

"grave voice, to which he owed so much of his influence." "I have brought you to eat and drink; food plain and nourishing, drink that shall restore, and not inflame." The tongue is clean, the eye clear, the pulse full, if a little irregular. My coming into the room suddenly hurried you, no doubt. If you go on well through the night, to-morrow I shall pronounce you convalescent. I never speak without being sure. When Constantine Katerfelto uses the word 'convalescent,' a patient may order his boots to be blacked and his spurs cleaned."

"You've brought me through right well, Doctor," replied John Garnet, glancing at the door, "you and Waif together. You must give the nurse some of the credit! She's been very careful and attentive. I think she has hardly left me for an hour at a time, till—till to-day."

How differently thirty and sixty look upon the ahrenoc of eighteen!

"Waif's a good girl," answered the Doctor, coolly, "and for a mere child, shows a fair amount of intelligence. I am glad you are satisfied with her."

"She—she's not ill to-day, I hope," hazarded the patient, eating, however, heartily enough, notwithstanding the anxiety to be inferred from his inquiry.

"Ah!" was the answer; "you know very little of Waif, or you would scarcely ask such a question. None of her race are over ill, any more than the beasts of prey. They die, indeed, but it is like the wolf and the jackal, in some forest-den. Skill, science, experience, are of no avail. It's in the blood,—nothing can cure them when they have once lain down. I've tried it a score of times, and failed."

"Is she a thoroughbred gipsy?" he asked, for it was pleasant to talk of her, even to this unsympathizing old man.

"As the Queen of Sheba," assented the other. "Some day, when we are better acquainted, I may tell you more of her history; but I give not my friendship lightly," he added, with a scrutinizing glance from his shining gray eyes; "it is offered only to those who owe me, or to whom I owe, a heavy debt of gratitude."

"I am sure I ought to be grateful to you," said John Garnet, "and so I am; but I can do nothing to prove it till you get me off this bed, and out of this room. Then, Doctor, speak up boldly. Say what you want, and I am your man!"

The other laughed a noiseless laugh, peculiar to himself. "You owe me but little as yet," said he; "perhaps you may live to be deeper in my debt than for the healing of a scratch. Not that I mean to say the scratch was a trifling one. I tell you honestly, many a surgeon would have given your case up as hopeless; and you ought to be thankful, if you young men ever are thankful, that you fell into my hands. No; for a bold, enterprising fellow, in the prime of life and strength, whose fingers, as I guess, close round his hilt pretty readily, I might do something better than stop a hole in the side. There are paths to fortune, plenty of them, for men who look upward and onward, steep it may be, and leading through miry places, not seldom slippery with blood. To a bold spirit this is half the charm! You are lying here, unable to leave your bed to-day; but do you not long for the time when you shall be riding wild horses, pledging lawless healths, drinking, dicing, and brawling once more? When the frost is bitter, and the earth white with snow, and the robin hops to your window for crumbs, do you not look forward to the opening spring, the soft south wind, the coming of the blackbird at last?"

A look of intelligence passed between them, and the sick man's eye brightened. It was the pass-word of a losing, nay, of a ruined cause. The handful of Jacobites remaining in England had not yet relinquished all hope of his return, who had proved indeed a bird of ill-omen, blacker than night, to those whose loyalty waged life and lands on his behalf.

"Nay, Doctor," said the other, with a flush of pride on his face, "the blackbird's

brisk it is alive."

For reasons of his own the charlatan was anxious to impress his patient with a conviction of his powerful character and superior intelligence.

"Not so," said he, with an air of extreme frankness. "I have no knowledge, for I have taken no trouble to learn. If I can spare the time to-night, when the moon goes down, I will set those to work who shall bring me all the information I require in less than forty-eight hours."

John Garnet, though scarcely a model Christian, was a good Catholic. He crossed himself and faltered a feeble protest against the employment of evil spirits or unorthodox powers of the air.

