

REDMOND O'DONNELL

LE CHASSEUR D'AFRIQUE.

PART II.

CHAPTER XXIV.—CONTINUED.

"We both know it, don't we, Hannah?" he heard Miss Heroncastle say—(there's no mistaking her description of her soft, slow, sweet tones)—"the one thing it appears she cannot change, and to our cost. Let us see if my cunning cannot overmatch his now. It's a long lane that has no turning. I think the turning for the most noble baronet of Scarswood has come, and he shall find it out shortly to his cost. Do you know the vow I vowed that last night long ago when he insulted me? "Living," I said, "I will pursue you to the ends of the earth—dead, I will come from the grave to torment you." Hannah, I have kept that vow. I have come from the grave—from the very jaws of death; to torment him. I have separated him from his wife—I have frightened him with ghost-seeing until his own shadow on the wall makes him tremble and turn pale, and last, but not least—I take his money. Six thousand in one night is a very respectable haul. Hannah—let us see if we cannot make it six more to-night. He doesn't know what a severe apprenticeship I have passed to all grades of skill for his benefit. He is paying me back the three thousand he once refused, with interest, is he not? Good-night, Hannah, don't fear for me. After to-night Sir Peter shall have breathing space. Try and keep our poor patient quiet; this seems one of his noisy nights. And don't sit up for me—there's a good soul. I won't be home until daylight."

"A very remarkable and mysterious speech, is it not O'Donnell? It struck Davis in that light, and he recollected every word of it, but then Davis has an uncommonly tenacious memory. What do you suppose she could have meant now by coming from the grave, and vowing now, and all that melodrama? Did Katherine Dangerfield not die after all? Was that death and burial only a sham; and is Miss Heroncastle Katherine Dangerfield alive in flesh?"

His lordship looked keenly across the table at his companion. Still the chasseur sat like the marble Agamemnon behind him, his face locked in an stony calm. "Go on," was his grim response. "Davis followed, as in a duty bound, and saw the person of Mr. Dantree safe within the baronet's apartments. He hovered about the passage—during the night he was at the keyhole when opportunity presented. They played the live-long night—the baronet more desperately, more recklessly than ever, more like a madman, indeed, than a sane gambler. He drank brandy at a perfectly furious rate—he doubled and redoubled the stakes and still he lost—lost. He seemed to go mad at last; an immense heap of gold and bank-notes changed hands. Davis calculates that he must have lost enormously—thousands. He sprang up at last as day was dawning, with a perfect shriek of rage and frenzy, accused Dantree of foul play, of being in league with the devil to rob him. Dantree laughed in his face, and swept the gold and notes into his pockets, filling them all. "I'll take your check for the remainder, Sir Peter Dangerfield," he said, coolly; "eighteen hundred pounds exactly."

"The words seemed to goad the little baronet to madness; he sprang upon Dantree and seized him by the throat (I say Dantree, you understand, for convenience). The next instant there was a sharp click, and through the keyhole Davis saw the cold muzzle of a pistol held within an inch of the baronet's head. "You coward—you bully—you fool!" he heard Dantree say between his clenched teeth. "Stand off, or by the Lord that made me, I'll shoot you. Write out the check, or—"

"He did not need to say more. The baronet returned of a greenish white, and fell back with a yelp of terror. He wrote the check, his hand shaking so that he could hardly hold the pen, and passed it with a white face of abject fear to the other. Dantree pocketed it and the pistol. "I shall cash these checks at Castleford bank to-day; were his parting words, 'and I shall carry my pistol. Don't let me see you anywhere in the visible horizon. Shall we cry quits this morning, or shall I return to-night and give you a second revenge?' He laughed insolently in Sir Peter's face. 'Ah, I see. You've had enough. Well, good-morning to you, Sir Peter. My advice is like Lady Macbeth's; 'To bed! to bed!' You really haven't the nerve, you know, for this sort of thing. As I heard them say out in New York; 'You can't gamble with a cent.' Once more, meet noble Lord of Scarswood, adieu!"

