

"You did something that was a good deal off colour for a woman who wants herself always regarded as careful of the proprieties. I found you doing it, and I was shocked, as you say."

Pauline straightened herself in her chair. "I don't know what you mean," she replied, a little crisply, "by 'off colour.' I suppose it is slang, and I choose, with good reason, to believe that it conveys an unjustly contemptuous estimate of my very harmless act. I took a stroll along that beautiful Battery with a friend."

"With an adventuring newspaper fellow, you mean," said Courtlandt, cool as always, but a little more sombre.

Pauline rose. "I will stand a certain amount of rudeness toward myself," she declared, "but I will not stand sneers at Mr. Kindelon. No doubt if you had met one walking with some empty-headed fop, like Fyshkille, or Van Arsdale, you would have thought my conduct perfectly proper."

"I'd have thought it devilish odd," said Courtlandt—"and rather bad form. I've no more respect for those fellows than you have. But if you got engaged to one of them I shouldn't call it a horrible disaster."

Pauline smiled, with a threat of rising ire in the smile. "Who thought of my becoming 'engaged' to anybody?" she asked. And her accentuation of the word which Courtlandt had just employed produced the effect of its being scornfully quoted.

He was toying with the links of his watch-chain, and he kept his eyes lowered while he said: "Are you in love with this Kindelon chap?"

She flushed to the roots of her hair. "I—I shall leave the room," she said, unsteadily, "if you presume to talk any further in this strain."

"You are a very rich woman," pursued Courtlandt. What he said had somehow the effect of a man exploding something with a hand of admirable firmness.

Pauline bit her lips excitedly. She made a movement as if about to quit the chamber. Then some new decision seemed to actuate her. "Oh, Court!" she exclaimed, reproachfully, "how can you treat me in this unhandsome way?"

He had lifted his eyes, now. "I am trying to save you from making a ridiculous marriage," he said. "I tried once before—a good while ago—to save you from making a frightful one. My attempt was useless, then. I suppose it will be equally useless now."

Pauline gave an agitated moan, and covered her face with both hands. . . . Hideous memories had been evoked by the words to which she had just listened. But immediately afterward a knock sounded at the partly closed door which led into the hall. She started, uncovered her face, and moved toward the door. Courtlandt watched her while she exchanged certain low words with a servant. Then, a little later, she approached him, and he saw that her agitation had vanished, and that it appeared to have so vanished because of a strong controlling effort.

"Mr. Kindelon is here," she said, in abrupt undertone. "If you do not wish to meet him you can go back into the dining-room." She made a gesture toward a *portière* not far away. "That leads to the dining-room," she went on. "Act just as you choose, but be civil, be courteous, or do not remain."

"I will not remain," said Courtlandt.

He had passed from the room some little time before Kindelon entered it.

"You did not expect to see me," said the latter, facing Pauline. His big frame had a certain droop that suggested humility and even contrition. He held his soft hat crushed in one hand, and he made no sign of greeting with the other.

"No," said Pauline softly, "I did not expect to see you." She was waiting for the sound of the hall-door outside; she soon heard it, and knew that it meant the exit of Courtlandt. Then she went on: "but since you are here, will you not be seated?"

"Not until you have forgiven me!" Kindelon murmured. Between the rich, fervent, emotional voice which now addressed her and the even regularity of the tones she had just heard, what a world of difference lay!

"You were certainly rude," she said, thinking how chivalrously his repentance became him, and how strong a creature he looked in this weaker submissive phase. "You know that I had only the most friendly feelings toward you. You accused me of actual hypocrisy. But I will choose to believe that you did not mean to lose your temper in that positively wild way... Yes, I forgive you, and in token of my forgiveness, there is my hand."

She extended her hand, and as she did so he literally sprang forward, seizing it. The next instant he had stooped and kissed it. After that he sank into a near chair.

"If you had not forgiven me," he said, "I should have been a very miserable man. Your pardon makes me happy. Now I am ready to turn over a new page of—of friendship . . . yes friendship, of course. I shall never say those absurd, accusatory things again. What right have I to say them? What right have I to do anything more than the honour of your notice, as long as you choose to bestow it? I have thought everything over; I've realized the fact of your being willing to know me at all is an immense extended privilege!"

Pauline still remained standing. She had half turned from him, while he thus impetuously spoke; she was staring down into the ruddy turmoil of the fire.

"Don't say anything more with regard to the little disagreement," she answered. "It is all ended. Now let us talk of other things."

He did not answer, and she let quite a long pause ensue while she still kept her eyes upon the snapping coal-blocks. At length she continued:

"I shall have the full list of Mrs. Dares' guests quite soon. It has been promised me."

