

ment? How much good would the result of such a law! Excellent food hitherto neglected would be introduced at monotonous English tables, and the destruction of oysters would be necessarily to some extent checked.—*Saturday Review.*

BEAUTY'S DAUGHTERS.

(By the Author of "Phyllis," "Molly Bawn," "Ary Fairy Lillian," etc.)

CHAPTER VII.

"I want to speak to you, Gretchen," she says, a few minutes later, standing on the threshold of the door that divides their bedrooms, and that as a rule stands open.

"Then come in," says Gretchen, gladly; "and do shut the door behind you, Kitty. You look important; and to talk comfortably with a dark gulf yawning behind one is impossible."

Kitty closes the door, and, going up to Gretchen, draws her down on the sofa beside her.

"I want to tell you something," she says, with curious diffidence, not so much taking Gretchen's hand as slipping her own into it. There is a hesitation in her manner foreign to it,—a want of confidence. She had felt no nervousness when speaking to her mother, but now that it comes to making her confession to Gretchen a new and strange emotion overpowers her. A faint choking sensation in her throat compels her to pause as though for breath; and Gretchen, who is blessed with the quick sensibility that makes the joys and griefs of others as our own, tightens her fingers upon hers, and says, in her gentlest tone,—

"You need tell me nothing, dearest; I know all about it. When you returned from your walk this afternoon I raised my head by chance just as he was handing you your tea, and,"—with a little laugh,— "though I have never been engaged, I knew perfectly well all in one moment how it was with you."

"And how was it?"

"Sir John had just asked you to be his wife, and you had said yes. I knew it by the way he looked at you and you at him. There was something in both your eyes I had never seen there before."

"You are a witch," says Kitty, smiling too. "Yes, it is all true."

"And you are happy, darling?"

"Very—very,"—somewhat dreamily.

Gretchen, looking at her, ponders for a little, and then says,—

"Of course, I won't ask you what he said, dear; I suppose that no one would quite like to tell that. But was he nice, Kitty?"

"Yes," says Kitty; and then there is a pause. "I must tell you about it, Gretchen," she says, at length, a touch of desperation in her tone. "I don't mind saying it to you, but—but I think he seemed a little too sure of my answer." The hot blush that accompanies these words betrays the fact that she "doesn't mind," and betrays the fact that, but for the uncontrollable longing to open her heart to some one, the confession would never have been made.

"I think that is the most natural thing in the world," replies Gretchen, quietly. "Of course he knew you would accept him. He understood perfectly you were not the sort of girl to smile upon his attentions for so long without meaning to say yes. I myself despise a woman who leads a man to propose to her, merely for the gratification of her own vanity, and so I am sure, does he. I really think," says Gretchen, warming to her work, "he paid you a very high compliment when he showed himself sure of your consent."

"Do you, Gretchen?" asks Kitty, wistfully.

"Yes, I do,"—stoutly. "And I think, too, it was very honest of Sir John not to pretend to have doubts on the subject. I think even better of him in consequence." Then impulsively, "What beautiful eyes you have, Kitty! If I were a man I should love you for them alone."

Every good woman likes a compliment. At this allusion to her eyes Kitty smiles and brightens perceptibly for a moment, after which she relapses into her former depression.

"That is not all. There was another thing," she says, doubtfully. "He had spoken to me for quite twenty minutes, and I had accepted him, and all that, before—before he kissed me."

"Do you know, Kitty, you surprise me?" says Gretchen, with much gravity. "Would you have him kiss you just at first, all in a hurry, before you had time to collect yourself? I think he behaved most delicately. I admire him more and more. And, besides,—certainly no one has ever yet proposed to me," says Gretchen, hopefully,— "but perhaps they all behave like that."

"Charley Dyneford didn't," says Kitty, shaking her head. "You remember I told you about him. He wanted to kiss me even before he proposed."

"I always thought that Mr. Dyneford must have been a very rude young man," says Gretchen, with decision, determined to uphold her argument at all hazards.

"Well, he really wasn't," Kitty answers, with palpable regret. At this moment she would have been glad to believe Charley Dyneford "a rude young man." "He was very gentle, and always as he ought to be."

"I much prefer Jack's conduct," says Gretchen, unflinchingly.

"Perhaps you won't when I tell you more," goes on Kitty, with some nervousness. "When at last he did kiss me, he did it suddenly, and without asking my permission."

"I should think not, indeed," says Gretchen, abandoning instantly and with the most glaring audacity the support of modesty. "To ask your permission when you had just told him with your own lips you would be his wife! I never heard of such a thing, my dear Kitty; no, neither in prose nor poetry. I'm sure I hope no one will ever ask my leave to kiss me, because I should feel it my duty to say no, and I might be sorry ever afterwards."

At this they both laugh. And then Kitty says,—

"I wish I could be quite sure he loves me with all his heart."

