

LINKED LIVES.

By Lady Gertrude Douglas.

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

"Ay, ay, I do mind ye. Ye're the bonnie we lolly that gied me the shilling you nickt forenent the big hooss in Glaske. The doctor telt me I wad see ye afore lang, but I wad hae kent ye if he hadda telt me."

"I should not have known you, Katie, and yet I have often thought of you, and wished to see you again!"

"There is a winning earnestness in Mabel's tone which seems to touch a right chord in Katie's heart. She looks at her wistfully.

"Where is your mother now?—and where is Maggie, your cruel sister?" pursues Mabel, with keen interest of voice and manner.

"Mither's awa' to prison—Maggie's aye cruel," replies Katie. "Och! I dinna need them noo."

"Katie, will you come up to where I live and see me this evening?" asks Mabel, for there are many people about the court; so that it is no place for conversation, but Mabel is determined not again to lose sight of Katie.

Katie promises gladly. She is much drawn to Mabel, and is pleased to think that she shall see her again; so Mabel gives her address, and appoints an hour for the interview; after which she asks Katie if she will come upstairs with her, but Katie shakes her head.

"Na, na, gang forrit yerseel—ye canna miss yer way. Pair Lizzie's gettin' the last sacraments. Father O'Donnell's wi' her I dinna want to see him."

So Mabel is obliged to go alone, for Mary has already preceded her; and hearing that a priest is in the room, Mabel feels much alarmed as to how Mary has, under the circumstances, comforted herself, for, to good, honest, but prejudiced Mary Grace, a Popish priest appears in the light of an evil angel in disguise.

When Mabel opens the door of the room she finds, however, to her great relief, that Mary is quietly seated near the fire place, doing or saying nothing aggressive, but watching, with an expression of horror upon her countenance, an old man of venerable appearance, with a silver head, and a singularly humble face, who, kneeling beside the bed of the dying girl, is calling upon Jesus to have mercy.

Wretchedly destitute of all comfort as the apartment seems to be, it has, nevertheless, been carefully prepared with all due respect for the solemn last rites of the Catholic Church. A temporary altar, consisting of two boxes piled one on top of the other, and covered with a large white linen sheet lent by some charitable neighbor, who has opened for the occasion her parlor, stands in the center, and upon it rests a crucifix, two wax tapers, and some really beautiful flowers, carefully arranged in cracked china vases. Exquisitely clean, too, is the sick girl's clothing, her head is reverently covered with a white veil, and round her neck is a broad blue ribbon, to which a large silver medal is attached, upon which her glazed eyes are fixed with a look of deep devotion.

The prayers are nearly over before Mabel enters—this she rather regrets than otherwise, for she would like to have assisted at the solemn service, for which she knows Mr. Vaughan has a special authorization.

As for Mary, she has been preparing for the encounter she imagines is to take place between herself and the Popish priest, who, she doubts not, will be very anxious, as soon as the prayers are over, to attempt the conversion of herself and Mabel. She is, therefore, surprised and somewhat disappointed when, the ceremony being ended, the old priest, having addressed a few kind words, first to the dying girl, then to the weeping mother, leaves the room immediately, saying only, with a benevolent smile and courteous inclination of the head, to Mabel and Mary, as he passes them, "God bless you, dear children. God reward you for your charity to His poor!"

Lizzie Logie is too ill to take much notice of her visitors, so that, after a little conversation with the poor mother, and after bestowing upon her the pecuniary assistance they have brought her, Mabel and Mary take their leave—not, however, before Mary has deposited several of her precious tracts upon the table. They were received by Mr. Logie in silence, but Mary would have been distressed could she have seen their fate. So soon as her back is turned Mrs. Logie gathers them all together and throws them into the fire. "I canna read mysel," she says; "but what kens wha's in they tracks? Maybe the bairns wad mak' mischief o' them."

Some hours later, towards nightfall of the same day, Lizzie Logie wakes from a short slumber, and finds herself alone with Katie Mackay. Katie's eyes are red with weeping, and there is a softened expression upon her face which has long been foreign to it.

