

down the front of the jacket. The sleeves are trimmed with fringe only on the lower part.

No. 4. Patelot Pera. Of grey stuff, with a trimming of narrow black grosgrain, edged with white satin. The collar, which is open and falls in a point, is trimmed with double rows, and the sleeves the same. The bottom of the jacket is edged with a double row of fringe.

No. 5. Patelot Thecla. The jacket is of dark green cloth, trimmed with dark green velvet, edged with satin. The trimming passes round the neck, forming a collar, down the front, around the lower edge and up the back to the collar. On the back are cords and tassels, as shewn in the illustration.

Registered in accordance with the Copy-right Act of 1868.

HILDA;

OR,

THE MERCHANT'S SECRET.

BY MRS. J. V. NOEL.

Author of the "Abbey of Rathmore," "Passion and Principle," "The Secret of Stanley Hall," "The Cross of Pride," &c.

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

The dinner was rather a sombre affair, although the vivands were the choicest, and the wines the vintage of southern Europe—imported by "Berkeley & Son," but the conversation on local and general topics was dull. The minds of those present were mostly of the common order; there was no superior intellect to brighten the dullness of that luxurious board with flashes of wit or gleams of original thought. Sir Gervase Montague, who could shine in conversation, was unusually silent; he was seated opposite Miss Tremayne, and she could not help remarking that his attention was directed more to her than to the lively brunette at his side. Hilda avoided meeting his eye, which she felt was often fixed upon her. She would gladly have concealed her identity with Miss Tremayne of Ontario Cottage. She wished him as well as herself to forget that period of brief intercourse, because she realized the danger of renewing such interesting *l'été-à-été*, such charming flirtations. It cost her an effort to desire this, but she was trying to do right. Principle was erecting a barrier between her and the dangerous path that had opened so unexpectedly before her.

On entering the drawing-room after dinner, Sir Gervase Montague found Miss Tremayne seated at the piano playing selections from the Opera of Satanella. Miss Berkeley and the Misses Brown were having a delightful chat on various subjects of engrossing interest to fashionable young ladies—dress, fashions, the military, the last ball, &c.—while their mammas, reclining in luxurious chairs, were discussing the everlasting topic of servants. Mrs. Grant Berkeley was dozing comfortably in a fauteuil, waiting the entrance of the other guests from the dining-room. She was one of those ladies who only enjoy the society of gentlemen.

Sir Gervase immediately approached the piano. Hilda was finishing the favourite air, "The Power of Love," and she played a little nervously as she felt his presence near. Stopping as soon as the air was finished she rose from the piano, saying she had been playing for the amusement of the ladies.

"And will you not continue playing to entertain us gentlemen? I for one am passionately fond of music."

Then, as Hilda quietly complied, he turned over the leaves of her music-book—which he instantly recognized—and placed before her a favourite song which she had often sung for him during those happy evenings at Ontario Cottage two years before. Pointing to his initials, which he had written in one corner, he asked her in a voice tremulous and reproachful why she had so soon forgotten him.

"Major Montague! Can it be possible? But really you do look changed! And yet I thought the tones of your voice seemed familiar."

"What a dissembler is woman! Even now, while Hilda was so quietly expressing her pretended surprise, appearing so self-possessed and indifferent, the pulses of her heart were beating wildly, stirred tumultuously by the tenderness of the Baronet's tones and the reproachful sadness of his eyes.

"How little did I know the happiness that awaited me to-night," continued Sir Gervase in the same low, agitated voice. "I came here never dreaming of meeting you, never thinking that the earnest longing of my heart for the last two years was about to be gratified."

Hilda listened to these words, the meaning of which she could not misunderstand,—for the Baronet's eyes spoke a language yet more passionate,—with mixed feelings of joy and anguish, yet struggling to subdue her emotion

she was outwardly calm. She had early learned to conceal her feelings. Self-control—so seldom attained by the young—she had gained by the rude discipline of her early years—in the dependent state of her governess life.

