, just five years after his love-match, Cosmo Dalrymple, Esquire, stirred half an ounce or so of laudanum into his absinthe, and wound up his chapter of the story.

Mrs. Dalrymple and the twins, two black-eyed dolls of four, came back to England in weeds and woe, and the paternal roof opened once more to receive her. Very subdued, soft of voice, gentle of manner, and monstrously pretty in her widow's cap and crapes, little Mrs. Dalrymple chanced one day, at a water party in the neighborhood, to meet the Sussex baronet, Sir Peter Dangerfield. Is there a destiny in those things that shape our ends without volition of our own?—or is it that we all must play the fool once at least in our lives? Sir Peter saw—and fell in love. Before Mrs. Dalrymple had been twelve months a widow, she was again a wife.

Five years of married life, and living by her wits, had sharpened those wits to an uncommon degree. She read the barcnet like a book. He was a miser to the core, mean beyond all meanness, half monkey, half tiger in his nature; and her plumpness, and her prettiness, her round, black eyes, her faltering voice, and timid manner did their work. He fell in love, and before the fervor of that hot fancy had time to cool, had made her Lady Dangerfield, and himself miserable for life.

She was nothing that he thought her, and everything that he thought her not. She was a vixen, a Kate whom no earthly Petruchio could tame. She despised him, she laughed at him; she was master and mistress both; she flirted, she squandered his money like water—what did she not do? And the twins, kept in the background in the halcyon days of courtship, were all at once brought forward, the black frocks flung aside, gay tartans, muslin, and silks bought, and a governess engaged. Scarswood was thrown open to the county, a house in Mayfair leased, parties, dinners, concerts, operas—the whole round of fashionable life run. And her poor relatives fixed upon him like barnacles on a boat. The Earl of Ruysland made his houses, his horses, his servants, his cook, his banker his own without a thought of gratitude, a word of thanks. His wife sneered at him, her high-titled relatives ignored him, men black-balled him at their clubs, and the milk of human kindness turned to buttermilk in her breast. He became a misanthrope, and buried himself down at Scarswood, did humbly as his lady ordered him, and took, as you have heard her say, to impaling butterflies on pins. If our fellow creatures are to torture us, it is some compensation to torture, in our turn bugs and beetles, if nothing better offers.

Lady Cecil came sweeping downstairs presently—tall, and slim, and white as a lily. Her India muslin, with its soft lace trimmings trailed in fleecy clouds behind her—all her lovely hazel hair hung half-curled in a rich bronze mass over the pearly shoulders. A Mechlin scarf hung about her more like drapery than a shawl; and a bonnet, a marvel of Parisian handicraft, half point-lace, half *lilies of the valley*, crowned that exquisite, gold-hued head.

The drawing-room was deserted—Lady Dangerfield was not yet down. Lady Cecil was two-and-twenty, Lady Dangerfield five-and-thirty, and for every ten minutes we spend before the glass at twenty, we spend an hour on the wrong side of thirty. She took a book and sank down among the amber satin cushions of a dormeuse near the open window, and began to read. So she had sat, a charming vision, for upward of half an hour, when her cousin, in pale flowing silks, youthful and elegant, floated in.

"Have I kept you waiting, Queenie? But that tiresome Delphine has no more eye for color or effect than—"

"Miss Herncastle, my lady," Soames the footman, interrupted.

And my lady stopped short and whirled around.

"Ah, yes—I had forgotten. Will you take a seat for a moment, Miss Herncastle? I was really in such a hurry yesterday, when I saw you, that I had no time to speak of anything about terms. We are over-due as it is, but—I think you told me you never were governess before?"

"I never was, my lady."

Only five short words, but Lady Cecil laid down her book and looked up surprised into sudden interest. It was such a sweet voice—so deep, so clear, so musical in its timbre. She looked up and saw a tall, a very tall young woman, dressed in plain dark colors, sink into the seat Lady Dangerfield had indicated by a wave of her pearl-gloved hand.

"Then may I beg to know what you did do? You are not, excuse me, very young—seven-and-twenty now, I should think?"

