

# THE TRIUMPHS OF DUTY.

CHAPTER XL.

A HAPPY HOUSEHOLD.

It was a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, both to peer and peasant, at Woolton Court. A devout Lent followed; then the joyful alleluia of Easter. With the autumn came the occupation of the "holyday cottage," on the lake of Windermere—Violet's dowry—by the Marquis of Seaham, his sister, Lady Clara Moorland, with the little twin girls and the attendants. The aged and young couples from Woolton Court were there to greet their arrival, and the latter remained during some happy weeks in the scenes of sweet remembrance; the more endeared, because of the many vicissitudes that had followed the betrothed and had terminated so blissfully in their marriage. Before the anniversary of that marriage it became a question whether Lady Violet Stanmore was to venture any more visits to Rockley Cottage; therefore, the same happy party assembled in the eastern half of Woolton Court, where, on the 10th of October, the Earl of Charleton was invited with his venerable companion, the Duchess of Peterworth, to pass by the long picture-gallery, from their western residence, to the Lady Violet's private suite of rooms. On arriving in the drawing room Lord Stanmore advanced from an inner room and placed his infant son in the arms of his grandfather, saying:

"Bless him and he shall be blessed!" adding with emotion, "Oh! it seems to me that for the first time I am really able to know and appreciate all the love you have had for me, my dear grandfather."

Lady Violet had a short convalescence in reward for the courage with which she had borne the maternal pangs. Very soon, with little Philip Henry in her arms, she glided through the long gallery to make him return the visits of his grandfather and of "Grandworth," the hereditary abbreviation of all grandmamma's Peterworth, by the children of Polhill Towers. No wet-nurse, no foster-brother, no sister, was permitted to approach the little Henry. Good and affable as the Lady Violet had ever proved to the poor on the estates of her father—a reputation that had preceded her to Woolton Court and had hitherto been sustained—it was now sufficient for the poor applicant to have an infant in her arms for Lady Violet to refuse the shortest audience; and until she was assured that the peasant child had quitted the house her own precious babe was nestled to her bosom.

"Oh, papa!" cried she, in reply to some playful comments of the marquis, "how can I be too cautious? How can I help seeing a 'Leon Bauvin' in every infant that approaches my Henry? Ah! how grateful I feel that I am strong and healthy enough to be his only nurse."

"Violet, shall I row you and baby on the lake?" said Lord Stanmore, fully expecting an assent, as he took the little heir in his arms.

"Thank you, Arthur; yes. It will be very refreshing."

"Come, then; I have sent the nursery servants down to the boat-house to amuse themselves; but I wish to have only ourselves on the water."

Away went the youthful pair; and the marquis, who had strolled from them at the first mention of boating, for which he had no fancy, gave an arm to his sister, Lady Clara, whom he met on the terrace; and they bent their steps to a pleasant walk over looking the lake, whence they saw the boat and its precious freight glide from the boat-house along the bowery and varied shades. They continued thus to watch in pleased silence till the

sounds arose in perfect harmony of the strain

"I know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows."

"Ah! Olara," said the marquis, when the sounds were lost in distance, "under heaven all this happiness is your affecting. Had you deviated from your perfect line of conduct by one smile or one look of evil fascination you might have dragged Lord Stanmore at your triumphal car till you had made desolate the now happy and congenial hearts of my Violet and her husband. You are one who could have done evil and did it not. *Qui poterit transgredi et non est transgressus, facere mala et non fecit!* Therefore shall your fidelity be found good in the sight of the Lord, as it is in that of your approving and grateful brother."

While this tribute was paid to the exalted and solid virtue of his sister by the penetrating Marquis of Seaham, the venerable Earl of Charleton, while strictly keeping his grandson's secret, had received with consolation the confidence of the duchess on her observation of the mild dignity, the unobtrusive firmness and rectitude of Lady Clara Moorland, as opposed to the love of conquest but too prevalent in her sex. On this day the aged couple had descended to the pleasure-grounds for the usual two hours destined to air and exercise after breakfast. The duchess in a light wheel chair, drawn alternately by Thomas Jenkins and James Turner; while Lord Charleton, resting a hand on the side of the little carriage, regulated the pace of the charioteers to suit his step when in exercise. By this arrangement the vigorous frame of the earl was enabled to continue the healthy custom of long walks without losing the society of his more delicate companion.