"I had rather not get well at all," said he, "than be cured by magic or witchcraft! I would leave the house this minute if I believed you were more than a doctor! I'll wager a fair stake and risk my life any day, but I won't sit down to play for my soul!"

"Your soul!" echoed Katerfelto, with his characteristic laugh. "My young friend, what should I do with your soul if I won it? My concern is with men's bodies, their energies, their courage, and their intellect. I shall not you on your legs in a week, and you can carry your soul about with you, if you have one, wherever you like. In the meantime keep quiet, take your medicine, drugs of the veriest earth—earthy; eat your food and drink your posset, prepared by no fairy hands, but those of a woman, real flesh and blood, with a human temper, worse, I daresay, than that of many average fends, and so get well. In a few days I will talk to you again on matters of business to our mutual advantage. Meantime I relegate you once more to the care of Waif."

His spirits rose at once, and he bade the charlatan good-night with an excess of cordiality not lost on that shrewd observer, who was as good as his word, for his voice could be heard in the passage bidding Waif hasten her house-work and watch by the patient till he slept, a mandate the gipsy girl obeyed to the letter, returning without delay to her former post, but taking up a station in the obscurity where John Garnet could not see her face. Neither did she vouchsafe a syllable of greeting or explanation, so that the patient felt uncomfortably hurt and perplexed.

"Have I offended you?" he asked at length, in an humble tone, contrasting preciously with the coldness of that in which she replied.

"Who am I, to be offended? My only business is to obey. The Patron bids me watch here till you sleep."

So he shut his eyes, yet not too tight, and scanned her the while covertly beneath their lids, thus detecting on her face, when she turned it towards him, a look of tender wistful longing, that told only too plainly the secret of her love.

Then he drew a deep breath of relief and contentment, satisfied he would rise a winner from the unequal game, and so fell sound asleep.

## CHAPTER V.

### A CHARLATAN.

In the surgery Katerfelto began to prepare for the reception of his visitors. Standing at a bright little mirror, he was soon immersed in the task. A spot of carmine on the cheek-bones, a line or two of paint round the mouth, about the eyes, and across the forehead added a score of years to his appearance and made him look a man of eighty. A flowing white beard, in which his own gray tresses mingled freely, and a black cloak bordered with crimson, drawn over the velvet gown, completed his equipment. Surveying the whole in his glass, he drew himself up, with something of the confidence a knight must have felt when armed from head to heel. "Come one, come all," he

cards! Never was such luck!"

"Fortune is a woman," answered the other. "Like all women, coy to be wooed, but grateful to be won."

"She hath played me more slippery tricks than I choose to count," laughed his lordship. "It may be that I solicit her too often, and trust her too fondly. Last night she did me a rare jade's turn! Look ye here, man; I had won a cool four thousand at pique, and St. Leger wanted to leave off. I was always too strong for him at pique. Well, sir, four thousand was no use to me, but eight would have taken my lady's diamonds out of pawn, and I offered him one more chance, double or quits."

"I know you did," observed Katerfelto with the utmost effrontery, "and left off quits; I wish I had been at your lordship's elbow."

"I wish you had!" replied the other: "for I believe you are the devil himself, or in close league with him. However, I did not come here to prate about my luck, and I have little time to waste; my lady thinks I am at Ranelagh. She's to meet me there later. Now business is business, my good friend; what have you done for me?"

"Little and yet enough," answered the other. "You will meet somebody at Ranelagh to-night; you are to be wary and cautious. Do not seem to recognise her till you find her unattended. You may then speak three words, no more. It is her express stipulation. They will be answered in due time. She goes to Ranelagh early and remains only an hour."

Then I had better be off!" exclaimed his lordship, pressing a purse into Katerfelto's hand. "What? are you so ceremonious? Must you needs come to the door yourself? Where's the pretty gipsy lass? I saw her not ten minutes ago. I say, Katerfelto, if ever you sell her back into bondage, let me have the refusal. By Jupiter! if I was to put that girl into velvet and brocade I could take the town by storm."