"Davis followed Mr. Dantree back, and saw him safely housed at Bracken Hollow. Then he returned—to report to me and take his necessary sleep. Off and on I have been on the watch myself to-day, but have discovered nothing. I also called upon Sir Peter this afternoon, and found him in bed—his complexion yellow than I ever saw it, his wizen face more wizen—a picture of abject misery and despair. He was only too glad to pour his piteous tale into any sympathetic ear. He had lost in two nights thirteen thousand pounds. Enormous stakes, surely. I got the story of the pistol, of Dantree's threatening language, of his conviction of foul play. Personal fear of that pistol—fear prevents his giving the case into the hands of the police, and having Dantree arrested for carrying deadly weapons and threatening his life. Of his wife or the separation he declined to speak—that is a matter not compared to the loss of his money. Now, my idea is, to find Miss Heroncastle—threaten her with the law, and make her refund all, or part of her ill-gotten gain. Then I shall make its restoration and her exposure the price of Sir Peter's peace with his wife. I see no other way at present to patch up matters between him and Geneva."

"And that will fall," O'Donnell said, decisively. "You mistake both Miss Heroncastle and Sir Peter if you fancy you can intimidate the one, or tempt the other. She will laugh in your face as she did in his, and defy you, and he will promise whatever you desire, and break the promise the instant the money is restored. That's hopeless believe me."

"Then what is to be done? Let this nefarious plot go on—let her escape with her spoils—let this idiot remain shut up there—terrifying all who hear him? O'Donnell, you know more of this extraordinary woman than you choose to tell; is the face of all this, can you still be silent? It is the duty of every man to hunt such a woman as that down."

Dantree's picture! I would like to see it if you can procure it. Who has it?" "I don't know that any one has it, but I fancy my sister may!" "Your sister?" "Yes—Rose. Your lordship will recollect she's from New Orleans, and I am aware she knows this Dantree. She did not speak of it—it was not necessary; and his acquaintance, as he turned out here, was hardly a thing to boast of. It still wants few minutes of eleven; he pulled out his watch. "She may not have retired. I'll run up to her room, if you like and ascertain."

Lord Ruysland signified his wish, and the chasseur ran, three steps at a time, up the broad low stairs. He tapped at his sister's door. "It is I, Rose," he said. "If you are up, let me in."

The door opened immediately—Rose, in a white dressing gown, brushing out her long, dark hair, stooped before him. "What is it?" she asked. "I forgot to ask you, when I promised to hunt up this fellow Dantree, if you had any portrait of him. Of course it is necessary to know what he is like, and no description is equal to a likeness. Have you one?"

She bent her head and moved away to her writing-case. Out of one of the drawers she procured a card picture wrapped in silver paper. She placed it in her brother's hand. "It is—it was a most excellent likeness. Any one who ever saw him once would recognize it. Remember, have you heard—is there any news of—?" Her voice died away. "I will tell you in a day or two. I have reason to think he is not dead. As yet of course I know nothing positively. In the case you are safe from him, Rose."

He was looking at the picture as she spoke. A photograph so brightly—finely executed. In all his brilliant *beauté du diable* the fatal face that had wrecked the lives of Marie De Lanza and Katherine Dangerfield looked up at him from the card—the pictured eyes a light—the square-cut, perfect mouth half-smiling—faultless almost as the face of the Apollo. As he looked, O'Donnell for the first time could understand and almost forgive his sister's folly.

"A rarely perfect face," he thought, "a face to make a fool of any woman. And to think the end of all his brilliance, all his beauty, should be—Bracken Hollow."

He left his sister, rejoined the earl, now pacing to and fro in the library. In the past twenty years of his life Lord Ruysland had never been fully aroused from his slumber before—never entered heart and soul into anything as he was entering into the hunting down of this young woman. He paused and looked at the vignette.