"Wull it be wee Katie Mackay?" says Lizzie feebly. "Eh lassie, I'm glad to see ye vime ma'ir."

"Eh, Lizzie, dinna say siccaan a thing, ye ma'ir dea'!—ye maunna dee!" groans Katie, weeping.

"Whisht ye, Katie! dinna greet sae sair, lassie, if ye wad but ken how contentit I am to dee!"

"Eh, but, Lizzie, it's just a' through me—I ken it fine—it's me that's kilt ye. Ye can forgie me, but I wull niver forgie mysel."

Poor Katie breaks down completely, and laying her face upon Lizzie's thin

outstretched hand, sobs as though her very heart would break. Lizzie looks discomposed. She is too weak to talk much, but she strokes Katie's head gently, and whispers—

"Dinna greet, Katie, och! dinna greet. If ye wad but believe me I wad see happy gin ye wad promise me to behave yerseel." "Ye're awfu' temptit, pair lassie, I ken it fine, but, oh! it's sair, sair to see ye gaein to the deevil, an' Steenie along wi' ye pair lad."

"Awae, Lizzie, listen," says Katie, checking her sobs, and clasping her hands firmly together. "I'll sweer it to ye. I wull behave mysel, I wull so! I'll awa' to Steenie, an' mak' freens wi' him. Whaur wull I fin' him?"

Before Lizzie has time to answer the door is suddenly thrown open, and Mrs. Logie enters, violently agitated, and crying bitterly. She does not at first see Katie, but drops into a chair, and flinging her apron over her face, rocks herself to and fro in a perfect agony of grief.

"What ails ye, mither? Whaur's Steenie?"

"Whaur's Steenie, Mistress Logie?" re-echoes Katie, whose heart smites her with a sudden terrible misgiving for she remembers that only that very morning, she has goaded Steenie beyond endurance, and that, when he left her, he told her he was going to enlist.

At the sound of Katie's voice, Mrs. Logie turns upon her, like a tiger robbed of her young.

"Hoo daur ye show yer face in this hoose! Ye hold, hairless quee than ye are, d'ye ken what ye hae dune? Ye've clean runt me son! He's to sail the morn to furruin pairs, he's bonned hissel' for two lang years, an' it's through ye—ye ha' driven him titt! Gang out o' me sicht, or ye'll gar me commit murder afore I've dune wi' ye."

"Eh, mither, whisht ye, for the love of Heaven whisht ye!" pleads Lizzie faintly, but Katie, roused almost to frenzy by Mrs. Logie's speech, rushes to the door, where she stands a brief moment, glaring at the miserable mother, the hot blood flushing her brow; then, clenching her hands, and muttering something incoherent, she dashes headlong down the stairs out into the dark night.

At another time such reproaches as those leveled at her by Mrs. Logie would have instantly extinguished all good impulse within her, but her late interview with Mabel has wonderfully softened Katie's hardened heart. She leaves Lizzie's dying bed with the firm resolve to prevent, at all hazards, Steenie's departure, even though, to do so, she must humble herself to the dust.

It is 10 o'clock when Katie reaches the town of Leith, where she thinks that she surely will find Steenie; for he lodges there at a sailor's home, raw night, drizzling rain is falling, and Katie, who has run most of the two miles, is very tired by the time she gets there. As she nears the lodging she slackens speed a little, and beginning to reflect upon the awkwardness of a meeting with Steenie, from whom she parted that morning in hot anger, she almost loses courage, and but for the thought of Lizzie dying, would turn back at the last moment.

Steenie, however, is not at his lodgings. He has paid his account, packed his belongings, and has left that very day. Beyond this scanty information, no one in the house can tell Katie anything further about him, so that, much disheartened, she is obliged to turn away, knowing what to do next.

There are in some human lives strange moments of good fortune—moments when hope, seemingly dead, suddenly receives the fulfilment of its desires—moments, when after a more or less prolonged agony, all our plans having apparently evaporated into empty smoke, we suddenly find the object, vainly sought after, set down beside us, so unexpectedly, so quietly, so without any effort of our own, that we are almost like people awaking from an unpleasant dream—glad to get back to the reality of life. In such cases the past seems to have been the dream, and the happy present the reality!

