

LILLIAN, THE HEIRLESS.

CHAPTER I.

Down the broad oak staircase through the silent hall into the drawing room came Lillian, singing as she went. The room was deserted; through the half-closed blinds the dim sunshine was rushing, turning to gold all on which its soft touch lingered, and rendering the large, dim, handsome apartment almost comfortable.

Outside everything is bright and warm, and genial, as should be in the heart of summer; within there is only gloom—and Lillian clings to her mourning robes. The contrast is disquieting; there, life, here death, or at least the knowledge of it. There joy, here the signs and trap-pings of woe.

The black gown and funeral train—hardly harmonious with the girl's flower-like face and the gay song that trembled on her lips. But, alas! for how soon a time does our first keen sorrow last! how swiftly are our dearest forgotten! how seldom does grief kill! When eight long months have flown by across her father's grave Lillian finds, sometimes to her dismay, that the hours she grieves for him form but a short part of her day.

Not that her sorrow for him, even at its freshest, was very deep; it was of the subdued and horrified rather than the passionate, despairing kind. Aunt though in truth she mourned and wept for him until her pretty eyes could hold no longer tears, still there was a mildness about her grief more suggestive of tender melancholy than any very poignant anguish.

From her the dead father could scarcely be more separated than had been the living. Naturally of a rather sedentary disposition, Archibald Chesney, on the death of the wife whom he adored, had become that most uninteresting and selfish of all things, a confirmed bookworm. He went in for study of the abstruse and heavy order, with an air worthy of a better cause. His library was virtually his home; he had neither affections nor desires beyond devoting himself exclusively to his books, he suffered them to take entire possession of what he chose to call his heart.

At times he absolutely forgot the existence of his little three-year-old daughter; and if ever the remembrance of her did cross his mind, it was but to think of her as an incubus—as another misfortune heaped upon his luckless shoulders—and to wonder, with a sigh, what he was to do with her in the future. The child, deprived of a tender mother at so early an age, was flung, therefore, upon the tender mercies of her nurses, who alternately petted and injudiciously reproved her, until at length she came to be as utterly spoiled as a child can be. She had one companion, a boy cousin about a year older than herself.

He too was lonely orphaned, so that the two children, making common cause, clung closely to each other, and shared, both in infancy and in early youth, their joys and sorrows. The Park had been the boy's home ever since his parents' death, Mr. Chesney accepting him as his ward, but never afterwards troubling himself about his welfare. Indeed he had no objection whatever to fill the Park with relations, so long as they left him undisturbed to follow his own devices.

Not that the education of these children was neglected. They had all the tuition that was necessary, and Lillian, having a talent for music, learned to sing and play the piano very charmingly. She could ride, too, and at her horse a mer-cute, and had a passion for reading—perhaps inherited. But, as novels were her principal literature, and as she had no time to regulate her choice of them, it was a matter of opinion whether she derived much benefit from them. At least she received little harm, as at seventeen she was as fresh minded and pure hearted as a child as one might care to know.

The county, knowing her to be an heiress—though not a large one—called systematically on her every three months. Twice she had been taken to a ball by an enterprising mother with a large family of unpromising sons. But as she reached her eighteenth year her father died, and her old home, the Park, being strictly entailed on male heirs, passed from her into the hands of a distant cousin utterly unknown. This young man, another Archibald Chesney, was abroad at the time of his kinsman's death—in Egypt, or Hong-Kong, or Jamaica—no one exactly knew which—until after much search he was finally discovered to be in Halifax.

From thence he had written to the effect that, as he probably should not return to his native land for another six months, he hoped his cousin (if it pleased her) would continue to reside at the Park—where all the old servants were to be kept on—until his return.

It did please his cousin; and in her old home she still reigned as queen, until after eight months she received a letter from her father's lawyer warning her of Archibald Chesney's actual arrival in London.

This letter failed in its object. Lillian either would not or could not bring her-

self to name the day that should part her forever from all the old haunts and pleasant nooks she loved so well. She was not brave enough to take her "Brace" and look up the earliest train that ought to convey her away from the Park. Indeed, so utterly wanting in decency and decorum did she appear at this particular epoch of her existence, that the heart of her only aunt—her father's sister—was stirred to depths. So much so that, after mature deliberation (for old people as well as great ones move slowly), she finally packed up the venerable hair-trunk that had seen the rise and fall of several monarchs, and marched all the way from Edinburgh to this Midland English shire, to try what firm expostulation could do in the matter of bringing her niece to see the error of her ways.

