

## THE TRIUMPHS OF DUTY.

CHAPTER XI.  
PAST AND FUTURE.

"How delicious is this calm," said the marquis to Lord Stanmore, as they stood together in the centre drawing-room; "one is the more aware of it from the distant hum of enjoyment of the crowd on the terrace, and in the scarcely perceptible movement of the more refined company in the rooms above."

As the marquis spoke, his eye fell on one of the chief objects in that centre room, a beautiful harp that stood beside a pianoforte, of the most approved modern construction. This tribute to the expected presence of Lady Violet did not pass unnoticed by the gratified father.

"I do not remember that a harp entered into our programme, made at Rockley, for the fete made at Woolton Court," observed he, smiling.

"But an appendix was added during my ride home," returned Lord Stanmore in the same strain, "and perhaps the Lady Violet will ascertain how the instrument has borne the journey on springs from London."

"Shall it be to-night or to-morrow, Violet?" asked the father.

"To-morrow, papa. Oh, papa, is it not a pity to disregard all that Lord Stanmore is doing to honor his grandfather? We never thought of an illuminated vessel on the lake. And those beautiful fireworks? Lord Charleton is standing at a window in the next room with the duchess; so is aunt Clara. Do come, papa, to this window here with me."

"Where did you learn the secret of that magic ship?" inquired the marquis, as they moved towards a vacant window.

"Where I learned many things, nautical and scientific," replied Lord Stanmore, "on the Ligurian coast. It was not, however, at Marseilles, but before the little port of Nice that I first saw and admired an illuminated vessel."

Seeing that Lady Violet was fully engaging her father's attention to the really attractive scene, which a dark but fine night showed off to great advantage, Lord Stanmore now passed to the first drawing-room, at one window of which were stationed his grandfather and his old friend the Duchess of Peterworth, and at the other Lady Clara Chamberlayne. In the vacant part of the last mentioned window our hero planted himself in silence. Some instants passed before he said:

"You are thinking of one far away?"

"I am," was the reply.

"Do you wish him to be here?"

"Not at this moment, although he would, as he always does, enjoy our description of what is beautiful; but I should like him to have heard the speeches at the banquet."

"Ah, true; but you shall soon relate them to him; and they will gain in eloquence and interest by passing those lips."

"They will be transmitted to him by my pen."

"Your pen! and by whom read?"

"By his reader, a young man who is devoted to him, and who reads remarkably well. It will not be his fault if these speeches fail in interest."

"And so all your correspondence has to pass under the eyes of this third person; but of course it could not be otherwise. When do you expect to meet?"

"Immediately on leaving the lakes, which is, I believe, fixed to be to-morrow week. We then go direct into Cheshire. My brother will be obliged to make short visits to London, during the interval before Christmas; but at Christmas we shall, please God, be a large and happy party at Marsden."

"Shall you still be Lady Clara Chamberlayne?"

"I believe not."

A long pause ensued. At length Lord Stanmore said, with emotion:

"You proposed once, in this house, to tell me the history—your history—in return for one I related to you on the lake. I could not then bear it. I will endeavor now to think only of your happiness. I have never inquired the name even of the man who, notwithstanding his physical deprivation, I consider to be the happiest man on earth."

"Sir Henry Moreland is a happy man," said Lady Clara; "not because he is soon to marry the woman of his choice, but because he has, in many difficult circumstances, done his duty both to God and man: because he receives his calamity as the one privation, amid many blessings, decreed for him by an almighty, all-wise, and loving Father; and because he knows, in true faith, that a sure reward is in store for him; he knows that 'eye hath not seen what God has prepared for those who love him;—far beyond,'" continued Lady Clara, "far beyond even the beautiful scene of to-night, in which there is so much of the mysterious blended with the beautiful that I have been greatly delighted. And now, my cousin Arthur," added she, turning more fully towards him, "let me assure you; that although at the moment you asked me the question I was really thinking of Sir Henry, yet, before and since, I have thought of those around me, and more especially of yourself. You do not know—you do not believe in the affectionate interest I take in you."

