

THE TRUE WITNESS FOR 1881

The True Witness has within the past year made a grand stride in circulation, and if the testimony of a large number of our subscribers is any proof, it may also claim a general improvement...

It was formerly two dollars per annum in the country and two dollars and a half in the city, but the present proprietors having taken charge of it in the hardest of times, and knowing that to many people a reduction of twenty or twenty-five per cent would mean something and would not only enable the old subscribers to retain it but new ones to enroll themselves under the reduction...

The True Witness is too cheap to offer premiums or "chromos" as an inducement to subscribers, even if they believed in their efficacy. It goes simply on its merits as a journal, and it is for the people to judge whether they are right or wrong.

On receipt of \$1.50, the subscriber will be entitled to receive the True Witness for one year. Any one sending us the names of 5 new subscribers, at one time, with the cash, (\$1.50 each) will receive one copy free and \$1.00 cash; or 10 new names, with the cash, one copy free and \$2.50.

Our readers will oblige by informing their friends of the above very liberal inducements to subscribe for the True Witness; also by sending the name of a reliable person who will act as agent in their locality for the publishers, and sample copies will be sent on application.

We want active intelligent agents throughout Canada and the Northern and Western States of the Union, who can, by serving our interests, serve their own as well and add materially to their income without interfering with their legitimate business.

The True Witness will be mailed to clergymen, school teachers and postmasters at \$1.00 per annum in advance.

Parties getting up clubs are not obliged to confine themselves to any particular locality, but can work up their quota from different towns or districts; nor is it necessary to send all the names at once. They will fulfil all the conditions by forwarding the names and amounts until the club is completed.

FOR COUGHS.—Mix one teaspoonful of Perry Davis' Pain Killer in three tablespoonfuls of syrup, and take two or three teaspoonfuls of the mixture every half hour, till relief is obtained.

DYNAMITE. WHAT THE IRISH IN LONDON THINK OF THE LATEST SENSATION.

LONDON, July 26.—The London correspondent of the New York Star cables: "The reported finding at Liverpool of a number of infernal machines filled with dynamite, on the steamer Malta, with which to blow the 'blasted' Englishmen to atoms, was a subject of conversation among the friends of Ireland in this city yesterday. The reported finding of some of O'Donovan Rossa's bills hidden in some of the barrels in which the machines were packed served to add additional excitement.

In order to ascertain the views of the Land League on the subject, the Star reporter interviewed Dr. W. B. Wallace, President of the Irish National Land League.

"I have no hesitancy in expressing my views," said that gentleman. "I do not know of any society on this side that has for its object such a mode of procedure. The men connected with Irish affairs are very clear-headed business men and do not believe in wasting their money or time in wild-goose schemes."

"Then, I infer that you disapprove of such a method of warfare?"

"If they take it into their heads to settle matters with England in a physical way, while they may not discard the use of dynamite, or any other powerful means of destruction, they do not believe in boxing up such things and packing them in ships for the purpose of having Custom House officers in England make the discovery of them, and by creating a sensation, throw dust in the eyes of the people of Europe. There is no use in denying that there are Irish organizations in this country with ramifications in Ireland that ultimately regard physical force as the only means whereby redress of Irish grievances can be obtained from England. It may be said that every Irishman possessing a spark of patriotism or an atom of sympathy with the people of his race, would hail an opportunity for successfully dealing with England in that way; but as I said before, these men want matters done in a business-like manner, and only when every other means of doing good should be exhausted. My impression is they regard these dynamite stories that we periodically hear of from England as either the purest fabrications of English officials for English purposes, or the mad exploits of wild and Quixotic Irishmen, who seem to think that they carry the Irish race in their pockets. In reference to the present case, if we wait long enough after this sensation, we will find the proper explanation come from the proper people."

JULY. During this month summer complaints commenced their ravages. To be forewarned is to be armed. Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry is the best known preventative cure for all forms of bowel complaints and sickness incident to the summer season.