So it was with Steenie Logie on the night in question. For the first time since his acquaintance with Katie, he had at last relinquished all hopes of making her his own—he had bound himself over to sail next morning with a merchant ship trading to the West Indies. On the preceding evening he had been drinking, he had drunk again after his final interview with Katie, and it was while still under the influence of the fatal drink that he had taken his hasty resolve of going to sea; otherwise he would scarcely have had the courage to leave his poor mother and his sister in her dying state. After parting with his mother (which parting, by the way, had been an accidental thing, for he had not intended to see any of his family before sailing), and had determined to communicate his resolution to them by letter, Steenie returned to Leith. Far too miserable to sleep, scarcely knowing or caring what was to become of him, he wandered into the dock-yard, resolved to spend his last night in Scotland under the free canopy of heaven, rather than to endure the noisy companionship of such associates as in his lodgings he was likely to encounter.

Thus it comes about that Katie, going she knows not whither, heedless of the drizzling rain and cold north-easterly breeze blowing up from the sea-coast, suddenly finds herself face to face with the object of her anxious search. The light of a dim lamp re-

veals him to her, standing moodily against the wall, with his cap slouched over his eyes, smoking his pipe, looking the very picture of hopeless, don't-care misery. Away goes Katie's pride. Remorse and real regret for the mischief she has done makes her oblivious of all other considerations, and stepping lightly to his side she lays her hand on Steenie's arm and calls him by his name.

He looks up quickly enough. There is no glad start of surprise, no word of welcome, for Steenie has said good bye to hope; but he takes his pipe out of his mouth, and, looking Katie calmly in the face, inquires,

"What brings ye here, lassie? Ye needna think to torment me nae ma'ir. I's no wantin' ye."

"Eh, Steenie, I's like to dee wi' grief!—what's this ye hae dune!" And the fair, pretty head, with its golden hair all crisp with the salt sea breezes, leans itself down upon the sailor lad's arm, and the blue eyes, full of real tears of sorrow, looks up beseechingly in his face.

A troubled expression comes over Steenie's face—he seems half inclined to shake off the little deceiver, but she clings to him yet more closely.

"Dinna gang, Steenie! Oh! bide wi' yer mither an' pair Lizzie. Ye maunna gang! ye maunna gang! Eh, promise me ye'll no gang."

"Katie Mackay," answers Steenie, severely, "it'll become ye maist o' a' to reproach me—ye ken fine ye've been fausse to me, lassie—ay, fausse—I might hae dune waur nor I hae dune. Dinna come here to torment me—the Lord kens I's miserable enough!"

"Eh, but Steenie, I's awfu' miserable at it a'! I ken fu' weel it's a' through me. Eh, Steenie, if ye wad but forgie me this aince ma'ir! Eh, Steenie, I aye loved ye, an' I've been awfu' bad to ye, but it s'ill be sae nae ma'ir."

The poor sailor lad's face flushes hotly, and his heart bounds with a sudden hope.

"Katie," he asks hoarsely, holding her out at arm's length, and looking at her beseechingly, "are ye sure, lassie, ye're no making game o' me? Div ye mean to tell me ye love me still?"

"Ay, Steenie, I do so. I do so!" reiterates Katie, with passionate eagerness.

"Mair nor Willie Cameron?" asks Steenie again: "for ye ken, Katie, I canna divide yer love wi' him, nor any other man under the sun."

"Eh, Steenie, dinna talk to me o' Willie Cameron nae mair. I gie ye my solemn promise I'll be yer ain wife. I's no gaetin' to keep company, nae mair wi' any o' them frae the sea, Steenie. Eh, dinna gang for to leave me, Steenie! Bide at hame, an' we'll awa' gang back to Glaske together. Eh, bide wi' us, Steenie! Say yoor bide!"

