

But I will not sacrifice my sense of what is due to myself simply to serve your interests!"

Mr. Paulton lastly subsided into the cushioned chair, his calmness untroubled by her excited tones.

"The scent of your flowers comes sweetly through the window. Let us enjoy them, and defer our discussion. There are some few days between this and Thursday, and ladies occasionally change their minds."

"I shall not alter my decision," said Lestolle, moving towards the door. "If you have nothing more to say to me I will go, and tell Miss Hill that you are here."

"I am in no hurry to see Miss Hill—she is well, I trust—and I have something more to say to you," he quickly replied. "You have not answered my question respecting Percy Lesmore. Men of the highest rank complain to me that they beseege your doors in vain, and yet I find him here. How do you explain this?"

Lestolle gave him a rebellious look, but did not speak.

He nodded oracularly. "I see. You have committed a folly, and you are conscious of it. You will be careful not to offend me again. You will give orders to your servants not to admit him any more."

Still she was mute; and, in spite of his efforts to conceal it, he began to lose temper.

"Girl, you have always been unfathomable; but you play with edged tools when you pit your puny wit against mine! What ails you? Are you meditating some scheme based on nothing more tangible than your own foolish fancies; or are you wavering between the love-sick boy, Percy, and his more intellectual cousin? In either case, you must submit to my better judgment, and believe me when I tell you that marriage with either of them is an impossibility."

Lestolle's colour came and went.

"Tell me why!" she exclaimed. "I am no longer an ignorant child, to whom the knowledge might be dangerous. I know something of what I ask, more, indeed, than you surmise. Tell me the rest."

Paulton started, and looked a little disturbed while she was speaking; but he had recovered his equanimity when she paused, waiting eagerly for his reply.

"Your question must be asked in a different tone, and under different circumstances, before I answer it," he said, significantly. "But content yourself; your interests are as dear to me as my own."

Lestolle made a gesture of impatience. "If you would but speak plainly, so that I might both comprehend and believe you! Is it that you set a price—an exorbitant price—upon your revelations?"

"Money will not buy my secrets," he answered, mysteriously, and with a provoking degree of self-satisfaction in his accent.

"Then under what circumstances will you be induced to restore the paper of which you robbed—yes; look as angry as you will, the term is rightly applied—robbed the defenceless girl who trusted in you?"

"Ma petite, have you yet to learn that such charges are actionable? Where are the proofs of my guilt? I stole into your room at night, and you saw me! Bah! You were dreaming; that is all. Do you ask when I shall be prevailed upon to say all I know. Come hither; and I will tell you. It shall be when—"

He stooped, and whispered something in her ear which made her start, and shiver, and recoil from him, crying angrily, "Are you mad, sir?"

He laughed. "Think me so if you like. I am too proud of you—too highly gratified at the result of my teachings—to resent your pettish speeches. You will not need any rouge to-night, Lestolle, if your cheeks retain their present color."

Lestolle's foot tapped the floor.

"Mr. Paulton, let us understand each other at once!"

He held up his watch. "My child, I am quite satisfied without any further explanations, and, as you perceive, I am due at the theatre. We do understand each other. My plans were made long since, and are unalterable. You may and will oppose them. You will fret and chafe, and offer a great deal of useless resistance. But in the end—do you hear me?—in the end you will yield."

She was beginning a passionate protest, but he stopped her.

"It grieves me to leave you, but I must. I had almost forgotten to say that I have heard it rumored that another of those bills of Viscount Branceleigh's is in circulation. Shall I buy it in?"

"The rumor is a false one," Lestolle promptly replied.

Mr. Paulton coughed dubiously. "But if it is not false?"

She turned from him without reply, and sitting down at the piano, began to rattle off a noisy Tarantella. When she came to the last note, and looked round, he was gone.

The next minute, Lettice Hill came swiftly into the room. The years that had passed over her head had not dealt with her as gently as they had with Wyley Paulton. Her figure had lost its roundness, her features had sharpened, and an habitual sadness lurked in the corners of the mouth, and her dimmed and sunken eyes. She looked anxiously round, and then, with a disappointed air, addressed Lestolle.

"I thought he was here. John said he had admitted him. Surely he has not gone without seeing me?"

"He was in haste. Business of some importance called him away," said Lestolle, softening

the truth for the sake of the forbearing woman who still believed in her dilatory lover.