"No, my lady; three-and-twenty."

"Ah! three-and-twenty, and going out as governess for the first time. Pray what were you before?"

Lady Cecil shrank a little as she listened. Ginevra went to work for the prosecution in so deliberate, so cold-blooded a manner. She looked at the governess and thought, more and more interested, what a singular face it was. Handsome it was not—never had been—but some indescribable fascination held Lady Cecil's gaze fast. The eyes were dark, cold, brilliant; the eyebrows, eyelashes, and hair of jetty blackness; the face like marble—literally like marble—as changeless, as colourless, locked in as passionless calm.

"A strange face—an interesting face," Lady Cecil thought; "the face, if I am any judge, of a woman who has suffered greatly, and learned to endure. A face that hides a history."

"I was a music teacher," the low, melodious, even tones of Miss Herncastle made answer; "I gave lessons when I could get pupils. But pupils in London are difficult to get. I saw your advertisement in the *Times*, for a nursery governess, and I applied."

"And you are willing to accept the terms I offered yesterday?"

The terms were so small that Lady Dangerfield was absolutely ashamed to name them before her cousin. At heart, and where her own gratification was not concerned, she was as great a miser as Sir Peter himself.

"I will accept your terms, my lady. Salary is not so much an object with me as a home."

"Indeed! You have none of your own, I presume?"

"I have none, my lady."

She made the answer quite calmly, neither voice nor face altering.

"You are an orphan?"

"I am an orphan."

"Well," Lady Dangerfield said, "your recommendations are certainly unobjectionable, and I don't see why you would not suit. Just open the piano, Miss Herncastle, and play some little thing that I may judge of your touch and execution. If there be one thing I wish you particularly to attend to, it is my children's music and accent. You speak French?"

"Yes my lady."

"And sing?"

There was an instant's hesitation—then the reply came:

"No, Madam I do not sing."

"That is unfortunate. Play however."

She obeyed at once. She played from memory, and chose an air of Suhubert's—a little thing, but sweet and pathetic, as it is the nature of Schubert's music to be. It was a favorite of Lady Cecil's as it chanced, but never had the pearl key's, under her fingers, spoke in music a story half so plaintive, half so pathetic as this. The slanting June sunlight fell full upon the face of the player—that fixed, dusk, emotionless face, with its changeless pallor; and, more and more interested, Lady Cecil half rose on her elbow to look.

"That will do," Ginevra said graciously; "that's a simple melody, but you play it quite prettily. Cecil, love, what do you think? Miss Herncastle will suit very well, will she not?"

"I think Miss Herncastle quite capable of teaching music to pupils double the age of Pearl and Pansy," replied Lady Cecil, decidedly. "Miss Herncastle, is it possible you do not sing? You have the face of a singer."

Up to this moment Miss Herncastle had not been aware a third person was present. She turned to Lady Cecil, and the large electric eyes, so dark under their black lashes, met the soft hazel ones full.

"I do not sing."

"Then I have mistaken a singing face for the first time. Ginevra, I don't wish to hurry you, but if we go at all—"

"Good Heavens! yes!" cried Lady Dangerfield, glancing in sudden hurry at her watch. "We shall be frightfully late, and I promised Lady Chantilly—Miss Herncastle, I forgot to ask—do you object to the country?"

"On the contrary, I prefer it."

"Very well, then; the sooner you come the better. We go down to our place in Sussex next week—you will find your pupils there. Suppose you come to-night—you will be of use to me in the intermediate days."

"I will come to-night, my lady, if you wish it."

"To-night, then. Soames, show Miss Herncastle out. Now then, Queenie."

. . . . .

"And what's your opinion of the governess? What are you thinking of as you lie back in that pretty attitude, with your eyes half closed, Lady Cecil Clive? Are you really thinking? or is it only to show the length of your eyelashes?"

Lady Cecil looked up. They were rolling along as fast as two high-stepping roans could carry them, Kew-ward.

"I was really thinking, Ginevra—thinking of your governess."

"You do my governess too much honor. What were your thoughts of her, pray?"