"I's owre late, Katie," says yoor Steenie, sadly shaking his head: "I'm to sail the morn—I canna get biddin' noo, gin I wad desire it. I'm bound over for the viage; gin I gaed awa', twad be desertin'; ye ken—it's again the law o' the land."

"O Steenie, can ye no tak' me along wi' ye? I canna bide here wantin' ye, sobs Katie, excitedly.

"Pair Katie, pair, wee lassie!" answers Steenie, warmly, opening his arms and taking the repentant girl to his own faithful heart once more: "dinna fret sae sair, it canna be helpt; maybe I'll be for the best. I'll no be lang awa'; afore two years out, ye'll see me hame. Eh, but it's gey hard! sair, sair misfortune!" he adds, himself breaking down as he reflects that, but for his precipitation, he might have been, this night, completely happy and satisfied with the fulfilment of his heart's desire.

Katie's head is pillowed on his rough sailor's coat, his face bent down over hers, and great reluctant tears are falling from his eyes on to her cheeks. At that moment she is indeed determined to be faithful to him; she is resolving now, in the future, she will atone to him for the past—nothing would have seemed too hard to promise then.

"Ye wudna deceiver me, lassie; wud ye, noo? an' this may be our last meetin', for God in Heevin kens hoo lang. Ye'll no bide wi' they Kers nae mair, ye're owre bonnie, my wee Katie, ye've gotten owre fair a face! I wish in my hairt ye were no sae bonnie, it's an awfu' temptation to ye to love notice." Steenie's voice is trembling with suppressed emotion, which, for Katie's sake, he is doing his best to control.

"I's nae deceiverin' ye, Steenie," answers Katie, with passionate earnestness; "my heart's like to break when I think on a I've garded ye suffer, but it wull be sae mair. I wull work for yer mither in the place o' pair Lizzie—aye! I wull so, I sweer to Heevin I wull. An' noo, Steenie, wull ye gang back to Edinburgh together?—ye maun say guid-bye to Lizzie, ye maun mak' yer peace wi' yer mither afore ye sail."

Steenie willingly assents to this proposal; his heart is so full of joy that he is ready to do anything that Katie wishes. And while they are walking together, Katie tells him about her meeting with Mabel, and that Mabel has promised to be her friend.

When they reach the entrance of Mrs. Logie's hoose, no amount of persuasion on Steenie's part will induce Katie to go upstairs.

"Gang forrit, Steenie," she replies to his exhortations; "mak' ye'r peace wi' yer mither, I'll do weel enuch here at the stair-fit for an aince."

By and-by, however, down comes Mrs. Logie herself, in search of Katie.

Yielding to her son's entreaties, and perhaps somewhat mollified by the account of Katie's recent conduct, she consents to forgive her, or, at least, to suffer her presence inside the hoose.

So the closing hours of poor Lizzie's life are hours of comparative peace. All night she lies with Katie's hand clasped in hers, and her repentant brother kneeling by her side. She breathes her last towards morning about 5 o'clock, going, calmly to her rest with a smile of peace upon her face, saying with prophetic earnestness to Steenie, a few minutes before she dies, indicating Katie by a motion of her hand.

"Steenie, lad, she'll mak' ye a guid wife ane o' these days."

It was towards sunset of the same day when the *Bonnie Dundee*, Steenie's ship, unfurled her sails and stood out to sea.

As long as she remained in sight, a fair-haired, blue-eyed girl might have been seen standing on the very furthest extremity of the long Leith Pier. The lookers on gazed with interest at the blooming child, for otherwise she could scarcely be called, pitying her not a little, for tears were streaming like rain down her face, and from time to time she seemed almost overpowered with grief; and, callous to all observation, would lean her head down upon the pier-rails sobbing passionately, and calling in broken accents upon her lover to return.

Not until the ship was entirely hidden from her gaze did the poor child turn away, and then only to fling herself upon a seat in such an agony of grief that one or two kind hearted sailors drew near to comfort her.

It was, however, all in vain, Katie would not be comforted; a terrible feeling of desolation had come over her, and for a while in her frenzy she would gladly have thrown herself into the cold, dark waters that had carried Steenie away from her.