Sometimes, when by some rustic seat, they would dismiss for awhile the attendants and converse or meditate while Lord Charleton rested. On this day, perceiving the Marquis of Seaham walking with his sister and engaged in deep discourse, they began to converse on the happy state of those who, like themselves, being advanced beyond the meridian of life, might laudably retire into calm shades with those of a like frame of mind.

"They must have served God and man first in active life, before they can thus retire with congenial spirits," observed the earl. "Our friend, the marquis, and his admirable sister, are fit types of the meridian time of the great toil of life. He, minister of state, and she, courted as his sister, the female head of his house, with known influence from the respect he bears her, with responsibilities as such in the accepting or refusing to patronize the applications made through her. She also may be said to have become a public character. It is well she has strength of mind to bear the weight, as well as to despise the glitter, of her position."

"There is another fair relation of the Marquis of Seaham," observed the duchess, "who would have turned all the astute diplomacy of her character to supplant Lady Clara Moorland in St. James-square and Marsden Park; but who has been providentially carried far from the scene of temptation, by the family chaplain, Rev. Dr. Rollings, and made the centre of a vast and admirable field of usefulness, whence she doubtless writes to all her former acquaintances, as she writes to me, to assist her in converting the world by the means laid down to convert herself. I speak of Lady Cecily Dorel—a woman powerful in her energy and activity; once a notorious votary of Satan, now turned to the service of God, and another type of the heat and toil of meridian life."

The marquis and his sister had now arrived sufficiently near the speaker for her to add:

"I am recounting to Lord Charleton the perseverance as well as zeal of Lady Cecily Dorel, who writes, I con-

clude, to interest her cousins in every good work under her patronage."

"You have conjectured with your usual penetration and accuracy, duchess," replied Lord Seaham. "I can already produce a mighty packet of letters, sermons, pamphlets, prospectus, architectural drawings of chapels and school-houses, lists of deserving schoolmasters, and other candidates for my patronage; although the focus of these admirable doings is in the heart of England, while I am now at the head of Foreign Affairs."

"But still, marquis, I conclude, from your great interest with your colleagues in the ministry, you have done something for Lady Cecily?"

"I have compromised with my dear little cousin, that she shall be paid partly in her own coin. I have pushed on, successfully, two of her plans, and one of her school-masters; while, in return, I have sent her the repentant Mademoiselle Lucille Brontel, escorted by Monsieur Julien, to be her chief assistant in forming the Congregation of the Holy Tongue. May God speed these two pious foxes! They require it, not that I wish them the wisdom of the serpent! They must serve God according to the characters He has given them."

"Yes," responded Lord Charleton; "the character given originally by the Creator we should never attempt to crush and destroy; it is a presumptuous, a vain attempt. We perceive some characters to be naturally more lovely and attractive than others; but, doubtless, if we watch the career of the originally less amiable, we shall recognize a gift of courage to conquer their defects, which, with an enlightened conscience, is certain to meet with deserved success, and form in the end most estimable and pleasing characters. I think also, in watching the Providence of God, respecting those to whom have been granted by nature lovely and attractive dispositions, we shall perceive a constant demand on them for generosity and self-sacrifice. If they respond to these calls, they will be cheered, even in this life, by peace of heart and trial, and will hereafter have their glorious eternal reward. I need not seek far to illustrate my theory. As maiden, wife, and widow, I have recognized this spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice in Lady Clara Moorland; and, as perseverance in well-doing is in itself virtue, and gives increased value to every charming act, I wind up to a culminating point in the testimony I bear, through a long life, to tried virtues of the Duchess of Peterworth."

"I thought, duchess, you had left off rouge," said the marquis, smiling, to his old friend.

"Here come the hopes of Woolton Court!" cried she, as Lord Stanmore, advancing slowly from the lake, with his wife on one arm and his sleeping babe on the other, took the path that led direct to our group of friends. The nurses, who at present led an easy life, went towards the house.

