

them, until the two are constant companions. In a few days he seems to have no aim or desire except to please her; while she goes blindly on, expressing genuine surprise at each fresh token of his generosity.

One day she buys a huge bouquet, which he has to carry home, and tells him that she dotes on flowers.

The next, a basket of the rarest specimens that Brussels can produce lies on her table, with her cousin's kind regards.

"What exquisite flowers!" exclaims Mrs. St. John. "What a lot he must have paid for them!" remarks her daughter, quite indifferent as to the motive of the offering.

But the next day the offering is repeated.

"More flowers!" says Irene: "what am I to do with them? There are no more vases, and the last are too fresh to throw away."

On the third day, a bouquet more beautiful than either of the others lies before her.

"Oh! this is too bad!" she exclaims, vexedly. "This is sheer waste! I shall speak to Colonel Mordaunt."

What does the speaking result in? An adjuration that no blossoms can be too fresh for one who is fresher herself than any blossom that ever grew in hot-house or in field, etc., etc., etc.

"Stupid old fool!" is Irene's grateful though unexpressed rejoinder. "The idea of taking every thing I say as gospel! I declare I will never tell him I like any thing again."

Yet she is pleased by the man's attention, though she hardly knows why. It soothes the pride which has been so sorely wounded: it makes her better satisfied, not with the world, but with herself. Colonel Mordaunt is not a brilliant conversationalist nor a deep thinker; he is quite content to follow her lead, and to echo her sentiments; but though he gives her no new ideas, he does not disturb the old ones, and she is not in a mood to receive new impressions. He is thoughtful, and generous, and anxious to please. He attends her, in fact, as a servant attends his mistress, a subject his queen: and all women, however broken-hearted they may be, dearly love to keep a retinue of slaves. Irene likes it: she is a woman born to govern, who takes submission to her as a right. It never strikes her that slaves may dare to adore.

Mrs. St. John receives Colonel Mordaunt's attentions to her daughter and herself with very different feelings. She is more than gratified by them—she is flattered. And if she can secure

his undivided attention for an hour or two, she makes the most of it by thanks and confidences. One day Irene is lying down upon her bed with a headache, as she says—with a heartache, as she might more correctly have expressed it—and Mrs. St. John has the colonel to herself. It is a warm afternoon, and the heat and the agitation of the interview have brought a roseate hue into the old lady's face which makes her look quite handsome.

"Colonel Mordaunt—Philip—if I may still call you so—I have a great anxiety upon my mind."

"A great anxiety, my dear Mrs. St. John! if it is any thing in which I can assist you—"

"I was sure you would say so! Yes: I think you can help me, or, at all events, it will be a comfort to consult you on the matter. I have so few friends in whom I can confide."

"Let me know what distresses you at once."

"It is about money. Oh! what a hateful subject it is. I believe money, either the want of it or the excess of it, to be at the bottom of almost every trouble in this world; and, though poor dear Tom left me very comfortably off, yet—"

"You are in want of it? My dear friend, every penny I have is at your disposal!"

"How like you to say so! No; that would not help me. The fact is I have been spending more than my income since my husband's death—intrenching largely on my principal—much more largely than I had any idea of till I received my banker's book a few weeks back."

"But I thought my cousin left you so well off."

"Not nearly so well as the world imagines. He had indulged in several private speculations of late, and the loss of them preyed on his mind—sometimes I think it hastened his death; I know that at the last he was greatly troubled to think he could not leave us in better circumstances."

"But, my dear Mrs. St. John, excuse my saying so—considering it was the case, how could you be so foolish as to touch your principal, the only thing you and your daughter had to depend on?"

"Ah! it was foolish, wasn't it? but don't reproach me; you can't think how bitterly I am repenting of it now."

She lies back in her chair, quite overcome by the idea, while Colonel Mordaunt sits by her side, silent and absorbed.

Suddenly Mrs. St. John starts up and clutches his hand.