"Be faithful, dinna forget me; God an' His Holy Mither keep ye, my Katie!" had been poor Steenie's parting salutation.

CHAPTER XIV.

CROSS QUESTIONS MADE STRAIGHT.
"Comfort her, comfort her, all things good, While I am over the sea; Let me and my passionate love go by, But speak to her all things holy and high, Whatever happen to me."

"Hugh, my old eyes do not deceive me! There is something more than the Lord Temple business in all this. My dear girl, you are right, Aunt Helen. I see it plainly—I have seen it for a long while, and, to tell you the honest truth, I cannot bear it any longer."

"What do you mean by that, my boy? Tell me—I must know."

"I mean what I say, Aunt Helen. I cannot endure the sight of Mabel unhappy. I feel I am the cause of it all. I have almost determined to go back to Tasmania."

Obedient to Miss Mackenzie's summons, Hugh had lost no time in coming to Edinburgh; if he could have avoided it, he would rather have gone a hundred miles another way; but there was no other help for it, so he came, and for the first few days after his arrival, he and Mabel had gone on systematically playing "cross-questions" with each other's feelings.

Miss Mackenzie's suspicions, in the meanwhile, had matured themselves into certainties. When she saw Mabel and Hugh together after Hugh's arrival, her decision was taken, and she had only waited for a favorable opportunity for speaking her mind to Hugh.

This opportunity had presented itself one evening, when Mary Grace, being carried off Mabel, shortly against her will, to dine in Moray Place, Miss Mackenzie and Hugh were left to spend a few hours *te-a-tete*.

"I want you to tell me what you think of Mabel?" said Miss Mackenzie. Hugh, who had been reading the newspaper by the light of the fire, put it down upon the table beside him, and sat sadly gazing into the red embers. He had thought her asleep, and was embarrassed by the abruptness of her question.

"Think of her, Aunt Helen!" he replied evasively. "I think she is fretting about something. I am afraid that Temple affair has upset her sorely."

To this Miss Mackenzie answered as above, and so led to Hugh's announcement with respect to his future plans. Miss Mackenzie's eyes filled with tears, and she stretched out her hands to him.

"My boy, come here—nearer to me, Hugh; my voice is weak, and I have much to say to you."

Hugh complied, and sat down in a vacant chair by Miss Mackenzie's couch; then, after a moment's pause, he said gravely,

"You are my oldest, almost my only friend, and to you I wish first to tell my future plans. I cannot stay at Elvanlea—I am going back to Tasmania in the spring of next year; the work there suits me better."

"No, Hugh—no, no!" said Miss Mackenzie emphatically: "this shall not be. You must not leave them. When I am gone there is no one but you to whom Guy can look up for advice, and poor Mabel!"

"Listen to me, Aunt Helen," returned Hugh firmly; "you are wringing a secret from me. Well, I do not say I am sorry; let me say to you this once what is in my heart. I owe it to you to explain my conduct, and afterwards, I beg of you, let it be a dead subject between us. I can be of no use to Mabel. Call me a fool if you will—you cannot think me a greater one than I think myself; but it is breaking my heart by inches to live

near her. I cannot—there, I cannot!"

Hugh broke off suddenly, burying his face in his hands. There was a short silence, and then Miss Mackenzie spoke.

"Thank you, Hugh—God bless you, my boy, for the confidence you have placed in me! But tell me, are you quite sure this is necessary?"

"Yes, yes, it is," he replied. "I have thought it over—long, earnestly. God knows what it will cost me. But this is it, Aunt Helen—my life is dedicated to God. I have always had a very high, severe notion of a clergyman's duties, and I believe it is impossible to be faithful to my avocation if, at the same time, this daily, hourly struggle is going on within me. How can I attend to the interests of my parish? How can I be the ever ready, watchful guardian of the flock committed to my care? How can I, when my whole soul is wrung in the conflict with this unforfeitable attachment, be it absorbing all the energy of my life; it leaves me weak, powerless, nerveless; it makes me a good-for-nothing soldier in the Great Army."