"Your lordship does her too much honor," answered Katerfelto, bowing profoundly while he opened the door, but there was a malicious twinkle in his eye, and a curl of scorn about the corners of his mouth, to belie the outward show of deference with which he dismissed his visitor.

The latter had been gone but a few minutes ere a sedan-chair was set down at the end of Deadman's Alley, and a lady closely veiled, carrying a riding mask, not over her face, but in her hand, alighted with some trepidation, peering up and down the passage, as if fearful of being observed, while she made for the red lamp in Katerfelto's window. This visitor was also admitted after a little cautious tap, but, unlike her predecessor, looked with scorn rather than admiration on Waif's jark locks and flashing glances. "Tell the Doctor, child," said she, "that I am not to be disturbed while I consult him, and beware of eaves-dropping. I do not choose to share my secrets with a waiting-maid, for all hersaucy looks and sallow skin!"

Waif scarcely heard and certainly did not heed, for her heart was in the sick-chamber with John Garnet, whither her agile body lost no time in following it.

"Your ladyship is early," said Katerfelto, with an obeisance courtly, but not subservient. "Ranelagh need wait the less impatiently for its fairest ornament."

"La, Doctor!" was the answer, "who could have told you I was going to Ranelagh? I protest you know everything. My lord thinks I am there now."

"My lord will be there as surely as my lady," answered the other. "But it was not to learn his lordship's movements that your ladyship came here!"

"Fie, Doctor!" she replied; what woman of fashion cares to know the doings of a husband? I have a crow to pluck with you. Do you remember what you promised me the last time I was here?"

"Triumphs by the hundred," said he; "compliments by the thousand; conquests and flatteries innumerable. Better than these,

chairman, who winked at each other as they took up their precious burden, moved a dozen paces, when a heavy step was heard in Deadman's Alley, and a burly figure, that seemed to ignore all considerations of secrecy and disguise, stopped at Katerfelto's door to thump till it shook again.

Undoing the fastening, hastily as she might, Waif found herself confronted by a stout, middle-aged person, in a rusty black riding suit, who looked as if he had been taking hasty refreshment, washed down by strong potations, as indeed was the case.

Parson Gale—for it was none other—had ridden post from Exmoor to London on receiving the news of his brother's death in a midnight brawl. Arrived in the metropolis, he lost no time in communicating with the officers of justice; and from the particulars thus furnished, satisfied himself that the affray took place without witnesses, and that the survivor had escaped. The Parson swore a great oath that he would avenge the crime, and if the perpetrator was above ground, he hunt him down to death. His difficulty was to find out where John Garnet lay concealed. Every day, and all day long, he pursued his inquiries, without success. Tired and hungry, while sitting at his tavern supper he chanced to hear Katerfelto spoken of as a cunning man, for whom there were secrets in this world or the next; and having ascertained the locality of Deadman's Alley, finished his bottle, and started without delay on his search.

The apparition of Waif, in answer to his summons, may have surprised him a little; but when a pretty lass was in question, Parson Gale was never at a loss; he recovered his astonishment in time to chuck her under the chin, and bestow on her a most unwelcome caress. The girl's eyes glittered, and her lithe fuggess stole to the knife at her girdle. He caught her by the wrist, and kissed her again. She disengaged herself, with one dexterous twirl, and pushed rather than ushered this unwelcome admirer into the presence of Katerfelto, muttering, in her own outlandish tongue, something that sounded less like a blessing than a curse.

When roused to wrath, it was her nature to resent an insult or an injury on the spot; but if immediate retaliation seemed impossible, to wait for an opportunity with untiring patience, not to be diverted from its purpose by any consideration of clemency or forgiveness.

"If I can learn something about you," she thought, "I shall know when and where to strike. Before our reckoning is over, you will wish your lips had been scared with a red-hot iron, rather than laid to mine against my will!" Then casting one loving look towards the chamber in which John Garnet was sleeping, she took up her post at the door of the surgery, and listened eagerly to the conversation within.