"Then be sure," returns Gretchen, earnestly. "When had I guessed the

truth, I could not help watching you both, to see how—how things would go on, you know. And in the drawing room to-night I saw when you spoke how he grew suddenly silent, as though he should listen to your voice. When you moved, his eyes followed you; and when you laughed he looked as if he should like to get up that very moment and kiss you on the spot. Kitty," says Gretchen, solemnly, "I am absolutely certain he adores you!"

"Oh, Gretchen, what a darling you are!" exclaims Kitty, with a sudden passion of gratitude. "How shall I thank you? You have almost freed me from thoughts that worried and tormented me. Yes, they were foolish thoughts and I was wrong to doubt." Laying her head on Gretchen's shoulder, she bursts into tears, and sobs unrestrainedly for a few minutes, with Gretchen's arms around her.

"It is only—" she falters, presently, making a desperate effort to control her emotion.

"I know," says Gretchen, tenderly: "you are crying because you are so happy: is not that it? Joy can claim tears as well as sorrow. And I think it is quite the sweetest thing you could do."

Perhaps Gretchen herself hardly understands her own meaning, but Kitty accepts her sympathy and sobs on contentedly. She might, indeed, be crying now, but that a low knock at the door arouses them.

"Never mind, Cole," says Gretchen, addressing the maid outside on the landing. "You need not wait. I shall do Miss Tremaine's hair to-night, and she will do mine."

Whereupon Cole, obedient,—albeit devoured with curiosity,—departs.

"Now sit down," says Gretchen, pushing Kitty gently into a seat before a glass, "and let me brush your hair. What lovely hair! It is like silk or satin, only prettier than either."

"What a lover you would make!" returns Kitty, with a faint smile.

When the hair is brushed and rolled into a loose coil behind her head, Gretchen, sinking on her knees beside her sister, says, coaxingly,—

"And when is it to be, Kitty?—I mean, when will Sir John take you away from us?"

"He spoke of the end of November, and said something about wintering in Rome."

"Only a few months; such a very few! And are you really going to be married, my dear, dear Kitty, and am I going to lose you? Do you remember, darling, how we learned our first prayers together,—and our lessons,—and how we were always praised and blamed together?"

"No, no. The blame was always mine, the praise yours. Gretchen, why do you speak to-night of the old fond memories?"

"Because they seem so close to me and yet so near their end. It may sound selfish, darling, but I can't help wondering how I shall manage to live without you."

"You sha'n't manage it,"—quickly. "You shall come to stay with me; and then you shall marry some great Duke (only he will never be great enough for you), and live always near me,"—caressing with loving fingers the soft fair hair lying on her lap. "Do you know I look forward to the time when you will come to see me as a guest in my own house with almost greater joy than I do to anything else? Now, Gretchen, if you cry I shall be angry, and I shall certainly begin all over again to myself, and then my eyes will be red to-morrow, and I shall tell Jack the cause of it, and he will give you such a scolding as you never got in all your life before."

"I think I should like to sleep with you to-night, Kitty," says Gretchen, tearfully, whereat Kitty—whose turn his now to adopt the role of comforter—laughs gayly, and giving her a heavy hug, assures her she would not part from her to-night for love or money, and presently they are both asleep, clasped in each other's arms resembling

A union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;
So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

Kitty's engagement makes little difference in the household. Sir John has been coming and going incessantly for weeks that now his more frequent visits cause no change, and hardly any comment. Every one treats him as though he were a second Brandy; and Brandy treats him as though he were indeed a brother,—a considerably younger brother,—giving it as his opinion that Blunden is a "jolly good fellow all around." Mr. and Mrs. Tremaine are quite satisfied on all points. Gretchen is sympathetic, and even Flora has been graciously pleased to say a few cautious words in his favour.

"But," says the youngest Miss Tremaine, quoting her nurse, "'If you want to know me, come live with me;' and"—in a darkly mysterious tone—"we have none of us lived with Sir John yet." Whereupon Brandy says, "he hopes not," in a voice severe but significant; and Mrs. Tremaine despatches Flora on some impossible mission.

But even Flora's awful insinuation fails to damp Kitty's spirits, who is happy and content, Sir John's behaviour ever since the memorable Thursday being all that the most exacting could require. Dugdale too has, of course, been taken into confidence, and has said all the charming things one generally does say on such occasions, whether one means it or not.

It is now October,—dreary, damp, and cold.

"When great leaves fall, then winter is at hand;" and now in truth the leaves are falling, and flowers are dead, and the cruel cutting wind speeds madly over barren lawns and loveless woods and colourless plains, striking terror to the hearts of shivering birds.

Dugdale has made several faint efforts to leave his present kindly quarters and go home, but the attempts have been pooh-poohed and set aside with determination by every member of the family. He has had rather a troublesome cough of late, and Mrs. Tremaine has nursed him tenderly herself, and done for him all that mother might do for son. Indeed, so much has helplessness—and perhaps his beauty—gained on all hearts at the Towers that his talk of departure has been sneered down by them with a will.

It may be that they have not found it a very difficult task to persuade him to remain. Long since he has discovered, and confessed to his inmost self