Surprised at the coldness and the change in her manner towards him, Sir Gervase gazed sorrowfully at her, trying to catch her averted eye, as if hoping to read there something of the old expression, some shadow of tenderness which would give him a gleam of hope. But Hilda, who was running her fingers lightly over the keys of the piano, did not venture to meet the Baronet's eyes, their mournful gaze thrilled her strangely, and she feared her own might betray the emotion she tried to hide.

"You must have left Kingston shortly after I did," Sir Gervase resumed, after a short silence.

"Yes, poor mamma's death occurred two weeks after you returned to England. Uncle Berkeley then wished me to come and live with him, and as I was alone in the world, I gladly complied."

Alone in the world! As these words passed the lips of Hilda, the recollection of Dudley flashed a startling accusation of falsehood across her mind. Oh, if Sir Gervase only knew! if the truth could then be revealed to him, would it not have been better for both! would it not have put an end to his hopes and spared her the struggle with her own heart—the misery of self-contest? But Hilda had not the moral courage to acknowledge herself the wife of the humble Dudley. How could she confess the humiliating fact to the elegant Sir Gervase Montague?

"When I left Kingston so suddenly," continued the Baronet, "I was summoned home in consequence of my father's death. It was my intention to return to Canada as soon as I could make arrangements for again leaving England, and in the meantime I wrote to a brother officer in Kingston, making enquiries about you. Imagine my distress on receiving the information of your bereavement and sudden disappearance."

A deep flush coloured Hilda's face. "I had no friends in Kingston," she observed, coldly, "and I did not think it necessary to inform the public of my movements."

"But did you never think of me? did it never occur to you, that in leaving Kingston without letting it be known whither you had gone, you were depriving me of any clew to find you?"

"I did not suppose you would wish for any, I thought our acquaintance for ever ended; I did not imagine you would wish to renew it."

"Ah! how you were mistaken! how little did you know the power you then possessed over my affections! how your image was enthroned in my heart, and how," he added in a voice husky from emotion, "it has kept possession of its innermost chamber, through the miserable period of our separation, although during that time you had forgotten me."

Hilda made no reply. She could neither speak nor conceal the emotion which made her frame quiver like an aspen leaf. This declaration came so unexpectedly. She had not certainly realized the depth of the Baronet's love for her. Eagerly he gazed upon her agitated face, the quivering eye-lids, the dark lashes moist with tears—all speaking of strong emotion—awoke within him a sudden joy, a bright hope that Hilda loved him, that the coldness of her manner was caused by resentment at his supposed neglect.

Much to the relief of Hilda, Mrs. Grant Berkeley at this moment approached the piano and put an end to this interesting tête-à-tête. Waking up from her doze as the gentlemen entered the drawing-room, she perceived with irritation, that Miss Tremayne was engrossing the attention of Sir Gervase Montague. Pauline had not yet lost her love of admiration, and still enjoyed a flirtation as much as ever. She was not in love with the Baronet, but she admired him exceedingly, and she determined to monopolise him for the evening to enable her to pass away time that would otherwise hang heavily. He was the only one of the guests she cared to talk to. The rapid nothings which the Hon. Mr. Cavendish called conversation were uninteresting. Sir David Brown talked only of politics which she didn't understand, and her husband's conversation, such as it was, she could enjoy—if she liked it—at home; therefore, approaching the piano she requested the Baronet to give her another lesson in chess. She was so anxious to understand the game thoroughly, and Sir Gervase was such an admirable player.

Though secretly annoyed at this *mal à propos* request, he blandly acquiesced. Politeness, which often rules society with a rod of iron, demanded the sacrifice, and for the rest of the evening he was prevented from renewing the conversation—so interesting to him—with Miss Tremayne.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION.