"It is as I fancied," O'Donnell said. "Rose has his picture. No doubt he favored all the young ladies of his acquaintance with his handsome face. Here—look and tell me if this is the face you saw?"

Under his outward carelessness his pulses were throbbing with feverish fire. He handed the earl the picture. The next instant he was aroused as the earl uttered a cry of recognition. "I knew I was right!" he said, in a voice of suppressed intensity. "This is the face I saw at the window—the face of old Hannah's visitor—younger, handsomer, but the same. This picture makes that much clear, at least—Gaston Dantree is the idiot of Bracken Hollow."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST LINK.

The late Parliamentary train rushing into the Castleford station some time after nine in the evening of this same eighth of August, brought among its passengers a little woman, dressed in black silk, wearing a Paisley shawl and a close black veil. The black silk was shabby, the Paisley shawl bore marks of age and wear, the little straw bonnet was last season's shape, and two words accurately describe the little woman tripping along the station—shabby genteel. She entered the ladies' waiting-room, her veil still over her face, leaving no feature discernible save the hard, bright glitter of the black eyes. She glanced around with a half-anger, half-frightened air, but no creature was visible here herself.

"I thought—I thought he might be here," she said, in a whisper under her veil. "I feel afraid to-night—I don't know of what—I have had the feeling since I got the letter first. What if it should be a trap—and yet how can it? Who knows—who would take the trouble? If I only dare inquire."

She stood in the middle of the room irresolute, and forward, came back, stood still again, undecided. "I don't know what all me to-night," she muttered. "I feel as though I were going to die—or something terrible about to happen. Is it a presentiment? Lord Ruysland is here—she is here. My little one—mine—the only creature on earth that belongs to me. If I could only see her—if I thought Lionel meant what he says. It seems far too good to be true—it is like a dream."

She drew from the bosom of her dress a letter, and looked at the envelope and superscription. It was postmarked Castleford and addressed:

MRS. HARRIET VAVASOR, RUE DE—, PARIS.

In a large, masculine hand. She opened it and read for the hundredth time its contents: "HARRIET—I am in England once more, in Castleford, on a visit to Lord Ruysland. My wife is dead out in Quebec. After infinite trouble I have discovered your address. Harriet, I know all—the miserable story of my dear sister's plotting that separated us four-and-twenty years ago. If the memory of that time has not wholly died, if you are free as I am, come to Castleford and meet me. I enclose a billet de banque in case you should need it. Do not ask for me—let no one suspect or frustrate us this time. We will meet in secret. On the night of the eighth of August, at ten o'clock, will be in waiting near the gate of the house known as Bracken Hollow. You know it, beyond doubt. When we meet I will explain everything—the cause of this secrecy, why I have selected that particular spot how I discovered your identity with the Mrs. Vavasor, who six years ago visited Sir John Dangerfield. Only come. I long for you as ardently as I did four-and-twenty years ago. You would not have failed me then; do not fail me now."

LIONEL CARDANELLI.

She read this singular epistle over word for word, then folded and replaced it in her dress. "If I only dare ask," she muttered again. "But if I obey him in one thing I obey him in all. And it must be all right. Who is there alive that knows—who would take the trouble to delude me? To think—to think, after all these years, I shall stand face to face with him again. His wife dead—his free. And I—if he should discover the hideous story of the past, my past—all my crime—all my wrong-doing, the story of my life revenge?"

time to spare. She walked resolutely out of the waiting-room—a fly stood near. She beckoned to the driver to approach. "You know Bracken Hollow?" "Surely, ma'am," looking suspiciously at the veiled face; "a main and lonesome place it be."

"I want to go there—at least to within a quarter of a mile or so. I will pay you now; how much?" The flyman named his price. She counted it into his palm, and took her seat. In a moment they were rattling through Castleford high street on their way. She looked about her; how familiar it all was; the shops she knew so well—the Silver Rose where she had stopped, the cottage of Henry Otis, and she shuddered as she looked at the lonely churchyard with its lonely grave.