THE MUSSULMAN REVOLT. Mr. Irving's lease of the Lyceum, in London, will soon expire, and it is understood that it is his intention to buy up the freehold of the theatre for a sum little short of £120,000. This sum Mr. Irving will be able to pay out of the net earnings of his management.

rest of the instruction printed in the Paris papers, for that reason exceedingly meagre and one-sided. It is positively known, however, that the French troops who captured Sfax are unable to advance further inland. A vast stretch of country extending from Sfax inland to the boundary of the Algerian province of Constantine, and northward to Medjerda Valley, is in the hands, or at the mercy of the rebels. Khairou, the holy city, inland from Sousse, on the Gulf of Hammamet, is the rendezvous of the Arab tribes, and there are not less than 30,000 men well armed irregular cavalry within call by the Mussulman authorities. The Arabs openly declare that the Bey betrayed the regency, and it is for them to fight for the Mussulman supremacy. The agitation in Tunis is increased by the arrival of the Tripolitan tribes, whose head men assert that France decreed the conquest of all the Barbary States and Egypt, and the Sultan called upon the followers of the Prophet to battle against the threatened spoliation. At this season of the year—and the summer is unusually hot—it will be quite impossible for any European force, no matter how strong, to attempt to penetrate the interior. The French can do nothing, therefore, but hold Sfax until reinforcements arrive. In the autumn France must either subjugate the marauding tribes or evacuate the country. The generals in Tunis have asked Governor Grevy for Algerian troops but the state of affairs there is so critical that the men cannot be spared.

ARE YOU GOING TO TRAVEL? Don't forget a supply of that Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry. It is a superior remedy for sea sickness, and positive cure for all bowel complaints induced by bad water, change of diet, or of climate. Whether at home or abroad, it should be kept at hand in case of emergency.

EVICTIONS IN IRELAND. There has been issued a return, compiled from statistics presented to the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary, of cases of eviction which have come to the knowledge of the constabulary in the quarter ended the 30th day of June, 1881, showing the number of families evicted in each county in Ireland during the quarter, the number readmitted as tenants, and the number admitted as caretakers. From this statement it appears that in Ulster 400 families, numbering 2,028 persons, were evicted; 24 families, consisting of 121 persons, were readmitted as tenants; and 275 families, numbering 1,373 persons, were readmitted as caretakers. In Leinster 171 families, numbering 750 persons, were evicted; 12 families, consisting of 50 persons, were readmitted as tenants; and 62 families, numbering 298 persons, were admitted as caretakers. In Connaught 268 families, consisting of 1,570 persons, were evicted; three families, numbering 14 persons, were readmitted as tenants; and 118 families, numbering 718 persons, were readmitted as caretakers. In Munster, 186 families, consisting of 914 persons, were evicted; 11 families, numbering 71 persons, were readmitted as tenants; and 89 families, consisting of 507 persons, were readmitted as caretakers. The totals for the quarter are:—Evicted, 1,065 families, consisting of 5,262 persons; readmitted as tenants, 50 families, consisting of 256 persons; readmitted as caretakers, 542 families, numbering 2,895 persons. This leaves 473 families, numbering 2,112 persons, who were not reinstated.

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CHARLIE STUART AND HIS SISTER

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING. PART II. CHAPTER XII.—CONTINUED.

"If ever you are mistress," he repeated. "Edith, my dearest, when will you be?"

"Who knows? Never, perhaps."

"Well, who can tell? I may die—you may die—something may happen. I can't realize that I ever will be. I can't think of myself as Lady Catherton."

"Edith, I command you! name the day."

"Now my dear Sir Victor—"

"Dear Victor, without the prefix; let all formally end between us. Why need we wait? You are your own mistress, I my own master; I am desperately in love—I want to be married. I will be married. There is nothing to wait for—I won't wait. Edith, shall it be this—the last of May—shall it be the first week of July?"