For a whole week it did very little. Lillian was independent in more ways than one. She had considerable spirit and five hundred pounds a year in her own right. Not only did she object to leave the Park, but she regarded with horror the prospect of going to reside with the guardians appointed to receive her by her father. Not that this idea need have filled her with dismay. Sir Guy Chesney, the actual guardian, was a young man not likely to trouble himself overmuch about any ward; while his mother, Lady Chesney, was that most gracious of all things, a beautiful and lovable old lady.

Why Mr. Chesney had chosen so young a man to look after his daughter's interests must forever remain a mystery—perhaps because he happened to be the oldest son of his oldest friend, long since dead. Sir Guy accepted the charge because he thought it unbecomingly to refuse, and chiefly because he believed it likely Miss Chesney would marry before her father's death. But events proved the fallacy of human thought. When Archibald Chesney's demise appeared in the Times, Sir Guy made a little face and took meekly a good deal of "chaffing" at his brother's hands, while Lady Chesney sat down and, with a faint sinking at her heart, wrote a faint letter to the orphan, offering her a home at Chetwood. To this letter Lillian had sent a polite reply, thanking "dear Lady Chetwood" for her kindness, and telling her she had no intention of quitting the Park just at present. Later on she would be only too happy to accept it, etc.

Now, however, standing in her own drawing-room, Lillian feels, with a pang, the game is almost played out; she must leave. Aunt Priscilla's arguments are detestable though they be, are unanswerably quite unanswerable. To her own heart she confesses this much, and the little girl French song dies on her lips, and the smile fades from her eyes, and her head bows from her long, white hair, and her long, dark, curl upward from her eyes, as though hating to conceal the beauty of the exquisite azure within. She is not tall, and she is very slender, but not lean. She is willful, quick-tempered, and impetuous, but large-hearted and lovable. There is a certain haughtiness about her that contrasts curiously but pleasantly with her youthful expression and laughable kissing mouth. She is straight and lithe as a young ash-tree; her hands and feet are small and well shaped; in a word, she is *chic* from the crown of her crown of her hair head down to her little arched instep.

Just now, perhaps, as she hears the honest sound of her aunt's footstep in the hall, a slight pause takes possession of her lips and a flickering from adorns her brow. Aunt Priscilla is coming, and Aunt Priscilla brings victory in her train, and it is not every one can accept defeat with grace.

She hastily pulls up one of the blinds, and advances up the room, young Miss Chesney rather turns her shoulder to her and stares moodily out of the window. But Aunt Priscilla is not to be daunted.

"Well, Lillian," she says, in a hopeful tone, and with an amount of faith admirable under the circumstances, "I trust you have been thinking it over favorably, and that—"

"Thinking what over?" asks Lillian, which interruption is a mean subterfuge. "And that the night has induced you to see your situation in its proper light?" says this virgin, with much solemnity, "you will never, never put yourself into the clutches of a man." She utters this last word as though she would have said a tiger, or a serpent, or anything else ruthless and bloodthirsty. "But all this is beside the question."

"It is rather," says Lillian, demurely. But, suddenly brightening: "Between my dismal dreaming last night I thought of another plan."

"Another!" with open dismay. "Yes!" triumphantly—"It occurred to me that this bugbear, my cousin, might go abroad again. Like the Wandering Jew, he is always traveling; and who knows but he may take a fancy to visit the South Pole, or discover the

Northwestern passage, or go with Jules Verne to the centre of the earth? If so, why should not I remain here and keep house for him? What can be simpler? "Nothing?"—truly—"but unfortunately he is not going abroad again."

"No! How do you know that?" "Through Mr. Shude, the solicitor."

"Ah!" says Lillian, in a despairing tone, "how unhappy I am! Though I might have known that wretched young man would be the last to do what is his palatable duty." There is a pause. Lillian's head sinks upon her hand; dejection shows itself in every feature. She sighs so heavily that Miss Priscilla's spirits rise, and she assures herself the game is won. Rash hope.

Suddenly Lillian's countenance clears; she raises her head, and a faint smile appears within her eyes.

"Aunt Priscilla, I have yet another plan," she says, cheerfully. "Oh, my dear, I do hope not," says poor Miss Chesney, almost on the verge of tears.