THE entrance of the gentlemen from the dining-room broke up the circle of young ladies and put an end to the interesting gossip of Mrs. Berkeley and her friend, Lady Brown. A few young officers, whose military duties had prevented their coming earlier, now drop-

ped in, and in consequence of this reinforcement of beaux the faces of the young ladies brightened amazingly. Music was soon proposed as a means of enlivening the evening, and the Misses Brown were requested to play or sing. These young ladies were very musical and fond of displaying their musical talents. The two elder girls undertook to perform a duet on the piano from *Il Trovatore*. They played quite artistically. The "Anvil Chorus," was exceedingly natural. One might imagine that a sledge-hammer was descending upon the keys by the notes produced from the instrument. The hands of the young ladies were large and their jewelled arms rather muscular; this might be from frequent practice, for six hours in each day were spent at the piano; the chief aim of their existence seemed to be to acquire proficiency in music, and be considered brilliant pianistes. When this laboured performance was ended the two younger sisters were induced to favour the company with an Italian song. Their voices which had no sweetness, but considerable compass, had been carefully cultivated, and the performance was what might be expected, a scientific shriek from beginning to end. Mrs. Grant Berkeley declared *sotto voce* to Sir Gervase that her nerves would not recover for a week from the jar they sustained during this infliction.

"Miss Tremayne sings divinely; could you not prevail on her to take part in this impromptu concert?" Sir Gervase remarked, as he made a false move on the chess-board and was about to exchange his queen for a bishop.

"You have heard her then?" and Pauline's bright eyes expressed surprise.

"Yes, I have had that pleasure."

"Not in Montreal, for this is her first appearance among us."

"No; in Kingston two years since."

"Ah! Now I understand the secret of her unexpected *début* at this dinner party!" and Mrs. Grant Berkeley laughed maliciously. She did not look on Hilda with favourable eyes. One beautiful woman seldom regards another woman equally beautiful without envy.

"May I not learn the secret?" asked the Baronet eagerly.

"Of course, you cannot guess!" and there was irony in Pauline's tones. "Now, does not your vanity suggest the reason why Miss Tremayne should emerge so suddenly from the seclusion in which she has lived since her arrival in Montreal, and cast the bright beams of her beauty upon us to-night?"

"Was he then the cause? Was it to meet him again? and a thrill of pleasure made the Baronet's fine eyes glitter as they met Mrs. Grant Berkeley's."

She understood the expression. "You comprehend now! Very flattering, is it not?"

But then came the recollection that Hilda had pretended not to recognize him, and this dissimulation pained the high-minded young man. He had worshipped a perfect ideal, and it grieved him to find his idol a woman merely—not an angel.

However, Mrs. Grant Berkeley might be mistaken; it was just possible that Hilda might not have known that Sir Gervase Montague and Major Montague were the same individuals. He did not remember having ever informed Mrs. Tremayne or her daughter that his father was a baronet, and that he would one day succeed to the title.

At this moment Hilda was led to the piano by the Hon. Mr. Cavendish. How marked his attentions were to Miss Tremayne. Sir Gervase felt annoyed at his impertinence, as he thought proper to term it. He already saw a rival in the young exquisite. But Hilda was not the sort of girl, he thought, to admire such an empty-headed fop. Surely he had nothing to fear from such a rival! Yet the Baronet continued to watch Mr. Cavendish with jealous eyes, as he stood beside the piano turning over the leaves of her music, while she poured forth a volume of rich melody, delighting her listeners with the exquisite notes of "Sweet Spirit, hear my Prayer."

"Hilda's voice is fine; what a pity it is not cultivated? She wants style," was Mrs. Grant Berkeley's ill-natured remark to the Baronet. She felt provoked at his very evident admiration of Miss Tremayne.

"Pardon me if I differ from you. Miss Tremayne's own good taste enables her to sing charmingly; that cadence is exquisite! I do not admire made voices."

"Not such singers as Arabella and Lydia Brown," observed Pauline, with an arch smile, "but you must like to hear artistic singing when there is melody. I must advise Hilda to take lessons from Professor —: it would improve her vastly."

During Hilda's song the chess-players suspended hostilities, the Baronet seeming to have eyes only for the beautiful singer, while his ears drank in the rich full sounds of her voice. When the song was finished, she was not allowed to leave the piano until she had sung one or two of Sir David Brown's favourite songs. He said he could never get his daughters to sing anything but Italian or French songs, and he did not care much for them; he didn't understand those languages.

"Pardon my curiosity," resumed Sir Gervase, after Hilda had left the piano and Clari-

bel Berkeley had taken her place, "but I should like to know if Mrs. Tremayne was Mr. Berkeley's sister."