"Lay the little Philip Henry on the knees of his 'grandworth,'" said Lord Charleton, "and we will follow at their chariot-wheels."

"I beg pardon of all the lords and ladies present, for my observation," said the charioteer, James Turner. "But this here blessed baby will grow up to be the perfect image of his great-grandfather, the young earl as was; and it is a fine day for me to see him in the lap of her as should have been his great-grandmother, the beautiful young lady of Eagle Crag."

It was during that happy autumn of 1856 that, at his evening toilet, Lord Stanmore said to his valet:

"Temple, I release you, during the next half-hour, from the promise I exacted from you, never to let the name of Lord Edwin Fitzjames pass your lips. He has been faithful to grace. He has persevered. He is professed. He signs himself Brother Bruno of Mercy; but reveals his real name. He has written

a thick volume of sacred poetry, in the spirit of expiation for his former loves of earth. His expressions are most edifying and affecting. He feels convinced of the continuance of my prayers, and promises his own; but he can never write again."

"I feel extremely grateful to you, my lord," said Mr. Temple, "for imparting to me this gratifying news. You will receive an additional joy throughout eternity each time you meet this repentant sinner—this now holy penitent." After a little pause, Mr. Temple resumed: "Has it ever occurred to you, my lord, that some innocent, but tepid souls, would be lost but for some startling fall, that has publicly disgraced them, and opened their eyes to their own previous state?"

"I think, Temple, you must mean to say, those apparently innocent souls; for 'tepid' and 'innocent' cannot hold together. A soul so tepid as not to love God, sins by omission, even mortally; that soul is just ripe for mortal sin by action. And now that we understand each other's terms, I will assure you I quite agree with you, that a public fall—a public disgrace, may possibly be the only means to save many such souls. Still, even here, we must not generalize too much. God does not limit His means of grace. It was through you alone, while at Marsden Park, that I heard the details of the wonderful conversion of Lady Cecil Dorel. There was no moral fall, no public disgrace. The family chaplain," continued Lord Stanmore, smiling, "caught a tepid lady in a trap, locked her up, prayed with such fervor that, like the tears of St. Scholastica, he drew down a thunder-storm; then persevered with his holy sacrifice and his prayers, till contrition succeeded to remorse, love to fear."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE FAMILY JEWELS.

It was on one of those clear still winter mornings that proclaim a walk or a drive, that the duchess, having been as usual handed into her little carriage by Lord Charleton, had to wait his return from an audience he had promised to a tenant in his private study. This awaiting the earl seemed to be an opportunity long desired by the two humble friends who drew the carriage; for the usual spokesman immediately commenced with:

"Honorable Miss Sedley, of Eagle Crag, as was, and grand duchess as is, we have, that is Tom Jenkins and me, has still a secret, and it is to you, that's still pretties in our eyes, and more bright to be here than any one else, that we wishes to confide it." He then whispered: "In the ceiling of the chamber supposed to be haunted by the Honorable Tristram Woolton, there be something else besides the music tubes. There be a casket—a jewel casket—the family jewels, marm. Now that the blessed baby, Philip Henry, is born, and we now really believes the dark young man is Viscount Stanmore, we gives up the secret."

"What could induce you to suppose Lord Stanmore to be otherwise than the real heir to Woolton Court?" demanded the duchess.

"We was always afeared he had to do with the branch in the West Injees; for about twenty years ago, a fine handsome gentleman, but very dark, a Mr. Woolton, grandson of the Honorable Gilbert, came here to see if the old place was likely to be sold; and he talked freely about his being the heir to all after the earl's death. When Lord Stanmore came to prepare for the return of the earl, we took him for the son of this dark gentleman, and did not give him no confidence. The two valets, Mr. Julien and Mr. Temple, have taken great pains to make us understand all the rights of it; and now the blessed baby is born, so fair, like all the true Wooltons, we gives in. So here's the last of the secrets, marm; and sure if any one had a right to wear them jewels, marm, it's yourself."