"There is something strange about her—something quite out of the usual governess line. It is an odd face—a striking face—a face full of character. It has haunted me ever since I saw it—so calm, so still, so fixed in one expression. That woman has a history."

"Really, then, I shall countermand my consent. I don't want a nursery governess with a history. What an imagination you have, Cecil, and what awful nonsense you talk! A striking face!—yes, if you like, in its plainness."

"I don't think it plain."

"Perhaps you do think it pretty?"

"No; pretty is a word I should never apply to Miss Herncastle. Herncastle!—a sounding appellation. Whom have I seen before that she resembles?"

"For pity sake, Queenie, talk of something else. Suppose, when you get down to Scarswood, you turn biographer, and write out my new nursery governess's history, from her own dictation. I dare say she's the daughter of some Cheapside grocer, with a complexion like her father's tallow candles, and whose piano-playing and French accent were acquired within the sound of Bow Bells. Queenie—" abruptly—"I wonder if Major Frankland will be at Kew to-day?"

Lady Cecil looked grave.

"I don't like him, Ginevra—I don't like the way he behaves with you—oh, yes, Ginevra, I will say it—nor the way you behave with him."

"And why? How does Major Frankland and my lowly self behave?"

"You hardly need to ask that question, I think. You flirted with him when you were fifteen, by your own showing; you flirted with him in the first year of your widowhood, and you flirt most openly with him now that you are a wife. Ginevra," with energy, "a married flirt is in my opinion the most despicable character on earth."

"An opinion which, coming from my Lady Cecil Clive, of all people, should have weight. Isn't there an adage about setting a thief to catch a thief? How true those old saws are! You don't mean to flirt, I suppose, when you are married?"

"Don't look so scornful, Ginevra—no—I don't. If ever I marry—what are you laughing at? Well, when I do marry, then—I hope—I trust—I feel that I shall respect and love my husband, and treasure his name and honor as sacredly as my own soul."

"Meaning, I suppose, Sir Arthur Tregenna?"

"Meaning Sir Arthur Tregenna, if you like. If I ever become the wife of Sir Arthur, I shall never let any living man talk to me, look at me, act to me, as that odious, bearded, sleepy-eyed ex-Canadian major does toward you. Don't be angry, Ginevra dear; I mean this for your good."

"No doubt. One's friends are always personal and disagreeable and prosy for one's good. At the same time I am quite old enough to take care of myself."

"Ah, Ginevra, age does not always bring wisdom. And Sir Peter is jealous—poor little Sir Peter! It is unkind, it is a shame; you bury that poor little man alive down there, and you dance, and walk, and flirt with Frankland. I say again, it is a shame,"

Lady Dangerfield leaned back in the barouche and laughed—laughed absolutely until the tears started.

"You precious Queenie—you Diogenes in India muslin and Limerick lace! That poor little Sir Peter, indeed! and Miss Herncastle, too! all low and abject things find favor in the sight of Lady Cecil Clive. Sir Peter! as if I cared what that odious little wizen-faced, butterfly-hunting imbecile thought! Major Frankland is one of my oldest, one of my dearest friends, with whom I shall be friendly just as long as I please, in spite of all the husbands alive. And to think of a sermon from you—from you, the most notorious flirt in London—on flirting! And Solomon says there is nothing new under the sun!"

Lady Cecil made a restless movement, and under the white fringe of her parasol her fair face flushed.

"Ginevra, I am sick—sick of having myself called that. And I am not a flirt in your sense of the word. I don't lead on men to gratify my own petty vanity, to swell the list of a vain, empty-headed, empty-bearded woman of the world's triumphs. I only like to have people like me—admire me, if you will; and when gentlemen are pleasant and dance well, and talk well, I can't be frigid and formal, and talk to them on stilts It's they who are stupid—moths who will rush into the candle and singe their wings, do what you will. The warning is up, 'dangerous ground,' but they won't be warned. They think the quicksand that has let so many through will hold them. They are not content with being one's friend—they must be one's lover. And then when one is sorry, and says 'no,' they rush off to Spitzbergen, or Spanish America, or Central Africa, and one is called heartless, and a coquette. It's my misfortune, Ginevra, not my fault."