"But he might have stayed to see me, if only for a moment. Did he ask for me?"

"Mr. Paulton hoped that you were well."

Miss Hill sighed. "And that was all! And yet he knows that it is a week since I saw him! How did he speak of me, Lestolle?—affectionately, and as if he were sorry to leave without seeing me?"

Lestolle put her arms around her friend's neck.

"My poor, dear Lettice, if he were a true and a good man, he would not use you as he does. Knowing this, why do you not try to forget him? Has it not been the same ever since he first put me under your care? He divines how fondly you have loved him, and—"

But Miss Hill would hear no more. She withdrew herself from Lestolle's embrace, and answered, with dignity, "I cannot permit any one to discuss Mr. Paulton's acts in my presence. When he told me that he was not rich enough to marry, I knew that we must have patience, and wait till he had attained a competency. No one could be kinder or more considerate than he has always been; and I will not be taught to doubt him. You are inclined to be rather harsh in your judgments, my dear."

Lestolle made no attempt to defend herself, and Miss Hill went back to her own room, to shed a few tears in secret over that long-delayed union which seemed as far off as ever.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LADY IDA.

Lord Glenaughton's carriage was at the door when Darcy entered Belgrave Square. He was not sorry to be able to conceal, under apologies for his tardiness, some of the embarrassment he could not help feeling.

The Earl made a good-humored reply, and then sank into silence until they had driven out of London, and were bowling along the smoother roads of the suburbs.

"I need not question you," he said, at last; "your looks have told me that you are not the bearer of good tidings."

"Then my face betrays me," Darcy replied, with an effort to speak carelessly. "I bring no news at all. The fair Lestolle had an engagement this morning, but she has promised to give me a hearing to-morrow."

"Did you see her? Is she as beautiful and fascinating as she is described?"

Darcy hesitated.

"I saw but little of the lady, yet I must acknowledge that Percy appears to have some excuse for his infatuation."

There was an infection in the young man's voice which the Earl detected; and he looked at him so searchingly, that Darcy, who felt dreadfully guilty every time he remembered how long he had lingered at the house of the actress, hastened to change the topic. Nor was it reverted to again.

They found Lady Ida and her mother sitting in a pavilion in the garden of the cottage ornée the Earl had rented. The Countess, never very demonstrative, and now languid with ill-health, suffered Darcy to kiss her cheek, murmured a few civil words, and let him pass on to accost her daughter. A note from Lord Glenaughton had apprized them that Darcy would accompany him to Richmond, so he was denied the pleasure of witnessing Ida's start of surprise at his appearance. But her greeting was so cordially spoken as to make some amends for this.

The Lady Ida had been cold and stately as a child. She was still the same, but this only made the contrast more charming when she un-

derwent, and smiled upon the favored few whom she thought worthy her notice. She had been beautiful in her childhood; as a woman, she was even more so. Her hair retained its golden tint and wavy crispness; her figure was finely developed; she had the gift of an empress, and her features were of that rare type of patrician loveliness—fair, statuesque, and emotionless—which is seen only at St. James's, or in Rotten Row.

She glanced at Darcy from beneath the blonde eyelashes resting on her delicate cheek, and congratulated herself upon his appearance. She was not so wholly in the dark as to the wishes he had expressed as the Earl imagined. They had been hinted to her by her mother, when the younger son of a needy baronet appeared to engross too much of her attention, and Ida had joyfully proclaimed herself ready to obey her parents' behests, if they determined to bestow her upon her handsome cousin.

"I am very glad you have come back to us," she said, in her liquid tones, as they strolled across the lawn together. "We see so little of Percy now that I might as well be without a brother."

"Then you'll have no objection to accept me as his substitute occasionally?"

"Oh, no; why should I?—we are such old friends!" and Ida glanced at him winningly. "That is, always provided you have nothing better to do with yourself. I don't like to think that I am a trouble to any one."

"You never need fear to call upon my services," answered Darcy. "One of the pleasantest privileges a male cousin enjoys, is that of playing the escort to his prettiest kinswomen."

Ida's lips parted into a gentle smile as she thanked him; adding, "I must take care not to tax your gallantry or your patience too much. For instance, I'll not ask you to 'squire me when I go shopping, nor to ride with me in the Row more than twice in the season. You'll

stay in London, Cousin Darcy, till we go to Branceleigh Hall, won't you?"