"No, sir; it shall not, nor the first week of August. We don't do things in this desperate sort of haste."

"But why do we delay? What is there to delay for? I shall have a brain fever if I am compelled to wait longer than August."

"Now, now, Sir Victor Catherton, August is not to be thought of. I shall not marry you for ages to come—until Lady Helena Powys gives her full and free consent."

"Lady Helena shall give her full and free consent in a week; she could not refuse me anything longer if she tried. Little tyrant! you cared for me one straw you would not object like this."

"Yes, I would. Nobody marries in this impetuous fashion. I won't hear of August. Besides, there is my engagement with Mrs. Stuart. I have promised to talk French and German all over the Continent for them this summer."

"I will furnish Mrs. Stuart a substitute with every European language at her finger-ends. Seriously, Edith, you must consider that contract an end—my promised wife can be no one's paid companion. Pardon me, but you must see this, Edith."

"I see it," she answered gravely. She had her own reasons for not wishing to accompany the Stuart family now. And, after all, why should she insist on postponing the marriage?"

"You are relenting—I see it in your face," he exclaimed impudently. "Edith! Edith! shall it be the first week in September?"

She smiled and looked at him as she had done early this eventful morning, when she had said "Yes!"

"As brain fever threatens if I refuse, I suppose you must have your way. But talk of the willfulness of women after this!"

"Then it shall be the first of September—St. Partridge Day."

CHAPTER XIII. HOW CHARLIE TOOK IT.

Meantime the long sunny hours, that passed so pleasantly for these plighted lovers, lagged drearily enough for one young lady at Powys-place—Miss Beatrix Stuart.

She had sent for her mother and told her the news. Placid Aunt Chatty lifted her meek eyebrows and opened her dim eyes as she listened.

Sir Victor Catherton going to marry our Edith! Dear me! I am sure I thought it was you, Trixy, all the time. And Edith will be a great lady, after all. Dear me!"

That was all Mrs. Stuart had to say about it. She went back to her tatting with a serene quietude that exasperated her only daughter beyond bounds.

"I wonder if an earthquake would upset ma's equality!" thought Trixy savagely. "Well, wait until Charlie comes! We'll see how he takes it!"

Misery loves company. If she was to suffer the pains of disappointment herself, it would be some comfort to see Charlie suffer also. And Trixy was not a bad-hearted girl either, mind—it was simply human nature.

Charlie and the captain had gone off exploring the wonders and antiquities of Chester. Edith and Sir Victor were nobody knew where. Lady Helena had a visitor, and was shut up with her. Trixy had nothing but her novel, and what were all the novels, in Mudie's library to her this bitter day?

The long red spears of the sunset were piercing the green depths of fern and brake, when the young man rode home. A servant waylaid Mr. Stuart and delivered his sister's message. She wanted to see him at once on an important business.

"Important business!" murmured Charlie, opening his eyes.

But he went promptly without waiting to change his dress.

"How do, Trixy?" he said, sauntering in. "Captain Hammond's compliments, and how is the ankle?"

He threw himself—no, Charlie never threw himself—he slowly extended his five feet eleven of manhood on the sofa, and awaited his sister's reply.

staring sweetly at him. "It was too much for me, Trixy."

"O' Charlie, she burst forth, "you are such a fool!"

"Mr. Stuart rose to his feet."

"Overpowered by the involuntary homage of this assembly, I rise to—"

"You're an idiot, there!" went on Trixy: "a laxy, stupid idiot! You're in love with Edith yourself, and you could have had her if you wished, for she likes you better than Sir Victor, and then Sir Victor might have proposed to me. But no—you must go dawdling about, prowling and prancing, and let her slip through your fingers!"

"Prowling and prancing! Good Heaven! Trixy! I ask you soberly, as man to man, did you ever see me prowl or prance in the whole course of my life?"