Poor Katherine Dangerfield! And Gaston Dantree—what had become of him? "It's a story I hate to think of," she thought. "That dead girl's face rises before me slight's when I can't sleep—white and still as I saw her in her wedding dress. And Gaston Dantree—I see him in my dreams as I know what he is like, and no description is equal to a likeness. All dead, and through me! I wish I had been satisfied with my first revenge—when I gave the earl the wrong child. I wish I had let Katherine marry Dantree and live. It's a horrible thing to have a dead face haunt one's dreams."

They left the town behind and took the quiet lane leading to Bracken Hollow. The night was close—dark, moonless, starless; the trees loomed up black on every hand; no living thing was to be seen. That chill feeling of vague fear increased—it was all so strange, so unreal. Why had he come back? Why had he chosen this desolate spot? What was to come of it all? She shivered in the still warmth of the night and wrapped her shawl closer around her. The driver suddenly stopped.

"Bracken Hollow be yonder," he said, pointing with his whip. "Keep straight on—there's no mistaking it; it's not twenty yards from this."

He helped her to descend, then remounted, turned his horse, and went jolting back toward the town. She stood in the darkness in the middle of the lane, where he had left her, feeling as lost as a shipwrecked sailor on a desert island. She stood watching him until the last sound of the wheels died away. Then she reluctantly turned and looked before her.

Darkness everywhere—black trees—black sky—dead silence. She walked slowly on. The gate of Bracken Hollow. Why, she murmured again—why, of all the lonesome places on earth, had he chosen this?

"It looks like the place for a murder," she thought, glancing fearfully around. "If some one should start out from these trees—some spy-broke—or poacher—or—"

A cry broke from her; she started back. A tall figure had stepped out from under the black trees.

"Harriet! a voice said, 'is it you?' "Lionel!"

"Lionel Cardanelli—yes. Then you have come! I feared you would not; you sent no answer. And after all those years, Harriet, we stand face to face again!"

Face to face, perhaps, but, in the deep darkness, the face of neither to be seen. Her heart was beating so fast that it seemed to suffocate her. She could not speak. He took both her hands in his, and led her on.

"This way, Harriet. I made Bracken Hollow the place of tryst because we can enter and talk undisturbed. I feared you would not come. I might have known you better; I might have known that whenever or wherever I called, you would have answered. Can you realize, Harriet, that it is I?"

She could not, indeed. No voice within responded to his tone or touch. That creeping sensation of fear was over her still. He had drawn her hand within his arm, and was hurrying her rapidly on. She looked up at him, tall above her, and strove to recall some resemblance. She could recall none. All was strange, vague, and unknown. She did not speak one word; she let herself be hurried on, breathless and palpitating.

They reached the gate; he opened it. The house loomed up, all darkness and silent amid its funeral trees. At sight of it she suddenly stopped.

"I can't go on!" she gasped—"I can't enter there! It looks like Hades itself! Oh, Lionel Cardanelli, is this really you?" "Come, come, come!" was his only answer, spoken firmly.

He hurried her forward; she had no power or strength to resist. The door was flung wide at their approach. Almost before she could realize it she was in the house—in a lighted room; the door was closed behind her, locked and barred.

An old woman stood before her; at her side she did not look. She turned to the man, trembling from head to foot. His coat collar was turned up, his slouched hat pulled down; but hidden as his face was, she knew in an instant it was not the man she had come to meet.

"Who is it?" she said, in a sort of whisper her black eyes gleaming fearfully through her veil. He turned down his collar, took off his hat, and showed the pale, set face of—Henry Otis. "You recognize me, Mrs. Vavasor? Yes, I see you do. It is many years since we met, but your memory is good, I know of old. Will you not put up your veil and let us see you? Further disguise is unnecessary."

She obeyed him. She flung back the veil and showed a face aged, sorrow, pallid with fear—all trace of beauty gone—nothing of it remaining but the wild black eyes.