"If you wish it, yes."

Lady Ida looked down as the half-whispered words fell on her ear, but she was not embarrassed. She had learned to regard Darcy's homage as a matter of course, and the idea that he could have permitted some less noble or beautiful girl to usurp her place in his imagination had not entered her head. He left England the slave of charms which she was proudly conscious had known no diminution.

"Papa says you are going to bring Percy back to us," she said, after a little pause. "We shall all be so glad if you contrive to exorcise the evil spirit that has taken possession of him. I may talk to you of our troubles freely," she went on, "because you, and I, and poor Percy were playmates together in the long ago. Don't you remember?"

Darcy smiled.

"Yes; and that our frolics were few and short, because there was always a dread before us of torn frocks and Miss Hill's displeasure; besides which, you had a provoking way of 'rounding my dignity by calling me a rude boy whenever I offended you."

"I have forgotten all my ill-natured speeches," Ida answered, demurely. "My most vivid recollection is of flying to you for protection when an angry bull manaced me, and how brave I thought you for interposing yourself between the fierce animal and my own shrinking form."

The reminiscence was a flattering one, especially when breathed by a young and beautiful woman; and Darcy was somewhat annoyed that their *little à-là-là* had to suffer an interruption.

A little lady, plump and rosy, with bead-like, black eyes, which danced and glittered incessantly, tripped towards them and slipped her arm through Lady Ida's.

"Aren't you going to introduce me to this returned paladin, or must I perform the ceremony for myself?" she asked, gaily. "I am able to claim kinship with you, Mr. Lesmore, for I am the widow of your second cousin, Captain Lavington. Is not this introduction enough?"

Lady Ida quickly drew her arm away as soon as Darcy had made a polite reply to the speech of the vivacious widow, who seemed to have thrown off with her words all other signs of mourning.

"I think I see papa looking for me," she said, and moved across the sward to join him, while Mrs. Lavington coolly took her place.

"You and the dear Earl changed, Mr. Lesmore. But he bears his troubles wonderfully well, though they are visible on his shoulders, aren't they?—that stoop, I mean. You can't think how it pains me to hear people say that it's all owing to his own culpable indulgence. I got so angry with them—wouldn't you?"

"The world notes out its censure more readily than its praise," said Darcy.

Mrs. Lavington threw up her hands.

"How true—how well expressed! Mr. Lesmore, I shall be afraid to talk to you. I can see at a glance that you are awfully clever. Don't you think a little mental anxiety is rather becoming to the Countess? She was a trifle hard—even we, who are so fond of her, are obliged to acknowledge this—but a pensive air tones her down admirably. She has been a handsome woman, and whom we can persuade her to dress to her age, she will look charming—don't you think so?"

"Pray don't ask my opinion respecting a lady's attire," answered Darcy, absently, his eyes following the slow, graceful movements of Ida.

"Ah, you are *éprouvé* with our *belle cousine*; all men are at first. That listless nonchalance which she assumes so well is charmingly novel, and makes her so different to other girls, that she is quite the rage."

"Lady Ida is very lovely!" the young man exclaimed, with such earnestness, that Mrs. Lavington laughed.

"Oh, yes, I quite agree with you, though you need not express your admiration so loudly; and it's not very flattering to me."

Darcy plucked a scarlet geranium and a white campanula from the nearest parterre, and held them towards his pouting companion.

"We don't compare these flowers, yet how beautiful they are individually. How well they blend together; and how little cause either has to complain, if, in the absence of one, we admire the other!"

"Very pretty indeed, and very consoling," cried the gay widow. "If you will promise never to be oblivious to my charms, I'll forgive you for letting your eyes wander towards *ma chère amie*. We are very affectionate, Ida and I. We have no secrets from each other. I assure you."

Darcy shrugged his shoulders slightly. "That intimates a degree of friendship which passes masculine comprehension."

Mrs. Lavington patted his arm with her parasol. "Don't abuse us, sir, because you are frank and confiding; qualities which your sex rarely possess. Have you seen our naughty boy since you returned to England? Although such things mustn't be said aloud in the house, I pity him sincerely. He is the victim of revenge, Mr. Lesmore."

Darcy stared, and the lady nodded oracularly.

"You don't comprehend me, but it's quite true, nevertheless; and that proud acting woman will never forgive her hold of the youth till she has satisfied her vengeance."