"Yes?" she heard him say a little absently.

"I shall, no doubt, have it by to-morrow morning," she went on. "Then I shall begin my arrangements. I shall issue invitations to those whom I wish for my guests. And I shall expect you to help me. You promised to help me, as you know. There will be people on the list whom I have not yet met—a good many of them. You shall tell me all about these, or, if you prefer, you shall simply draw your pen through their names. . . . Why don't you ask me how I shall obtain this boasted list?"

"You mean that Mrs. Dares will send it?" she heard him ask.

"No, I mean that I shall secure it from her daughter."

"Her daughter?"

"Yes—Cora. I have been to see Cora. I visited her studio . . . By the way, what a good portrait she has there of you. It is really an excellent likeness."

She slowly turned and let a furtive look sweep his face. It struck her that he was confused and discomfited in a wholly new way.

"I think it a fair likeness," he returned. "But I did not sit for it," he added, quickly. "She painted it from memory. It—it is for sale like her other things."

"Oh, no, it is not for sale," said Pauline. She saw his colour alter a little as her gaze again found stealthy means of scrutinizing it. "Miss Cora told me that very decidedly. She wants to keep it—no doubt as a precious memento. I thought the wish very flattering . . . I—I wondered why you did not ask Cora Dares to marry you."

"She perceived that he had grown pale, now, as he rose and said:

"I think I shall never ask any woman to marry me." He walked slowly toward the door, pausing at a little distance from its threshold. "When you want me," he now proceeded, "will you send for me! Then I will most gladly come."

"You mean . . . about the *salon*?" she questioned.

"Yes . . . about the *salon*. In that and all other ways I am yours to command . . ."

When he had gone she sat musing before the fire for nearly an hour. That night, at a little after nine o'clock, she was surprised to receive a copious list of names from Cora Dares, accompanied by a brief note.

She sent for Kindelon on the following day, and they spent the next evening together from eight until eleven. He was his old, easy, gay, brilliant self again. What had occurred between them seemed to have been absolutely erased from his memory. It almost piqued her to see how perfectly he played what she knew to be a part.

Soon afterwards her invitations were sent out for the following Thursday. Each one was a simple "At Home." She awaited Thursday with much interest and suspense.

(To be Continued.)

"VERAX" ON THE QUEEN'S BOOK.

WE can know but little of the effect of a royal environment upon a royal personage except by a voluntary disclosure such as the Queen has now made, and which is so valuable, partly because of its rareness, but chiefly because it comes to us like a flash of light from a distant all but unknown land. Our ignorance, it should be observed, relates chiefly to the moral and intellectual effect produced by the royal environment, and not to the environment itself. Of this we may take several attributes for granted. We see at once that it must differ in many essential respects from the environments of common people. One difference is found in the almost absolute power of controlling it which lies in the Sovereign's hands. Ordinary folk cannot help themselves. They must take life as they find it. They cannot always choose the sort of people they have to deal with, but must take them as they come, rivals, cynics, critics, people who do not care a straw for them, and have not the smallest objection to tread on their corns. The disciplinary effect is no doubt admirable. It teaches us to know ourselves, and it compels a recognition of the rights of others. From discipline of this sort a sovereign is almost wholly exempt. He can take care to remove from the range of his habitual intercourse all unpleasant things. The result is the freest possible outcome of his own nature. The autocratic individuality has fashioned its surroundings to its own taste, we see it as it is. In such a state of things when everything disagreeable has been weeded out of the surroundings of daily life, there are no critics, no censurers, no advisers. Moods of temper which in private persons would have to be repressed are enticed and pampered into luxuriant growth. Sorrows meet with exaggerated sympathy, and when a fit of gaiety succeeds everybody is ready to attest by appeals to Heaven how natural and how laudable is the indulgence. How will it fare with poor human nature in such circumstances? If we really wish to know, the Queen's Book supplies us with abundant illustrations. In the first place we have what may perhaps be described as an enormous aggrandizement of self-consciousness. It absorbs into itself all persons and things that come within its range till they all think the same thoughts, sigh the same sighs, and shed the same tears. The Queen presents herself to the world as a sorrowing widow, and in that character asks for universal sympathy. It is not in human nature to refuse the request. Yet widowhood is no uncommon misfortune. A colliery explosion often makes fifty widows at a stroke. A collier's widow finds the cupboard empty, and is obliged to stifle her grief in order to find her children food. In the exaggerated self-consciousness of royalty a special measurement is applied to the ordinary incidents of life, so that what would appear to ordinary