"I'm a plain man, Doctor," began Parson Gale, in his rough, frank notes. "I speak the truth mostly myself, and expect others will speak it to me. Now I am told that you know more, good and bad, than ever another person in this great wicked town. That's what brought me here."

Katerfelto nodded gravely. "Good and bad," said he, "are relative terms. Knowledge cannot of itself be evil, whether it be gleaned from the crowded footway or the solitary moor. Wisdom crieth aloud, could we but hear her, from the dome of St. Paul's, no less than from the purple outline of the Quaker Hills and the brown rido under Dunkerry Beacon."

The mention of the familiar places startled his listener; and Katerfelto, who had already detected the kindly West-country accent, did not fail to notice his surprise.

"I believe you are a conjuror," said the Parson, "as sure as I am not! Well—if you can tell me where I came from, perhaps you will tell me what I came for."

The charlatan smiled. "You wish to learn something very near your heart," said he, watching the other's countenance.

"Not quite the nearest and dearest of all! yet a matter of great importance. A matter

"Show me where the deer is harbored," said he, passing into the street. "I can do all the rest myself. The Lord have mercy on him, for I will not, when once I set him up to bay."

## CHAPTER VI.

### MY LORD AND MY LADY.

They occupied separate apartments now. There had been a time indeed when Lord and Lady Bellinger might have competed for the sitch of Bacon at Dunmow, so well satisfied was each with the other, for weeks, nay months, after a marriage of vanity, with some little inclination. Was not my lord the best-dressed man at court? Had not my lady the finest hand, the tightest waist, the loftiest head-gear in London? Did not both exist only in the atmosphere of the great world, sacrificing to the airs and graces time, health, money, and reputation? Many tastes had they in common, some vices, not a few follies, prejudices and frivolities; yet they soon began to differ, and after passing through the customary phases of disappointment, pique, resentment and disgust, subsided into a sullen, stony indifference that was perhaps the most hopeless condition of all. Rarely meeting, except at meals, or in the presence of others, they had few opportunities for quarreling; when they did fall out, it is only fair to say that her ladyship usually took the initiative. Let us give her precedence, therefore, now.

She is seldom stirring before noon. The sun is already at mid-heaven when she rings for her chocolate, sighs, yawns, thrusts on her small feet her small slippers, wriggles into a much embroidered morning gown, and totters across the room to look at herself in the glass. The face she seen therein reflected affords, alas! a history and a moral.

Its features are delicate, and the smile that has now become rigid from force of habit was once very flexible and sweet, but late hours and false excitement have scored premature wrinkles round the eyes, and the free use of paint has served to deaden, and, as it were, rough-cast the surface of the skin. Lady Bellinger was never quite a pretty woman, though with the advantages of dress, manner, and candle-light she could hold her own in general society against many a professional beauty, and counted her ball-room conquests in numbers that, if they did not satisfy her rapacity, were quite enough for her reputation. This border-land between good looks and an ordinary exterior is, perhaps, the most dangerous ground of all. Vanity is excited, but not gratified. Wit, vivacity, freedom of gesture and conversation are called in to supplement the charms that nature has left imperfect. The player grows more reckless as the game goes on, and at last no stake is thought too high to risk on a winning card.

The face she is studying wears a mournful expression to-day. Weary, perhaps, rather than dissatisfied, for she won twenty guineas last night at ombre, and overheard Sir Hector Bellairs ask who she was; that refined young gentleman, a rising light at Newmarket and the Cocoa Tree, adding with an oath, "She has a game look about her, like a wild, thoroughbred mare!"

And yet; was it worth while, she pondered lazily, to tremble half an hour over the cards for twenty guineas? Were the pains lavished on dress and toilet to yield no higher triumph than Sir Hector's silly comparison, or the sneer with which it was received by the man he addressed? Harry St. Leger used to admire her once, at least he told her so, and now—he only smiled at Sir Hector's idle talk, and turned away to a little bread-and-butter miss, whose round blue eyes were becoming the rage of the town.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]