"Bah-h-h!" said Trixy, with a perfect shake of scorn in the interjection. "I've no patience with you! Get out of my room—do!"

Mr. Stuart, senior was the only one who did not take it quietly. His bile rose at once.

"Edith! Edith Darrell! Fred Darrell's penniless daughter! Beatrix Stuart have you let this young baronet slip through your fingers in this ridiculous way, after all?"

"I never let him slip—he never was in my fingers," retorted Trixy, nearly crying. "It's my usual luck. I don't want him—his a stupid noodle—that's what he is! Edith's betrothal with me, and when I was sick on that horrid ship, she had everything her own way. I did a little too hard to be scolded in this way, with my poor sprained ankle and everything!"

"Well, there, there, child!" exclaimed Mr. Stuart testily, for he was fond of Trixy; "don't cry. There's as good fish in the sea as ever were caught. As to being better-looking than you, I don't believe a word of it. I never liked your dark complexioned women myself. You're the biggest and the best-looking young woman of the two, by George!" (Mr. Stuart's grammar was hardly up to the standard.) "There's this young fellow, Hammond—his father's a lord—rich, too, if his grandfather did make it cotton-spinning. Now, why can't you set your cap for him! When the old rooster dies, this young chap will be a lord himself, and a lord's better than a baronet, by George! Come downstairs, Trixy, and put on your stunningest gown, and see if you can't hook the military swell."

Following these pious parental counsels, Miss Trixy did assume her "stunningest" gown, and with the aid of her brother and a crutch, managed to reach the dining-room. There Lady Helena, pale and preoccupied, joined them. No allusion was made at dinner to the topic—a visible restraint was upon all.

"Old lady don't half like it," chuckled Stuart pere. "And no wonder, by George! If it was Charley I shouldn't like it myself. I must speak to Charlie after dinner—there's this Lady Gwendoline. He's got to marry the upper-crust too. Lady Gwendoline Stuart wouldn't sound bad, by George! I'm glad there's to be a baronet in the family, even if it isn't Trixy. A cousin's daughter's better than nothing."

So in the first opportunity after dinner Mr. Stuart presented his congratulations as blandly as possible to the future Lady Catherton. In the next opportunity he attacked his son on the subject of Lady Gwendoline.

"Take example by your cousin Edith, my boy," said Mr. Stuart in a large voice, standing with his hands under his coat-tails. "That girl's a credit to her father and family, by George! Look at the match she's making, without a rap to bless herself with. Now you've a fortune in prospective, young man, that would buy and sell half a dozen of these beggarly lordlings. You've youth and good looks, and good manners, or if you haven't you ought to have, and I say you shall marry a title by George! There's this Lady Gwendoline—she ain't rich, but she's an earl's daughter. Now, what's to hinder your going for her?"

Charlie looked up meekly from the depths of his chair.

"As you like it governor. In all matters matrimonial I simply consider myself as non-existent. Only this I will promise—I am ready to marry her, but not to court her. As you truthfully observe, I have youth, good looks, and good manners, but in all things appertaining to love and courtship I'm as ignorant as the child unborn. Matrimony is an ill no man can hope to escape—love-making is. As a prince in my own right, I claim that the wooing shall be done by deputy. There is her most gracious Majesty, she popped the question to the late lamented Prince Consort. Could Lady Gwendoline have any more illustrious example to follow? You settle the preliminaries. Let Lady Gwendoline do the proposing, and you may lead me the day, you please as a lamb to the slaughter."

With this reply, Mr. Stuart, senior, was forced for the present to be content and go on his way. Trixy, overhearing, looked up with interest.

"Would you marry her, Charlie?"

"Certainly, Beatrix; haven't I said so? If a man must marry, as well as Lady Gwendoline as any one else. As Dunderbary says, 'One woman is as good as another, and a good deal better.'"

"But you've never seen her."