"Oh, yes, as your future nephew. As the good young man who is to do all you tell him to do; whose life is to be portioned out by a set of duties. At one-and-twenty I cannot feel much disposed to a life full of mere dull duties."

"The duties of life are life," observed Lady Clara, "for what is life without them. You are describing duty as a dull, monotonous thing, but your practice disproves your theory; for your duty was to welcome back your grandfather, and instead of feeling and making him and others perceive it to be a dull affair, can anything have been more joyous?"

At this moment the closing beauty of the fireworks arose in the form of the nosegay, well known, but always beautiful; and when at length the spectators turned from the windows, the conversation became more general. The venerable earl looked at each of the group with silent interest, especially on the young and lovely Violet. It was apparent that he had approved and assented to the betrothal between the youthful pair.

One anxiety had troubled the Marquis of Seabam, which he had wished to impart to Lord Stanmore before the earl should retire to his apartments; yet, as is often the case, it had escaped his memory while they were alone together. He shuddered at the idea of the effect that might be produced on the mind of the long exiled lord of the mansion should the mysterious music recommence its wail. It was true that both he and Lord Stanmore had become convinced that the contrivers of the plot were friendly to the old family; yet the uneasiness continued, and he resolved to make the opportunity that he had permitted to escape him. Hitherto the only servants who had entered the drawing-rooms had been the butler, Grainger, and the earl's own valet; but now, just when the marquis had crossed the room to draw away Arthur to a private conference, two footmen entered in the heavy and gorgeous livery of the Wooltons, without hearing refreshments, or any apparent motive for their presence. They advanced together with great formality and respect, till they found themselves directly

opposite Lord Charleton, who was seated in an arm-chair near a sofa, on which sat the Duchess of Peterworth and the two other ladies.

"Earl of Charleton," commenced a voice that Arthur recognized to be that of the old gardener, "I first wore this here livery fifty-two years ago, being then eighteen years of age, and I have kept it in a box under my bed all these years, and it has served as a pattern for all the rest to be in order on this state occasion. I could not have got into it all the years of my heavy manhood; but now, at seventy, I've shrunk back, and it fits me very well; don't it ma'am?"

"Incomparably well," cried the duchess, quite delighted.

"Now here is my friend, Tom Jenkins, that's only two years younger than me and the earl; he has been as faithful as me to the old times, and we remember all the afflictions of the young earl, as you was then, my lord, and we hopes you remembers us, the gardener's son, Jim, and the carpenter's son, Tom, that used to be proud to row you on the lake, and take letters for you to that pretty, grand lady, who lived at Eagle's Crag; and when you had to go off with the old lawyer, Oldham, we took your horses to meet you at the turn of the road up to Eagle's Crag, and there you was, not seeing us, nor minding the danger of stopping there; and there was the pretty young lady not heeding us neither, in her grief; and says she, 'You're my first love,' says she, 'and if they part us for ever, I'll never forget you, Charleton,' says she; and then we two makes a noise, and off she flies, and we hurries you off to the chaise waiting with Mr. Oldham, the old'un. And all these long years we two helped with our contrivances that no other family should stop for long here at Woolton Court. We'll tell you all about that, my lord, another day. What we come for, now, is to beg while we live we may come and go freely from our little cottages to the servants' hall, here, and on great days may do, as we used to do and have done to-day, wear the state livery of the Earls of Charleton, and wait on company."

"That you shall freely do, my old and faithful friends," said the earl. "I remember you both perfectly, and the incidents to which you allude as perfectly. The only part I do not comprehend is that you have assisted, it appears, to keep the lawful purchasers of this place from the enjoyment of their property."

"Come, my good man," said the marquis, advancing, "give us your word that the magic music shall cease from this time."

