

Pennant's hands, who could ill afford to help her, and her sudden good spirits were soon depressed.

"I—I—will go into the town, and take lodgings till I get another situation," she said.

"You will do no such thing; as long as we are here you are welcome; and then—why, we must consult the parson," chuckled David Pennant.

"The Father of the fatherless will provide for her, and He has put her into our care at present," was the old farmer's decisive opinion; and Miss Manent remained at Brynhafod.

She was afterwards pronounced to be God-sent; for she made herself so useful to Mrs. Pennant, not only in amusing her by her bad Welsh, but in doing much needlework for her, that Michael's illness became tempered to that worthy woman.

Although Caradoc made as light of this illness as he could, he was not easy in his mind. Consumption had been their family disease, as, indeed, it was the terrible scourge of the mountainous district in which they lived. The humidity of the climate engendered it, and there was little chance of Michael's getting out of the climate. Moreover, Carad feared that there was some trouble on his brother's mind. Watching him narrowly, he remarked that there was restraint in his manner with Daisy, and he could but think it was on Lord Penruddock's account. Daisy waited on him assiduously. "But was she in love with him?" asked Carad. "In love!" The words came to him unsought. What a treasure would be Daisy's love to him who won it in its entirety! and now, if ever, was Michael's time. So thought Carad, whose almost womanly tenderness for his brother increased tenfold during his illness. Indeed, neither he nor Daisy seemed to have appreciated Michael before. They had all loved him, but scarcely understood him.

He had a character of remarkable depth, which no friend had as yet sounded; and as he lay or sat about during the first weeks of his indisposition, traits were continually appearing that no one had perceived in his previous every-day life. He, Caradoc, and Daisy were continually together, joined, of course, by the other members of the family at intervals; and this close intimacy seemed to bring them nearer than ever. Still, they were only groping in one another's minds.

The truth was, that Michael's delicate organisation had received a shock at the announcement of the earl's decision concerning the lease. His heart and interests were at Brynhafod; and since he had taken upon himself to seek to benefit the Monad people, and to identify himself with Daisy in the work, he had conceived the hope of being of service to his fellow-creatures, and labouring for his God. He had been aware of Lord Penruddock's admiration of Daisy, even before she was herself. Indeed, he was of such a thoughtful, discriminating spirit, that he often saw what others did not, and knew what they attempted to conceal from him. Although he had never breathed a word to Daisy that a brother might not say to a sister, he was as well aware as she was that they were intended by his parents for one another, and he had somehow accepted the happy fact without analysing his own feelings or sounding hers. They were both young, and their lives had flowed onward together like two sweet streams, side by side, and seemingly to be united at last. He had never paused to think that such streams sometimes stray far apart as they pursue their course, or to ask whether the fair and shining waves of Daisy's existence were to join the humbler and darker ones of his. It was now that he began to watch, and reason, and question; and this was why there was restraint in his manners with her he loved so dearly.

Daisy, on the other hand, grew ever more and more tender towards him, as if she felt she had in some sort estranged him, and were conscious of some other attraction that drew her innermost soul away from him. She read to him, talked to him, sang him his favourite hymns, supported him when he was able to go out, and showed him a love that seemed passing that of a sister.

"They shall marry, please God he gets well!" said David Pennant to Caradoc. "You think he will get well—eh, Carad?"

"I hope so, father; there are no dangerous symptoms as yet; but he must have rest and care."

"How is he to have them now we must be moving? There will be nothing but bother and

bustle until it is all over. I tell you what it is, Carad, matters are even worse than they seem. We have spent every penny as we got it on the land, which is now first-rate, and if we go to Coed Bach shall have to begin again upon poor neglected property, with nothing but our stock, for assuredly the earl will take the crop. The prospect is gloomy enough."

"Sunshine will come, father."

As Carad spoke these hopeful words, the long-expected Ap Adam entered the hall. It was his wont to return as if he had not been away, and as he expressed his dislike to "good-byes" and "how d'ye do's," his friends generally received him according to his fancy. On the present occasion, however, he broke in upon them like a whirlwind. He had heard of what had befallen at the farm.

"Sunshine!" he exclaimed, catching Caradoc's word. "How is Michael?" If anything happened to the lad I lay it at the earl's door. The miserly cur!"

"Hush, master!" exclaimed David Pennant. Thou art more put out than I was. I longed to call him hard names, but had the grace given to abstain. We had a friend of yours here, the Honourable General Sir George Walpole.

"I have no friends honourables or generals. I am come to take Michael's place in the farm, and am off to work as soon as I have seen him and Daisy and the mistress."

"They are in the parlour," said Caradoc.

"Come with me then," said Ap Adam, meaningly, and he and Caradoc left the room together. Not at once for the parlour, however. Ap Adam led the way to the school-room where they had a long talk over all that had occurred during his absence. He would acknowledge no acquaintanceship with Sir George Walpole; and when told that that gentleman had offered aid in return for kindness shown him, he walked up and down the room excitedly, exclaiming at his impertinence, and changing the subject.

"I find that your beacon is creating a sensation among sailors and fishermen," he said. "I heard one old sea-captain declare that whether it was the work of angel or demon, it was a good one, for there was not a tithe of the wrecks there used to be. Who has been tending it lately?"