"Really, Mrs. Lavington, your words require some explanation!" said her hearer, hastily.

"I'll give you one, with pleasure. Let us turn into this talk, through the shrubbery. Ida will forgive us, when she knows the subject of our conversation. Perhaps you are not aware that Lady Glenaughton had an attack of gastric fever, after her return from Spain, and, fancying it would prove infectious, Lady Ida was hurried off to a finishing establishment, a few miles from town. There she found congenial companions, and elected to stay. She was the queen of the little community; and Ida likes to be looked up to. *Then*, a Miss Wyley was introduced into the school, who formed a great attachment to our cousin, and I fancy Ida was disposed to reciprocate it, till, by some accident, it was discovered that the girl was of no birth, and actually looking forward to the stage for a livelihood! Ida, very correctly, refused to hold any further intercourse with such a creature, and the other young ladies followed her example. She also wrote home to the Earl, who removed her directly. Miss Wyley now figures before the public as Madame Lestolle; and there can be little doubt but that she is avenging herself for Ida's contempt, by ensnaring her foolish brother."

Mrs. Lavington had now talked herself out of breath; but Darcy made no reply. By an odd train of thought, he was imagining the scene at the finishing establishment when it was discovered that a daughter of the people had intruded herself among these scions of nobility. He saw Lestolle as beautiful, and, in outward seeming, as refined, as they; yet driven from their society, scoffed at, taunted, and despised, because the accident of birth had placed her beneath them.

"She must be a horribly bad woman, mustn't she?" murmured Mrs. Lavington in his ear, and he started from his musings.

He made an evasive reply; and the next minute they were joined by Ida and an effeminate-looking youth, whom she introduced as the Marquis of Lechlade.

"There is nothing in him," she observed, with a disdainful curve of her lips, when Mrs. Lavington had pounced upon the young peer, and dragged him away to look at her aviary. "Nothing in him, although he is immensely wealthy, and has been most carefully educated, yet I find him endurable, because he makes no attempt to seem what he is not. Mamma has been asking for you, Cousin Darcy. Will you come to her?"

Nothing loth, he followed whither she chose to lead him. He even found the Countess's querulous protests endurable, for Ida sat close by, her hands crossed in her lap, her golden head lying back on the purple velvet cushions of the chair in which she reclined. It was difficult to tear himself away from his rapt contemplation of her delicate face, for Darcy's sense of the beautiful was dangerously acute, and Ida had always been his incarnation of all that is good and lovely in woman. But the Earl was obliged to return to town, to be present at the reading of a bill in which he was interested, and, as his nephew, mindful of his appointment on the following morning, went with him.

As he stood at Lestolle's door at the appointed hour, waiting for admittance, and nervously asking himself in what words he should broach his errand, a cab drove up from which a gentleman alighted. It was his cousin, the young Viscount Branceleigh. The recognition was mutual, and Mr. Lesmore held out his hand, looking as smiling and indifferent as he could under the circumstances. But Percy, with a look of intense scorn, waved it away.

"I never stoop to double-dealing, Darcy Lesmore. You are here to spy over my actions—to curry favor with my father, and win Ida as your reward, by carrying to him all the scandal malice can invent."

"You wrong me, Percy. Friendship for you, and regret for the unhappiness of your parents, combined to bring me here."

"Is this your first visit? No. Then, while you were talking to me at the Albany with such apparent candor, you were actually taking mental notes of all I said in reply! Oh, it was well and honorably done! But you shall not practise such devices here. Step in, sir. The door is open to you, and Lestolle shall give you your answer from her own lips. But beware what you say! One insulting word, or even look at her, and I shall forget our relationship as you have done. Proceed, sir; I will follow you."

(To be continued.)

WEARING FLANNEL.

The majority of people are not aware of the beneficial effect of wearing flannel next to the body, both in cold and warm weather. Flannel is not so uncomfortable in warm weather as prejudiced people believe. Frequent colds and constant hacking coughs have left me, since adopting flannel garments. There is no need of great bulk about the waist, which condemns the wearing of flannel with those who prefer waists to health, for in that case the flannel can be cut as loosely-fitting waists, always fastened at the back. There are scarcely any of the bad effects of sudden changes of weather felt by those who wear flannel garments, and mothers especially should endeavor to secure such for their little people, in preference to all those showy outside trimmings which fashion commands.