"What difference does that make? I suppose the Prince of Wales never saw Alexandra until the matter was cut and dry. You see I love to quote lofty examples. Hammond had described her, and I should say from his description she is what Barry Cornwall would call a 'golden girl' in every thing except torture. Hammond speaks of her as though she was made of precious metals and gems. She has golden hair, 'alabaster bow, sapphire eyes, pearly teeth, and ruby nose. Or, stay—perhaps it was ruby lips and chiselled nose. Chiselled, sounds as though her olfactory organ was of marble or granite, doesn't it? And she's three-and-thirty years of age. I found that out for myself from the Peagee. It's rather an advantage, however, than otherwise, for a man's wife to be ten or twelve years the elder. You see she combines all the qualities of wife and mother in one."

And then Charlie sauntered away to the whit-table to join his father and mother and Lady Helena. He had as yet found no opportunity of speaking to Edith, and at dinner she had studiously avoided meeting his eye. Captain Hammond took his post beside Miss Stuart's invalid couch, and made himself agreeable and entertaining to that young lady.

Trixy's eyes gradually brightened, and her colour came back; she held him a willing captive by her side all the evening through. Papa Stuart from his place at the whit-table bestowed paternal approval down the long room.

A silken-hung arch separated this drawing-room from another smaller, where the piano stood. Except for two waxlights on the piano this second drawing-room was in twilight. Edith sat at the piano, Sir Victor stood beside her. Her fingers wandered over the keys in soft, dreamy melodies; they talked in whispers when they talked at all. The

spell of a silence, more delicious than words, held the young baronet; he was hearing the speechless phase of the grand passion. That there is a speechless phase, I have been credibly assured again and again, by parties who have had experience in the matter, and certainly ought to know.

At half-past ten Lady Helena, pleading headache, rose from the whit-table, said good-night, and went away to her room. She looked ill and worn, and strangely anxious. Her nephew, awaking from his trance of bliss, and seeing her pale face, gave her his arm and assisted her up the long staircase to her room.

Mrs. Stuart, yawning very much, followed her example. Mr. Stuart went out through the open French window to smoke a last cigar. Captain Hammond and Trixy were fathoms deep in their conversation. Miss Darrell, in the inner room, stood alone, her eyes fixed thoughtfully on the wall before her. The twinkle of the tapers lighted up the diamond on her hand, glowing like a miniature sun.

"You have been so completely monopolized all the evening, Dithy," said a familiar voice beside her, "that there has been no such thing as speaking a word to you. Better late than never, though, I hope."

She lifted her eyes to Charlie's face, Charlie looking as he ever looked to her; "a man of men," handsome and gallant, as though he were indeed the prince they called him. He took in his hand hanging loosely by her side, the hand that wore the ring.

"What a pretty hand you have, Edith, and how well diamonds become it. I think you were born to wear diamonds, my handsome cousin, and walk in silk attire. A magnificent, truly—a heirloom, no doubt in the Catherton family. My dear cousin, Trixy has been telling me the news. Is it necessary to say I congratulate you with all my heart?"

His face, his voice, his smile held no emotion whatever, save that of cousinly regard. His bright gray eyes looked at her with brotherly frankness, nothing more.

"The colour that came so seldom, and made her lovely, rose deep to Edith's cheeks—This time the flush of anger. Her dark eyes gleamed scornfully; she drew her hand suddenly and contemptuously away.

"It is not necessary at all, Cousin Charlie. Pray don't trouble yourself—I know how you hate trouble—to run fine phrases. I don't want congratulations; I am too happy to need them."

"Yet being the correct thing to do, and knowing what a stickler you are for les convenances, Edith, you will still permit me humbly to offer them. It is a most suitable match; I congratulate Sir Victor on his excellent taste and judgment. He is the best fellow alive, and you—I will say it, though you are my cousin—will be a bride even a baronet may be proud of. I wish you both, all the happiness so suitable a match deserves."