"Mr. Otis," she gasped, "why have you done this?" "To make you tell the truth at last," he answered. "There is but one way of dealing with such women as you—and that is the dark way of deceit. Yes, I wrote you that letter signed Lionel Cardanelli. I knew that poetic idyl of your youth, you see; and it has succeeded better even than I hoped. You have no idea what a task it was to hunt you up, and then to have you come to fetch you here; and then to have you both. If you had not come to me, I should have gone to you. Take a seat; you look fatigued. Hannah, Mrs. Vavasor will take a glass of wine."

There had been a time when Mrs. Vavasor would have plucked enough to reply as Claverhouse replied to the same question of the Covenanters' widow: "To man I can answer well enough, and God I will take in my own hand; but that time was past. She sank back in her seat, her hands over her eyes, covering, shrinking like the guilty creature she was, before him—not daring to meet that stern, terrible face. The strange adventure, her nervous fear, the darkness, the solitude—all were telling upon her as such things tell upon women.

"It was rather a hazy plan of vengeance," the cold, quiet, pitiless tones of Henry Otis went on—"taken second-hand from one of your favorite three-volume novels, and quite unworthy the originality and inventive genius you have displayed in later years. You make no attempt to deny it, I see; that at least is wise."

"I do deny it," cried Mrs. Vavasor, plucking up courage from sheer desperation at last. "I don't know what you are talking of. How dare you bring me here? What is the meaning of this infamous plot? How dare you detain me in this dreadful house? Let me go, Henry Otis, or it will be worse for you."

She rose up and faced him at bay—her face gray with fear, and a hunted light in her black eyes. "How dare you write me that letter!—how dare you sign that name!—how dare you bring me all the way from Paris—to meet—"

She stopped suddenly, covered her face, with both hands, and burst into a passion of tears—tears of rage, of fright, of disappointment. The old love for the handsome, high-born lover of her youth lived yet in her heart—that battered, world-hardened heart had throbbled with the purest rapture it had felt for years at the thought of seeing him once more; and it was bitter—bitter to her beyond all telling to have it end like this.

"If there be a law to punish such treachery as this, you shall be punished, Henry Otis, when I go free," she passionately cried. "When you go free?" Mr. Otis repeated; "ah, but you are not going free! I don't do my work in that bungling way. As cleverly as you plotted to entrap Katherine Dangerfield six years ago, so I have entrapped you to-night. Pause a moment and think. No one—not a soul—knows you are here, and I presume you have left no friends behind in Paris who will trouble themselves greatly to make search for you. Women like you have no friends. This house, as you have seen, is utterly lonely and isolated—it is reputed to be haunted—no one comes here who can possibly avoid it. And here you stay—though it be weeks, months—until you make a full confession. Make it to-night, and you go free—refuse, and you are locked up until you do. Here are pen, ink, and paper—dictate your confession and I will write it down."

She sat mute, dogged, her hands clenched, her lips shut, her eyes glittering. "What do you know?" she asked, sullenly. "Enough to send you to Newgate. That when Lord Ruysland came to your cottage to claim his child a year after its mother's death, you gave him yours and kept his. You kept the infant Lady Cecil Clive, and gave the Earl of Ruysland John Harman's daughter. John Harman's daughter lives in luxury at Scarswood Park to-night, and Lady Cecil Clive, the real Lady Cecil, is—where, Mrs. Harman? Sold like a slave to strangers in her third year—strangers who loved her, little thanks to you. Still your vengeance against her dead mother, who had robbed you of your lover, was not sated. On her wedding-day you came forward and told the world she was not the daughter of Sir John Dangerfield—you took care not to tell whose daughter she was—you robbed her of her husband, home, and name—you killed her as surely as ever murderess killed her victim. That's what I know. The story Lord Ruysland shall hear, whether or no you confess. The law of England would force your story from you if I gave you over to it. I chose, however, to take the law in my own hand. Out of this house you never go alive until you have confessed."