"No; Mrs. Tremayne was a lady of good family in the old country, who eloped with Mr. Berkeley's brother, an itinerant actor."

"An itinerant actor!" repeated Sir Gervase in surprise.

"Yes, the Berkeleys cannot boast of noble ancestry," said Mrs. Grant laughing, "but in a new country like Canada that is nothing. Money takes the place of birth; we have no aristocracy here but that of wealth."

"You are very candid to admit this."

"Oh, it is a well-known fact!" rejoined Pauline carelessly. "Among the wealthy and respected families you meet in society scarcely any would be willing to tell you what their grandfather was. Now, Sir Gervase," she continued gayly, "have I not frightened you from the contemplation of matrimony while you stay among us? You would not like to bring as a bride to your ancestral home in England the granddaughter of a tavern-keeper, or chandler, or tailor, or washerwoman, or the daughter of a strolling player," she added, lowering her voice, and fixing her eyes full of malicious archness on her companion.

The Baronet made no reply, and the game of chess was abruptly renewed.

"What was Mrs. Tremayne's name before she was married," he asked, after some minutes' silence. "I think you said she was of good family?"

"She was a Miss Godfrey; her father was Colonel Godfrey, of some place in the south of Ireland."

"Innismoyne, perhaps?" said Sir Gervase eagerly.

"Yes, that is the name of the estate."

"Then I can claim kindred with Miss Tremayne," and the face of the Baronet flushed with sudden pleasure.

"Indeed! A fortieth cousin, I suppose!"

"Something less distant. My aunt married into Colonel Godfrey's family. It must be an uncle of Miss Tremayne's."

"Then the connection is by marriage, not kindred."

"Yes; you are right."

"However, it is, I suppose, a pleasure to be connected with her in any way. Is it not, Sir Gervase?" and an arch smile displayed Pauline's white teeth. She was going to make more enquiries about the Godfrey's when the conversation was interrupted by Lady Brown, who came to invite Sir Gervase Montague to lunch the next day. Arabella wished to show him some fine exotics. She was passionately fond of botany. She had a splendid pomegranate tree in full blossom, and several magnificent plants from South America.

Lady Brown, like other ambitious mothers in Montreal, had designs on the English baronet, and by inviting him to lunch in Simpson Street, she hoped to afford her prettiest daughter, Arabella, an opportunity for a flirtation among the fine collection of rare plants in her conservatory. The money which enabled Sir David Brown to live in the style befitting his rank had been made by his wife's father, a lumber-merchant in Quebec. Sir David had been a Government employé, and having been sent to England on some political business, he was knighted by the sovereign. Thanks to the wealthy lumber-merchant! who departed this life just in time to leave the new-made knight a fortune to maintain his new-found dignity, otherwise Her Majesty's kindness would have been a doubtful benefit. A palatial mansion was now purchased and furnished without any reference to expense. An elegant equipage was set up, and Sir David himself, who was a good whip, was often seen driving his splendid bays with a servant in livery seated on the box beside him. Lady Brown's carriage, with herself and daughters habited in the newest Parisian fashion, might be seen dashing along the fashionable thoroughfares, or stopping the way in Notre Dame Street while some obsequious clerk from a magnificent store attended to the ladies' orders.

Mrs. Berkeley and Lady Brown had been intimate in Quebec when both ladies moved in an humble sphere, and an intimacy grew up between their families as both climbed the social ladder. The Browns were now at its top, and the Berkeleys some steps lower. The head of the Berkeley family was still plain Mister. Titles cannot be picked up like dollars in Canada. Claribel advised her papa to get into the House of Legislature, and then he might be sent home with some deputation and rewarded by a title for his political services. Then they might hold their heads as high as the Browns, and their name would do honour to a title. Sir Lewis and Lady Berkeley would sound so aristocratic! Brown was such a common name!

But although Mr. Berkeley wanted ambition he had too much good sense to wish for an empty title, therefore the advice of Claribel was disregarded, and the merchant continued to plod on from year to year in the dingy counting-house in St. Paul Street, contented with the high respect his honourable dealings in the commercial world won him from his fellow-merchants and the citizens of Montreal.

It was late when Hilda Tremayne retired to her apartment on the night of her uncle's