"Yes, and it emanated from you. Supposing I were to remain here, and he did fall in love with me, and married me, what then? Would not that solve the difficulty? Once the ceremony was performed, he might go prying about all over the known globe for all I should care. I should have my dear Park. I declare," says Lillian, waxing valiant, "had he but one eye, or did he appear before me with a wooden leg (which I hold to be the most contemptible of all things), nothing should induce me to refuse him under the circumstances."

"And are you going to throw yourself upon your cousin's generosity, and actually ask him to take pity on you and make you his wife?" Lillian, I fancied you had some pride," says Miss Chesney, gravely.

"So I have," says Lillian, with a repentant sigh. "How I wish I hadn't! No, I suppose it wouldn't do to marry him in that way, no matter how badly I treated him afterwards to make up for it. Well, my last hope is dead."

"And a good thing, too. Now, had you not better sit down and write to Lady Chetwood or your guardian, naming an early day for going to them? Though what your father could have meant by selecting so young a man as guardian is more than I can imagine."

"Because he wished me to live with Lady Chetwood, who was evidently an old flame; and because Sir Guy, from all I hear, is a sort of Admirable Crichton—just as well let me have a room here, I'm sure the place is large enough. He need not grudge me one or two apartments. The left wing, for instance."

"Lillian," says Miss Chesney, rising from her chair, "how old are you? Is it possible that at eighteen you have yet to learn the meaning of the word 'propriety'?"

"You—a young girl—to remain here alone with a young man!"

"He need never see me," says Lillian, quite unmoved by this burst of eloquence. "I should take very good care of that, if I know I shall detest him."

"I decline to listen to you," says Miss Priscilla, raising her hands to her ears. "You must be lost to all sense of decorum even to imagine such a thing. You and he in one house, how should you avoid meeting?"

"Well, even if we did meet," says Lillian, with a small rippling laugh impossible to quell, "I dare say he wouldn't bite me."

"No!" sternly—"he would probably do worse. He would make me his son, and some instant warns me," says Miss Priscilla, with the liveliest horror, gazing upon the exquisite glowing face before her, "that within five days he would be making violent love to you."

"You strengthen my desire to stay," says Lillian, somewhat frivolously. "I should so like to say 'No' to him!"

"Lillian, you make me shudder," says Miss Priscilla, earnestly. "When I was your age, even younger, I had a full sense of the horror of allowing any man to mention my name lightly. I kept all men at arm's length. I suffered no jesting or foolish talk from them. And mark the result," says Miss Chesney, with pride: "I defy any one to say a word of me but what is admirable and replete with modesty."

"Did any one ever propose to you, auntie?" asks Miss Lillian, with a naughty laugh.

"Certainly. I had many offers," replies Miss Priscilla, promptly, "which is one of the few lies she allows herself. 'I was persecuted by suitors in my younger days, but I refused them all. And if you will take my advice, Lillian, this virgin, with much solemnity, 'you will never, never put yourself into the clutches of a man.' She utters this last word as though she would have said a tiger, or a serpent, or anything else ruthless and bloodthirsty. 'But all this is beside the question.'"

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She walks with a slow, father stately step, and in spite of her years carries her head high. Upon this head rests the daintiest of morning caps, all white lace and delicate ribbon-bows, that match in color her trailing gown. Her hands, small and tapering, are covered with rings; otherwise she wears no adornment of any kind. There is a benignity about her that goes straight to all hearts. Children adore her, dogs fawn upon her, young men bring to her all their troubles—the evil behavior of their tailors and their mistresses are alike laid before her.

To be Continued

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The best burning Oil in the Market  
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N. B.—I bought this oil before the advance and can sell lower than the lowest. G. T. W. Weddall, Dec. 8, 1885.

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Temperance Hall Building, York St., Fredericton, N. B.  
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Just Received: A Large Lot of  
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In Different Sizes which will be sold at Bottom Prices for Cash. Also, Sole Agent for  
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**100 bbls. Apples,**  
Bishop Pigeons and American Rabbits, 300 lbs. White's Choice CORNED MEAT, 100 LBS. in Barrels, Tinned and Salt, together with a full stock of choice Steaks and Poultry, etc. etc. for the most trade, all of which will be sold at the lowest possible prices. Extra inducements for cash.

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10 Various **CABINET ORGANS,** 5 to 12 Stops. Cheapest in the City.  
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THOUSANDS OF ARTICLES too numerous to mention; but we have a larger stock and better assortment and lower prices than any other dealer for the same class of goods. A lot of Bed Comforters, Apple Peelers.

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