She listened to him, her face settling sullen and dark. "I'll never confess. I say again I don't know what you are talking of. I gave Lord Ruysland his daughter—mine died. The child Sir John Dangerfield adopted was my—my cousin's daughter; I had an old grudge against her mother. I say again, Henry Otis, let me go, or it will be worse for you. Threats and illegal punishment are Newgate matters, if it comes to that. Let me go, or I'll!"

What Mrs. Vavasor meant to do Henry Otis was never destined to hear. The words seemed to freeze upon her lips—her face slowly blanched to the ashen hue of death—her eyes dilated with some great horror. Henry Otis followed her glance.

Old Hannah had quitted the room unobserved some seconds before, leaving the door ajar. Through this door, without sound of any kind, a figure had glided. It stood now just fixed on the doorway, perfectly still, its eyes fixed on Vavasor. It wore a dress of good white summery stuff, its long, loose hair fell over its shoulders, its face was perfectly white, its eyes cold and fixed, its arms hung loose by its side.

So in years past she had a hundred times seen Katherine Dangerfield living, she saw her once more to-night dead. Dead surely—and this was her ghost.

She uttered no cry, no sound. Slowly, step by step, she recoiled, that utter horror on her face, her eyes fixed on the motionless figure, until the wall barred her progress. "Look!" she whispered, in an awful voice. "Look where?" Henry Otis repeated, stolidly. "I don't see anything."

"At the door!" still in the same awful whisper—"see—it is—Katherine Dangerfield! Look!"

"Well," Mr. Otis responded testily, "I am looking and I don't see anything. You're dreaming, Mrs. Vavasor. Katherine Dangerfield is in Castleford churchyard, is she not? She can't be at Bracken Hollow. Come! look at me, and leave off staring in that ghastly way at nothing."

She turned her eyes slowly upon him for an instant, then they moved back as it beyond all control of hers to the door. The specter had vanished. And Mrs. Vavasor, with a gasping cry, fell down fainting in a heap.

"Artistically done. You're the most useful of ghosts, Katherine," Mr. Otis cried, springing up. "Come in, pray, and fetch salts and cold water. I think she'll need no urging to tell now."

Miss Heroncastle came forward, a smile on her face—the salt in her hand. "I don't think she will. It was quite as much as I could do to preserve my gravity; standing stock still there under her horrified gaze. I am afraid I should have laughed out, right, and spoiled the tableau if you had not called her attention off. Yes, I think we shall have the truth now."

"You had better go—she is coming round," said Mr. Otis, as the widow's eyelids fluttered; "vanish, Katherine, and send Hannah here. You'll hear all in the passage."

appeared. Mrs. Vavasor's black eyes opened to the light. She started up, memory returning with consciousness, and grasped the arm of Henry Otis. "Has she gone?" Her eyes went wildly to the door. "Yes, I saw her go—Katherine—she plainly as I ever saw her in my life. Mr. Otis, for God's sake take me away—don't leave me or I shall go raving mad."

"I shall take you away, and I shall not leave you a moment alone, if you will speak the truth."

"Yes—yes, I will. I'll do anything—tell anything, only stay with me for the love of Heaven. I would rather die than see her again."

She covered down into her chair, her face hidden in her hands and in a sort of gasping whisper told her story.

"I confess it all," Mrs. Vavasor began; "I don't know how you have found it out, but it is true every word. I did change the children. I hated the Countess of Ruysland; but for her I would have been Lionel Cardanelli's wife. I married John Harman, but I despised him. Poor, weak fool, I was glad when he died. She gave me money, she gave me presents, and I took them all, and hated her more every day. She wasn't happy with her husband—that was some comfort. She was jealous—she had a furious temper; Katherine inherited it, you may remember. She shivered as she pronounced the name. "My baby was a month old the night she ran away from the earl in a fit of fury and came to me. I didn't care for the child; I always disliked children; I used to wish it might die. It was a great deal of trouble, and I hated trouble; and it looked like John Harman. Why should I care for it? She came to me; she thought I had forgotten and forgiven, and was her friend."