Again Ginevra laughed.

"My dear, what eloquence! Why weren't you lord, instead of Lady Cecil Clive?—you might take your seat in the House, and amaze that noble and prosy body by your brilliant oratory. Queenie, answer me this—truly now—were you ever in love in your life?"

Under the white fringe of that silken screen, her parasol, once more that delicate carnation flushed all the fair "flower face" of La Reine Blanche. But she laughed.

"That is what lawyers call a leading question, isn't it, Ginevra? Who falls in love in these latter days? We talk of settlements, instead of turning periods to our lover's eyes; we go to St. George's, Hanover Square, if an eligible parti asks us to accompany him there; but as for getting up a grande passion—not to be thought of—bad style and obsolete. Somebody says in Coningsby, 'passions were not made for the drawingroom,' and I agree with that somebody. I don't mean to be cynical, Ginevra—I only state plain facts, and pity 'tis 'tis true."

Lady Chantilly's morning party was doubly pleasant for being about the last of the season, and Major Frankland was there. He was a tall, military swell, with heavy blonde mustache, sleepy, cat-like eyes, a drawl, and an eye-glass. It seemed the most natural thing imaginable that Lady Dangerfield should receive her Neapolitan ice from his hand, and that he should lean over in her chair and whisper in her pretty pink ear while she ate it.

"We always return to our first loves, don't we, Lady Cecil?" laughed the Honorable Charles Delamer, of the F. O., eating his ice, and taking his seat by the side of Lord Ruysland's daughter, "as faithful as the needle of the north star is old Frankland to the idol of his youth." Apropos of first loves, Lady Cecil," looking up artlessly, "whom do you suppose I met at her Majesty's last night?"

The Honorable Charles, one of the "fastest," most reckless young fellows about town, had two blue eyes as soft and innocent as the eyes of a month-old babe, though how Mr. Delamer preserved even the outward semblance of innocence at eight-and-twenty it would be difficult to say.

Lady Cecil laughed. She liked Charlie for this good reason, that he had never fallen in love with her.

"Not being a clairvoyant I cannot say. You must have met a great many people I should think. I know you never came near our box."

"No," Mr. Delamer said, "I did not visit your box. He wouldn't come."

"Who wouldn't come? Name this contumacious subject?"

"O'Donnell."

"Who?" suddenly and sharply she asked the question. "Who?"

"O'Donnell—Captain Redmond O'Donnell, of the Third Chasseurs d'Afrique—Le Beau Chasseur, as they call him—and the best fellow the sun shines on."

She was always pale as a lily—La Reine Blanche—was she really paler than usual now? Charlie Delamer wondered. Was it only the shadow of the white parasol, or—

There was a pause—only for a moment, but how long it seemed. Coote and Tinnye's band discoursed sweet music, fountains flashed, birds sang, flowers bloomed, June sunshine steeped all in gold, and under the leafy branches Lady Dangerfield was strolling on the arm of Major Frankland.

Mr. Delamer, just a thought startled, spoke again.

"You know O'Donnell, don't you? In Ireland, was it? I think he said so last night."

"Yes—I know—I mean I knew Captain O'Donnell slightly once. It is over six years ago though—I should have thought he would have quite forgotten the circumstance by this time."

"Men who have been so fortunate as to know La Reine Blanche don't forget her so easily. Since you honor him by your remembrance, it is hardly strange, if he recollects you."

"If I remember him!—Mr. Delamer, Redmond O'Donnell saved my life!"

"Saved your life! By Jove! the lucky fellow. But those dashing long-sword, saddle-bridle Irishmen are always lucky. And the fellow said his acquaintance was but trifling."

Lady Cecil laughed—not quite so musically as usual.

"Trifling!" Perhaps Captain O'Donnell rated his service at the valuation of the thing saved! And he is in England. How curious. I fancied him—soldier of fortune—free lance that he is! for life out there in Algiers."