Was this sarcasm—was it real? She could not tell, well as she understood him. His placid face, his serene eyes were as cloudless as a summer sky. Yes, he meant it, and only the other day he had told her he loved her. She could have laughed aloud—Charlie Stuart's love!

On the instant Sir Victor returned. In his secret heart the baronet was mortally jealous of Charlie. The love that Edith could not give him, he felt instinctively, had long ago been given to her handsome cousin. There was latent jealousy in his face now, as he drew near.

"Am I premature, Sir Victor, in offering my congratulations?" Charlie said, with pleasant cordiality; "if so, the fact of Edith's being my cousin, almost my sister, must excuse it. You are a fortunate man, baronet. It would be superfluous to wish you joy—you have an overplus of that article already."

Sir Victor's brow cleared. Charlie's frankness, Charlie's perfect good-humor staggered him. Had he then been mistaken after all? He stretched forth his hand and grasped that of Edith's cousin.

She turned suddenly and walked away, a passion of anger within her, flashing as she went a look of hatred—yes, absolute hatred—upon Charlie. She had brought it upon herself, she had deserved it all, but how dared he mock her with his smiles, his good wishes, when he knew, that her whole heart was in his keeping?

"It shall not be in his keeping long," she said savagely, between her set teeth. "Integrate! More unstable than water! And I was fool enough to cry for him and myself that night at Killarney."

It was half past eleven when she went up to her room. She had studiously avoided Charlie all the remainder of the evening. She had demoted herself to her affianced with a smiling devotion that had nearly turned his brain. But the smiles and the brightness all faded away as she said good night. She tottered wearily up the stairs, pale, tired, spiritless, half her youth and beauty gone. Farther down the passage she could hear Charlie's mellow voice trolling carelessly a song:

"Did you ever have a cousin, Tom? And could that cousin sing? Sisters we have by the dozen Tom, But a cousin's a different thing."

Everyone went to bed, and to sleep perhaps, but Sir Victor Catherton. He was too happy to sleep. He lit his cigar and paced to and fro in the soft darkness, thinking of the great bliss this day had brought him, thinking over her every word and smile, thinking that the first of September would give him his darling forever. He walked beneath her window of course. She caught a glimpse of him, and with intolerant impatience extinguished her lights and shrouded herself and her wicked rebellion in darkness. His eyes strayed from hers to his aunt's farther along the same side. Yes, in her room lights still burned. Lady Helena usually kept early hours, as befitted her years and infirmities. What did she mean by "burning the midnight oil" to-night. Was that black lady from London with her still? and in what way was she mixed up with his aunt? What would they tell him to-morrow? What secret did his aunt hold? They could tell him nothing that could in the slightest influence his marriage with Edith, that he knew; but still he wondered a little what it all could be. At one the lights were still burning. He was surprised, but he would wait no longer. He waved his hand towards Miss Darrell's room, this very fargone young man. "Good-night, my love, my own," he murmured. By-ronically, and went to bed to sleep and dream of her. And no warning voice came in those dreams to tell Sir Victor Catherton it was the last perfectly happy night he would ever know.

CHAPTER XIV. TO-MORROW.

To-morrow came, gray, and overcast. The fine weather which had lasted almost since their leaving New York showed signs of breaking up. Miss Stuart's ankle was so much better that she was able to limp down stairs at eleven a.m., to breakfast, and resume her flirtation with Captain Hammond where it had broken off last night. Miss Darrell

had a headache and did not appear. And the absence of his idol and day star, Sir Victor collapsed and ate his morning meal in silence and sadness.

Breakfast over, he walked to one of the windows, looking out at the rain, which was beginning to drift against the glass, and wondering how long he was to be kept from the long hours without Edith. He might as well play billiards with the other fellows, but no, he was too restless even for that. What was he to do to kill time? It was relief when a servant came with a message from his aunt.