She didn't know me, you see. That night her baby was born—a girl, too. Next morning she was dead. She died in my arms, in my poor cottage, without husband or friend near her. That would have satisfied most women—it didn't satisfy me. They came and took her away. The earl told me to keep and nurse the child—who so fit as I? I don't believe he ever looked at it. He didn't much care for his wife, but the manner of her death was a shock and a scandal. They buried her, and he went away."

"It was then that the plan of changing the children occurred to me. Some people believe the spirits in Heaven hear and see and watch over their loved ones on earth. No doubt the Countess of Ruysland was in Heaven—could a lady of her rank go anywhere else? Well it would be a satisfaction to let her see her daughter growing up in poverty and obscurity, and John Harman's in rank and luxury. His lordship paid me well; I sold out Harman's business and left the town where I and the children were known. I went to live in a village some thirty miles away, where the fraud could be carried on in safety. I took no especial care of either of them, but they grew and thrived in spite of that. My daughter had brown eyes and flaxen hair, and was small and delicate-looking—much the prettier of the two. The earl's daughter had gray eyes and fair hair, and was large for a child of two years. She had her mother's temper and her mother's will; mine was one of the gentlest creatures that ever was born; I called the earl's daughter Katherine. I called mine Cecil, as Lord Ruysland had desired his daughter to be named. I was well paid, but I grew tired to death of taking care of them and vegetating in a stupid village. I wrote to Lord Ruysland to come for his child."

"He came, and I gave him mine. I did not let him see the other at all; I told him my little girl was ailing, and he took the other away totally unsuspecting. Then I sold off everything and went to France, taking little Kathie with me. Her collision in the which I was badly hurt followed—the child escaped. In the hospital Colonel Dangerfield came to see me; he thought I was poor, and I did not undeceive him. His only daughter had been instantly killed—he offered to adopt little Kathie in her stead, and I closed with the offer at once. I never saw her again until, under the name of Mrs. Vavasor, I came to Scarswood Park, and met her as Sir John's heiress."

"I solemnly swear that the young girl who was known as Katherine Dangerfield was in reality the Lady Cecil Clive, only child of the Earl and Countess of Ruysland. The person who now bears that title is my daughter, christened Katherine Harman. I will swear this in any court of law. I changed them out of revenge upon the late Lady Ruysland."

(Signed) HARRIET HARMAN.

The wretched woman wrote her name, old Hannah and Henry Otis affixed theirs as witnesses. He folded up the document, superscribed it "Confession of Harriet Harman," and placed it in his breast pocket. She sat watching every motion with terrified eyes. "What are you going to do with it?" she asked.

"I am going to place it in the hands of Lord Ruysland between this and to-morrow night. The rank and name your daughter has usurped for two-and-twenty years, shall be taken from her before the expiration of four-and-twenty hours."

"It was not fault of hers," the guilty woman said with trembling lips. "You made Lord Ruysland's daughter pay the penalty of her mother's actions—yours shall pay the penalty of hers. For you," Mr. Otis arose, "Lord Ruysland shall deal with you as he sees fit."

She started to her feet and caught him as he was turning away. "Take me away from this horrible house—now, at once. You promised, you know. Do anything you like, only take me away."

"Not to-night," he answered coldly. "It is impossible. You would make your escape, and that I can't allow. Six years ago you had your day—this is mine. The mercy you showed Katherine Dangerfield shall be meted out to you now. Don't be afraid—you shall not be left alone. You shall have a light. Hannah take her up to the room prepared for her, and remain with her all night."

He drew himself from her grasp, and left the room. He heard her cry of terror and despair as he went out. Miss Heroncastle still stood in the passage. He took her hand and led her out into another room, and gave her the paper.