"He goes back shortly. He is a born fighter, and comes of a soldierly race. The O'Donnells have been soldiers of fortune for the last three hundred years, and asked no fairer fate. He leaves England soon, places his sister with some friends in France, and goes back."

"His sister!—the Rose of whom he used to speak—of whom he was so fond?"

"Yes; I heard him call her Rose."

"You heard him! She is here then! And what is she like? Redmond O'Donnell's sister"—with a little laugh—"she ought to be pretty."

"Well, she is not—at least not now. She appears to be under a cloud—sickness, trouble, something—didn't talk much—looks sad and sombre, and is a brunette, with blue eyes. She is just from New Orleans—her brother went for her. I called there immediately before I came here, and O'Donnell dines with me this evening. What a prince of good fellows he was out yonder in Algiers, and the devil's own to fight. He won his way straight up from the ranks with his sword. And he saved your life! How was it, Lady Cecil?"

"Much too long a story for a morning party, with the thermometer at 90 degrees. There is Madame de Vilafleur beckoning—is she not?"

"She is. Permit me, Lady Cecil." And taking Mr. Delamer's proffered arm, Lady Cecil sauntered over to Madame la Comtesse de Vilafleur.

The rose light of the summer sunset was just merging into starry dusk, as the baronet's wife and earl's daughter drove back to Lowndes Square. Lady Dangerfield was in excellent spirits—evidently Major Frankland had been entertaining—and talked incessantly the way home; but Lady Cecil lay back among the barouche cushions, paler, graver, more silent than was her wont. She had been very much admired, as usual; she had held her court of adorer's, also, as usual; but now that it was over, she looked wan, spiritless, and bored.

And he is in England—in London!" she was thinking. "He was at the opera last night, and saw me! And it was not worth while renewing so slight an acquaintance! To think—to think"—she set her pearly teeth hard—"to think that after all those years I should not yet have outlived that sentimental folly of so long ago!"

"How stupid you are, Queenie!" her cousin said, pettishly, as they neared home. "I believe you have not spoken two words since we left Kew; and now that I have asked you twice if you saw Chandos Howard playing lawn billiards with Lady Charlotte Lansing, you only answer, 'Yes dear, very pretty indeed!' It is to be hoped you will recover the use of your tongue and your senses before you appear at Carlton Terrace to-night."

With which reproof Lady Dangerfield got out and went up the steps of her own aristocratic mansion.

Soames the footman, flung open the drawing-room door, but Lady Cecil did not enter. She toiled wearily up to her own apartment, threw off her bonnet and scarf, as if even their weight opressed her, and crossing to the gold and ebony writing desk, unlocked it, and took out her treasured relics once more.

"I do not need you to remind me of my folly any longer," she said, looking at them. "I will do now what I should have done this morning."

The faintly sighing evening wind fluttered the lace curtains of the open window. She walked to it, gazed for a moment at the pictured face, set her lips, and deliberately tore up into minutest fragments the note and the picture. The summer breeze whirled them in an instant, the spray of clematis, and the dark curl of hair followed, and then Lady Cecil rang for her maid, and dressed for the evening.

"They say—those wiseacres who make books—that every life has its romance. I suppose they are right, and so forever has ended mine. Not the white satin to-night, Desiree—the blue silk and turquoise ornaments, I think!"

At half-past eleven that night—and when had the phenomenon occurred before?—the Earl of Ruysland returned to his niece's house. He had written and dispatched his letter, and though Lady Cecil had sent no message to Sir Arthur Tregenna, the letter contained a most encouraging and flattering one. He had dined at his club, he had indulged in chicken hazard for an hour, and at half past eleven stood in the moonlight at Lady Dangerfield's door. He had been up, as you know, until half-past five the preceding day, and on the wintry side of fifty late hours and dissipation tell.

"I think I will give up London life," he said to himself; "and devote myself to growing old gracefully. Let me accomplish this marriage, pay my debts, and with replenished coffers, and a rejuvenated reputation, betake myself to pleasant Continental Spas and Badens, and live happy forever after. Ah,