"My lady's compliments, Sir Victor, and will you please step upstairs at once."

"Now for the grand secret," he thought, "the skeleton in the family closet—the discovery of the mysterious woman in black."

The woman in black was nowhere visible when he entered his aunt's apartments. Lady Helena sat alone, her face pale, her eyes heavy and red as though with weeping, but all the anger, all the excitement of yesterday-gone.

"My dear aunt," the young man said, really concerned, "I am sorry to see you looking ill. And—surely you have not been crying?"

"Sit down," his aunt replied. "Yes, I have been crying. I have had good reason to cry for many years past. I have sent for you, Victor, to tell you all at least all it is advisable to tell you at present. And before I begin, let me apologize if anything I may have said yesterday on the subject of your engagement has wounded you."

"Dear Lady Helena, between you and me there can be no talk of pardon. It was your right to object if you saw cause, and no doubt it is natural that Edith's want of birth and fortune would weigh with you. But they do not weigh with me, and I know the happiness of my life to be very near your heart. I have only to say again that that happiness lies entirely with her—that without her I should be the most miserable fellow alive—to hear you withdraw every objection and take my darling to your arms as your daughter."

She sighed heavily as she listened.

"A wifful man must have his way. You are, as you told me yesterday, your own master, free to do as you please. To Miss Darrell personally I have no objection; she is beautiful, well-bred, and, I believe, a noble girl. Her poverty and obscure birth are drawbacks in my eyes, but since they are so in yours, I will allude to them no more. The objections I made yesterday to your marriage I would have made had your bride been a duke's daughter. I had hoped—it was an absurd hope—that you would think of marriage for many years to come, perhaps not at all."

"But, Aunt Helena—"

"Do I not say it was an absurd hope? The fact is Victor, I have been a coward—a young, wretched coward from first to last, about my eyes to the truth. I feared you might fall in love with this girl, but I kept the fear away from me. The time has come when the truth must be spoken, when I love for you can shield you no longer. Before you marry you must know all. Do you remember, in the heat of my excitement yesterday, telling you you had no right to hide the truth from me? In one sense I spoke the truth. Your father—"

she gasped and passed.

"My father!" he breathlessly repeated. "Your father is alive."

He sat and looked at her—stunned. What was she saying? His father alive, after all those years! and he not Sir Victor Catherton! He half rose—ashen pale.

"Lady Helena, what is this? My father alive—my father, whom for twenty years, since I could think of all—I have thought dead! What vile deception is here?"

"Sit down, Victor; you shall hear all. There is no vile deception—the deception, such as it is, has been by his own desire. Your father lives, but he is hopelessly insane."

He sat looking at her, pale, stern, almost confounded.

"He—he never recovered from the shock of his wife's dreadful death," went on the ladyship, her voice trembling. "Health returned after that terrible brain-fever, but no longer. We took him away—the best medical aid everywhere was tried—all in vain. For years he was hopelessly, utterly insane, never violent, but mind and memory a total blank. He was incurable—he would never regain his title, but his bodily health was good, and he might live for many years. Why, then, deprive you of your rights, since in no way you defrauded him? The work was given to understand he was dead, and you, as you grew up, took his place as though the grave had indeed closed over him. Legally, as you see for yourself, you have no claim to it."

Still he sat gazing at her—still he was silent, his lips compressed, waiting for the end.

"Of late years, gleams of reason have returned, fitfully and at uncertain times. On these rare occasions he has spoken of you, has expressed the desire that you should still be kept in ignorance, that he shall ever be the world dead. You perceive, therefore, though it is my duty to tell you this, it need in no way alarm you, as he will never interfere with your claims."

Still he sat silent—a strange, intent, lifeless expression on his face.

"You recollect the lady who came here yesterday," she continued. "Victor, looking far back into the past, have you no recollection of some one, fair and young, who used to bend over you at night, hear you say your baby prayers, and sing you to sleep?"