"I have," replied Caradoc; "but the nights have been light, and the weather calm, so I have only kindled it now and then. I suspect that the earl has been watching, for I have seen him on horseback near the place. We have met more than once, and he questioned me about it."

"I will undertake it for the next few weeks," said Ap Adam. "He won't question me; but, to be sure, he is absent. However, we must put him off your scent; and, if he is set upon mine—why, 'the wise man of the mountain' will circumvent him."

"At any rate we can manage it between us," remarked Carad. "Daisy must not be implicated in any way."

"Certainly not; for the wreckers all down the coast mutter curses not 'loud but deep' on 'the witch of the Esgair.'"

CHAPTER XXVIII.—BROTHER AND SISTER.

Carad went into the house, and found his mother and Miss Manent engaged in preparations for supper. The latter had grown quite sprightly, and was in treaty for a situation to the wife of a clergyman living at a distance, whose husband was a friend of Mr. Tudor's. That gentleman came to the farm when he could, but had not ventured to renew the subject nearest their hearts. What between his parish, the earl, and his mother, he was much oppressed by the burden of responsibility. However, he visited Monad, accompanied by Daisy and Miss Manent, and tried to take up Michael's role. But the people were strangely suspicious of a clergyman, while eager for Michael, whom they trusted.

Miss Manent had seen Michael on horseback, with Daisy walking by his side, amongst the hay-makers on the hill, so Caradoc made for this spot. Here he found Ap Adam hard at work in his shirt-sleeves, who said the absentees had gone further. Caradoc ventured to hint to the master that it might be well not to urge his father to maintain the farm, but Ap Adam disagreed with him. He said that the earl had forgotten to give notice to

quit, and had probably imagined that the expiration of the lease was notice enough; but "possession was nine points of the law," and the earl would find it difficult to turn them out without legal notice.

"I will have a tussle, if no one else will," said Ap Adam, as Caradoc went on his way.

Skirting the hill, Carad walked quietly towards another hay-field, whence his grandfather and father had come. He thought of many things, for, indeed, his life's plot was hourly thickening. His profession, the expected change of abode, his father's altered temper, his mother's uncertain nerves, his grandfather's advanced age, their means of existence expended on the earl's property, the future management of the beacon, Michael's illness, and, above all, Daisy's decision, weighed down his usually buoyant spirit. He had seen little of Daisy of late. While Michael was confined to the house they had been thrown together, but since that time he had avoided her, he scarcely knew why. Her manner towards him had grown strangely distant and cold, and he could only account for it by the fact of his involuntary interference in the affair of Lord Penruddock.

While he was meditating over these things during his slow walk, Michael and Daisy were seated on a haycock in the hill-field which he was approaching. Michael had ridden thus far, and, feeling fatigued, had dismounted a while. The horse was feeding near them, and the haymakers whom they had come to superintend, were loading a wagon at a distance. They had been engaged in a conversation so earnest that they had forgotten their surroundings, time, and fatigue.

"Daisy," Michael had begun, "I can never thank you enough for all your care of me. I am nearly well, and I owe my recovery, with God's blessing on the means, to Carad and you."

"Oh, Michael," she answered, "not to me, but to Carad. I but carried out his wise orders."

"Truly he is wise, good, and handsome," said Michael, fixing his thoughtful eyes on Daisy, who coloured beneath his gaze. "Why are you shy with him, and, indeed, of late, with me? Is it because our hearts are too much bound up in you Daisy?"

She cast down her eyes, and was silent.

"We have been brothers and sister so long," he continued, "that it seems difficult to feel that we are not so. But, dear Daisy, will you try to return to the old feelings, and look on me really as—as your brother—only your brother? While I was ill I thought and saw much more that I had not thought of or seen before. I am changed in many ways, and have tried to be resigned to leaving this dear place; but I cannot bear your estrangement."

"I am not conscious of estrangement, Michael."

"I know that dear; but I suppose illness makes us sensitive. You have been a devoted nurse to me, but I fear the old love has vanished. Is it my fault?"

"Oh, Michael, dear Michael, what do you mean?"

She laid her hand on his, and looked into his face.

"Now thou art our own Daisy once more," he said, taking her hand in both his. "Listen to me sister. You know how well we love you, and how your happiness is dear to us all as our own—dearer, indeed!"

"Do I not belong to you, Michael? Am I not one of you? Pray do not make me fancy that I am alone."

"You cannot be alone, dear, while we live. But I wish you to feel free, not bound in any way to us because you have been so graciously given to us. It is difficult for me to explain myself, still you must understand me. I think our parents have been making a mistake all these years."

Michael's voice faltered, his pale face flushed, and his hands grasped Daisy's convulsively. She trembled all over, and turned pale and cold. What did he mean? He continued low and calm.

"I have schooled myself to love you only as a sister, darling. Brother and sister! Is there a sweeter tie? I can bear to think that your innermost heart is given to another if only you will restore to me your sisterly love. Now I have said this I shall have perfect peace."

Daisy could neither speak nor look at him, but her breast heaved, and her tears rose. How often had she longed for some such explanation as this