Hugh paused for a moment, overcome by the depth of his emotion; then he went on more quietly—

"She will come again in the Spring time, and you, Aunt Helen, know how she leans for support, for guidance, on the clergyman of the parish. You know what I ought to be to her, and what I shall have to be, God knows I was helpless enough last time, when she wanted help so sadly. No, no, it's hopeless, useless. I can do nothing for Mabel, and the sight of her is more than my strength can bear—I must go."

"Noble!—noble!" murmured Miss Mackenzie, in a low tone; then she added aloud, "Hugh, are you sure that you could not make Mabel love you?"

"No, no, Aunt Helen, do not tempt me. I dare not try. She is so inexperienced, she has seen so little of the world, it would not be fair. She is affectionate, and trusts me. Were I to try, and then fail, it would make everything far more painful."

"Well, now," said Miss Mackenzie, anxiously, "you are her guardian, Hugh. Tell me what sort of life you would choose for Mabel?"

"What sort of life?—why, every happiness, of course; not poverty—not to share the life of a man old enough to be her father," returned Hugh slowly.

"She might have married Lord Temple if she had pleased to do so," re-echoed Miss Mackenzie; "and he was young enough, and handsome, and rich, and everything else you like. Why did she refuse him?"

"Why?" repeated Hugh with a puzzled air. "Do you know why, Aunt Helen?"

"No, I tell you candidly I do not, Hugh. I have my own surmises. But Mabel, dear child, is that reserved—and is trying to hide something from me into the bargain. I am quite sure of it."

"Do you think there is anyone she does love?" asked Hugh suddenly.

"I really do not know. But this much I can tell you, Hugh—the cloud that has come over her is a very recent one. She was the gladdest and gayest of lassies till—let me see, when—well, then, I must just tell the truth—it was not until several weeks after you came that I began to see a change in her."

"Good God! Aunt Helen, are you sure of this?"

"Hugh, Hugh! Patience, too, for I am sure of nothing. Yet take my advice—the advice of an old woman but one, nevertheless, who is not too old to remember what love was. I am looking at events from the borders of eternity, and they look more real at my age, Hugh, than perhaps to you or Mabel."

Miss Mackenzie closed her eyes, and spoke her next words almost in a whisper.

"I can see that a deep, honest love is worth more in the scale of happiness than are all the advantages of riches or station. I can see—take heed, Hugh!—that it is foolish—aye, worse than foolish—it is cruel, wicked, to risk the happiness of perhaps two lives rather than to risk a refusal. I tell ye, Hugh—and my words are none the less true because it is an old, old woman, very near her grave, who says them to you—when a man loves a woman he had better tell her so, even if he believes there are nine chances against him. The tenth may be in his favor, and it may be the winning number. Now, a man who loves a woman owes it to her to risk it. Remember how helpless a woman is—remember how, in such a case, her heart may break a thousand times, yet neither by word nor sign can she betray her secret. The more she loves him the more she must shroud her feelings from his sight. I do not say, mind, that Mabel loves you, but this much I do say—the man she does love, whoever he may be, will never know it, unless he be willing to risk a refusal."

"But it would be selfish! I am not thinking of myself now—I am thinking of her. Aunt Helen, look at me, a prematurely aged, broken-down old man! What would Guy say—that would everyone say? What a life for Mabel, even if she were willing to share mine!"

"The life she loves the best, any—how," returned Miss Mackenzie gently—"the life that has made her happy from her childhood. And, after all, Hugh, she has some fortune of her own, and it strifes me, you are not so badly off at Elvanlea yourself; besides which, I am sure that Mabel would willingly give up some luxuries for life's greatest happiness."

"What is that?" asked Hugh, in a low tone.

"To spend her life with the man she loves, and who loves her," answered Miss Mackenzie. "Mabel cares not a rush for the gay world—and, by-the-by, Hugh she is not quite so ignorant about it as you seem to imagine. She has spent one season in London, and has had, on the whole, a pretty fair taste of society. It has few charms for her, I know, and as a regular woman of the world, Mabel would be entirely out of her sphere; of that I am perfectly convinced."