"As far as I have the power it shall," replied James Turner; "for it has answered its purpose."

"And you, too, Mr. Carpenter," continued Lord Seabam, "give your promise, also, that the noble earl may enjoy a good eight hours sleep, after the excitement and fatigue of this propitious day."

"I makes the same promise as my friend," replied Jenkins, "that, as far as lies in my power, the house will be still to-night."

As soon as the two old men had quitted the room the duchess arose from the sofa, and said—

"My dear friends, on the last occasion of our meeting in a happy group, I fulfilled my promise to wind up by a final scene that should interest you all. That scene was a betrothal. On this momentous day, I propose winding up by a public confession, that shall strengthen that betrothal. I am, or rather was, that imprudent girl who loved not wisely, but too well; who made promises she was forced to break. At sixty five I may own my first preference for a man seventy. So, my dears, you see him in the hero of this fete. The Earl of Charleton is he; and if I have been bound by other ties to forget him during the greater

part of life, I am now in my age, at full liberty to love him as much as I please, and his son's son, till time shall be no more."

As the duchess paused, Lord Charleton raised her hand to his lips, saying—

"Ever the same!"

CHAPTER XII.  
THE BALL.

At how late an hour the several breakfasts were served to the guests, on the second day of the festival at Woolton Court, has not transpired. The chief point of interest was to be the ball; and although there was riding and driving, and walking and boating, not to mention luncheon and dinner, all was made subservient to the approaching night.

"I expected that Stanmore would open the ball with Violet," said Lord Seabam to the duchess; "but after the disclosures of last night, perhaps, as you were once the finest dancer of your day, and Lord Charleton has declared you to be 'ever the same,' he will solicit your hand for a polonaise."

"Lord Charleton has never done a ridiculous thing yet," replied the duchess; "and God forbid that I should tempt him to forget the dignity of his age and mine."

"But I only suggested a polonaise," continued the marquis. "Claude will tell you of the German courts, where grand dukes and even emperors of the age of the noble earl lead forth the lady whom they wish to honor. The polonaise is only walking gracefully to a measured strain."

"They had better do so by deputy," returned the duchess; "and my substitute is your own graceful Violet, the future lady of Woolton Court. As for Lord Charleton, where can he find a better substitute than his grandson, a truly fine youth, whom I loved from the first time I saw him."

This little interchange of opinion between two friends who well understood each other, was in the twilight, checkered by firelight, of that late autumn day, while Lady Violet was tuning the harp in the adjoining room, and Lord Stanmore was, in a subdued voice, relating and hearing much of deep interest in a conversation with his grandfather.

The subject that had the most occupied the attention and touched the feelings of Lord Charleton had been the history related to him that morning, by old Turner, of the last years of his uncle, the Honorable Tristram Woolton, who, having failed, or been averse to escape with his brother, Gilbert, to America, had remained during eight years, a voluntary prisoner in the mansion of his birth, sometimes enjoying the range of all the top floors of the house, and walking at night in the grounds; sometimes, and especially latterly, confined to the room and corridor, which the vigilance of his humble friends had secured from intrusion. When years had past, and the gradual payment of debts had rendered this seclusion unnecessary, Tristram had become so habituated to the life that he could bear no other. Naturally shy and timid, with strong family affections, he dwelt morbidly on the past; and, notwithstanding the devoted care and attention of his two family retainers, would have finally sunk some years sooner but for the soothing influence of music. For this beautiful art he possessed a genius that, in an humbler class of life, or connected with a greater energy of character, might have redeemed his fortunes. He played most exquisitely on the flute, and before the property had found a purchaser, solaced his solitude by strains that, like the perfume of the desert rose, fell on no human sympathies. As the alteration in his health became apparent to his faithful friends, they consulted the medical advisers, who agreed in forbidding the flute. Tristram could, with his genius, have mastered the violin, but he had always preferred wind instruments, and now