"The world shall know you as you are at last," he said—"I shall give you the name you should have borne from your birth. Let me be the first to call you by it." He lifted her hand to his lips. "Lady Cecil Clive."

CHAPTER XXVI. HUNTED DOWN. It was very early on the morning of the ensuing day—so early that the rosy spears of sunrise were but just glancing through the tall fir and waving branches around Bracken Hollow, when a loud, authoritative knock aroused the inmates of the lonely old house from their slumbers. In five minutes, old Hannah was up and dressed, and in the room of her young mistress.

"It must be Henry Otis—it can be no one else at this hour. Go open the door, Hannah, and let them in, whoever they may be."

"But my dear—"

"There is nothing to fear, whether it be a friend or foe. If they do not come to me, I shall go to them. The power is mine now. Before the sun sets, Hannah, my Haman confession shall be in the hands of my Lord of Ruysland. They shall learn of me and all, who the despised governess whom they have turned from their doors is to their cost."

"And then?" old Hannah said. "Ah! And then—"

Sufficient unto the day, etc. Go open the door, Hannah—there is the knock again; and on my word, whoever the gentleman is, he knocks commandingly."

Hannah went. She flung open the door and stood confronted by a tall man, with a hard, handsome, stern-looking face, and an unmistakably military air.

"I wish to see Miss Heroncastle," this gentleman began, with perfect abruptness; "I know that she is here."

"Who are you, sir?" old Hannah demanded, with equal sternness; "and by what right do you come at such a time of morning as this, routing decent folks out of their beds?"

"My name is O'Donnell. I am Miss Heroncastle's friend, and I have come to do her service while there is yet time. Before two hours it may be too late. Give her this, I beg, and tell her I must see her."

"He says it as though he were a king," thought old Hannah. "He looks grand enough and noble enough for any king of Donnell? Why, he's the Irish officer, who found her out—that she's most afraid of."

She stood irresolute, holding the card as he had given her, and looking angrily at doubtfully from him to it.

"I don't know what you want here—why you mean by coming here. You're no friend of Miss Heroncastle's—I know that. You're the man that followed her—that has been her enemy and pursuer from the first. How dare you call yourself her friend?"

"I tell you," O'Donnell exclaimed impatiently, "I am her friend; I want to see her if she will let me. She has rendered herself amenable to the law; she is an object of suspicion; the officers are on her track. I am her friend, you will give her that card at once."

"Yes, Hannah, give it to me. I'm not a afraid of Captain O'Donnell. Let me see what he has to say."

It was Katherine herself—in slippers and dressing-gown—her brown hair undone, tripping in the old girlish way over her shoulders. In that white negligee, with hair bound and its natural color, she looked, with the rose-flesh of the August sunrise upon her younger, fairer, fresher than he had ever seen her before.

She took no notice of him. She received the card from Hannah gravely—and gravely examined it. Beneath his name in pencil was written: "I know that you are here. I came as your friend. If you have any regard for yourself, you will see me at once."

She looked up and held out her hand to him with a smile—a smile that had something of the old brightness, the old saucy defiance of Katherine Dangerfield.

"Good-morning, Captain O'Donnell. My friends are so few and far between at present that it would be a thousand pities to refuse an audience to one of them. But you my friend! Isn't that rather a new role for the gallant Captain of Chasseurs?"

She led the way into the bare-looking apartment, where last night Harriet Harman had made her confession, and pointed to a chair. "There was a grace, a triumph about her he had never seen before—the whole expression of her face was changed. What was the sad, sombre face of Miss Heroncastle now? A sort of loud triumph lit all the face before him.

He accepted the chair only to lean across its wooden back and look at her. She stood where the golden sunshine fell fullest upon her—her tall form looking taller and more classic than ever in her trailing white robe, a crimson cord for her girdle. The brown hair was swept off forehead and temples, showing the scar on the left plainly, and adding to the nobility of her face. The black had been washed from the eyebrows—altogether she was changed almost out of knowledge. There was a smile on her lips, a light