Miss Mackenzie seemed exhausted, and lay with closed eyes, while Hugh, deeply pondering, sat gazing into her fire. Presently Miss Mackenzie opened her eyes again, and said inquiringly,

"Well, Hugh?"

He started up, and paced to and fro in a state of violent agitation.

"Aunt Helen, I wish I could dare to think it possible she could care for me—but I do not feel I can; and I will tell you now why, for her sake, I do not wish to risk making a mistake. You were not at Elvanlea when she refused Temple—I was, and Guy bothered me into speaking to her—fool that I was! I shall never forget the anguish of remorse I witnessed on that occasion. She is terribly sensitive and scrupulous, and if she has to tell me now that she cannot love me, I can foresee what a sea of trouble and additional misery we shall both endure."

"Listen, Hugh, one moment. I hear the bell, and it is time Mabel was home. She said she usually be here at nine. Make no resolves; bear in mind what I have said to you: watch her tonight, for you must go down now and leave me. I am getting very tired. Take my advice; talk over with Mabel your plan respecting the return to Tasmania. Don't jump at conclusions too quickly, and if no thought of your own happiness will influence you, for her sake, Hugh—for her sake—make sure that you have indeed nothing to do with her depression of spirit."

When, half an hour later, Mabel came into the drawing-room, she found Hugh more than usually grave and pre-occupied. He did not seem inclined to talk, and imagining he would perhaps wish to be left alone, she lingered only a few moments, and then wished him good night. Very much astonished, therefore, she was when Hugh held the hand she had stretched out to him fast in his own, and with a steady look into her eyes, which brought a rush of color to her white face, he said, in a tone almost beseeching,

"Stay a little longer, Mabel—I have something to say to you."

She sat down again at once next to Hugh, and looked at him with her hands folded in her lap, to listen.

"Mabel," he said, after a moment's silence, "I have spoken to Doctor Greeme this afternoon, and I am glad to find he thinks Aunt Helen decidedly better; so I took the opportunity of talking over with her some lately-decided plans of mine."

Mabel looked up quickly; there was something in the expression of her eyes that made Hugh's heart grow bold.

"I shall be obliged to go back to Elvanlea to-morrow, but you will have Guy and Jessie with you in a day or two. I hope, a day or there is anything worse you will let me know directly."

"Must you go?" said Mabel sadly.

"Yes, I ought to go. And yet I cannot bear to leave you as I found you, Mabel—so happy."

Mabel shivered slightly, but made no reply.

"Where is Mr. Vaughan now?" asked Hugh suddenly. Does he ever write?"

"Scarcely ever," said Mabel, sighing. They are in France. Genevieve writes sometimes—very rarely though—and her letters are so short, so odd, so unlike herself. Oh, all is so changed!"

"Yes, and it's all my doing, I fear," said Hugh mournfully. "You were happy when I came, Mabel. My coming sent Mr. Vaughan away; you lost your friend, and—"

"Oh, stop, Hugh! Indeed I did not mean that!" interposed Mabel quickly. "You have nothing to do with my happiness—at least, not in the way you think. Oh what an I saying!—if you only knew!" she added, her agitation almost depriving her of utterance. Hugh grew terribly anxious.

"Mabel," he resumed, as quietly as he could force himself to speak, "God has so willed that wherever I go a shadow from my dark life falls on those around me—this is what I mean by being the cause of your unhappiness. Shall I tell you something more? Shall I tell you that on those I love the most the shadow often seems to fall the heaviest? Well, God knows best if the shadow is over you. Does it not tell you, then, what I have scarcely courage to say won't you let me be all I can to you, Mabel? If I may not be what Mr. Vaughan was, at least I will do my best. Dear Mabel—dear child—let me help you! Do—do!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

Summer Weakness
And that tired feeling, loss of appetite and nervous prostration are driven away by Hood's Sarsaparilla, like mist before the morning sun. To realize the benefit of this great medicine, give it a trial and you will join the army of enthusiastic admirers of Hood's Sarsaparilla.