

could never reveal to her the depths of a noble nature like Pauline's. She could sooner have sounded the depths of the Atlantic than the grand deep of that young girl's noble heart and soul; they would always be dead letters to her—mysteries she could not solve. One morning the impulse was strong upon her to seek Pauline, to hold a friendly conversation with her as to mourning; but when she reached the door of the study her courage gave way, and she turned abruptly, feeling rather than knowing why the discussion of dress and mere personal appearance must prove distasteful to Miss Darrell.

Little by little Lady Darrell began to take her place in the grand world; she was too wise and wary to do it all at once. The degrees were almost too imperceptible; even Lady Hampton, one of the most fastidious of critics, was obliged to own to herself that her niece's conduct was highly creditable. The gradation in Lady Darrell's spirits were as carefully regulated as the gradations of color in her dress; with deep lavender and black ribbons she was mildly sorrowful, the lighter grew the lavender the lighter grew her heart. On the first day she wore a silver brocade she laughed outright, and the sound of that laugh was the knell of all mourning.

Visitors began to arrive once more at Darrell Court, but Lady Darrell exercised great restraint over herself. Her invitations were at first confined to matrons of mature age. "She did not feel equal to the society of gentlemen yet."

There was a grand chorus of admiration for the nice feeling Lady Darrell displayed. Then elderly gentlemen—husbands of the matrons—were admitted; and, after a time, "braw wooers began to appear at the hall," and then Lady Darrell's reign began in real earnest.

From these admiring matrons, enthusiastic gentlemen, ardent lovers, and flattering friends Pauline stood aloof. How she despised the whole of them was to be gathered only from her face; she never expressed it in words. She did not associate with them, and they repaid her behaviour by the most hearty dislike.

It was another proof of "dear Lady Darrell's sweet temper" that she could live in peace with this haughty, abrupt, willful girl. No one guessed that the bland, amiable, suave, graceful mistress of Darrell Court stood in awe of the girl who had been disinherited to make way for her.

"Pauline," said Miss Hastings, one day, "I want you to accustom yourself to the idea of leaving Darrell Court; for I do not think there is any doubt but that sooner or later Lady Darrell will marry again."

"I expect it," she returned. "Poor Sir Oswald! His home will go to strangers, his name be extinct. How little he foresaw this when he married!"

"Let it take place when it may, the Court can be no home for you then," continued Miss Hastings.

Pauline raised her hand with a warning gesture.

"Do not say another word, Miss Hastings; I cannot listen. Just as criminals were fastened to the rack, bound to the wheel, tied to the stake, I am bound here—awaiting my revenge!"

"Oh, Pauline, if you would but forego such strange speech! This longing for vengeance is in your heart like a deadly canker in a fair flower. It will end badly."

The beautiful face with its defiant light was turned toward her.

"Do not attempt to dissuade me," she said. "Your warning is useless, and I do not like to grieve you. I acquainted Lady Darrell with my determination before she married my uncle for his money. She persisted in doing it. Let her take the consequences—bear the penalty. If she had acted a true womanly part—if she had refused him, as she ought to have done—he would have had time for reflection, he would not have disinherited me in his anger, and Darrell Court would have descended to a Darrell, as it ought to have done."

"If you could but forget the past, Pauline!"

"I cannot—it is part of my life now. I saw two lives before me once—the one made noble, grand, and gracious by this inheritance, which I should have known so well how to hold; the other darkened by disappointment and shadowed by revenge. You know how some men wait for the fair fruition of a fair hope—for the dawn of success—for the sunshine of perfect prosperity; so do I wait for my revenge. We Darrells never do things by halves; we are not even moderate. My heart, my soul, my life which might have been, I grant, filled with high impulses—are concentrated on revenge."

Though the words she spoke were so terrible, so bitter, there was no mean, vindictive, or malign expression on that beautiful face; rather was it bright with a strange light. Mistaken though the idea might be, Pauline evidently deemed herself one chosen to administer justice.

Miss Hastings looked at her.

"But, Pauline," she said gravely, "who made you Lady Darrell's judge?"

"Myself," she replied. "Miss Hastings, you often speak of justice; let me ask, was this matter fair? My uncle was irritated against me because I would not marry a man I detested and loathed; in his anger he formed the project of marriage to punish me. He proposed to Elinor Rocheford, and, without any love for him, she agreed to marry him. I went to her, and warned her not to come between me and my rightful inheritance. I told her that if she did I would be revenged. She laughed at my threat, married my uncle, and so disinherited me. Now, was it fair that I should have nothing, she all—that I a Darrell, should see the home of my race go to strangers? It is not just, and I mean to take justice into my hands."

"But, Pauline," opposed Miss Hastings, "if Lady Darrell had not accepted Sir Oswald, some one else would."

(To be continued.)

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