# AS IN A LOOKING GLASS.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS. The story opens in Paris, where Mr. Lena Despard is in extremes with a lady friend who is endeavoring to rehabilitate herself in a brilliant marriage. She backs off by a series of fascinations and intrigues the engagement between Algernon Balfour the handsome student, and Miss Vere. She introduces Capt. Jack Lorimbres, a black mailer, and succeeds in getting the Capt. appointed to Mr. Vere, and agrees in the event of his not marrying her to pay him a thousand pounds as his share in the affair. Balfour as the price of his silence can remain her just. Mrs. Despard, after having made a conquest of Sir Thomas Gage an elderly gentleman of wealth, who assists her financially goes over to the Continent. She is followed to Paris by Sir Thomas Gage who declares himself madly in love with her. Lord Udolpho Dawsey, a young English man, seeks interviews with her but Mrs. Despard discreetly keeps him at a distance

## CHAPTER X.—(*Continued*).

"I know like me, I know," he assents, with a sigh. "I am not like myself. I have not been myself since I fell in with you at Ostend. Before I met you I was happy. Yes, happy, for to be absolutely satisfied with one's lot, and to have no desire, no ambition one cannot call happiness, is to enjoy such happiness as only few men can attain. I ate, drank, slept, worked, and played in comfort and in peace. I was held up as a model of what a country gentleman should be. I had even the reputation, in a way, of being a good man, a Christian, and now——

I begin to feel terribly uncomfortable, but I hold my tongue. He will have done all the sooner if I don't interrupt him.

"Now I am—well, what I am—your slave. You have fascinated me; you have metamorphosed me; you have made me drink of a cup which contains a cordial that intoxicates and a poison that torures. Don't laugh, I *mean* explain to you what I feel, and I can't find words to express it. You have taught me that it is one thing to exist and another to live. Until last September I had existed, and I was content. Ever since I caught sight of your sweet face I have *lived*, but I am not content. When you are near me, when you speak kindly to me, even although we are surrounded by prying eyes, I am tasting a bliss which is ineffable, which I once believed only existed in the brains of poets and novelists. When you are far away or when you are listening to the vapid nonsense of some young fop of the period, I am undergoing an agony of jealousy and longing. Lena, I can't exist without you." He stops, choked with excitement.

"And was it to tell me this," I say, with deliberation, "that you have tracked me out, that you have run away from home like a truant school boy, although you know well enough that the escapade might irretrievably ruin my reputation? And yet you say you love me?"

"Lena, my idol!" he cries, falling upon both knees before me. "Lena have pity, I implore you! Love such as mine is a terrible thing enough when it comes to a young man, but when a poor fellow is past forty'—I turn my head to hide a smile; past forty, indeed! he seems to me to reached middle age, and has never loved like this before, it is more, far more; it is a madness of adoration; and it can only lead him to the seventh heaven or to destruction! Ah! Lena, again I entreat you, have mercy!"

"I had anticipated a scene, but this is becoming a little too dramatic. And so I proceed to try the effect of a cold bath.

"You really must excuse me, Sir Thomas," I say in my icicle voice; "it is getting late, and I am going out to dinner."

Instead of damping his ardor, my shower-bath seems only to be casting oil upon the flame.

"No!" he cries, madly flinging his arms about my skirts. "No, you shall *not* go! No, you *shall* not leave me!"

"*Shall* not! I repeat coldly. "That is a strong word, Sir Thomas. By what right do you presume to speak to me like that?"

"By what right?" he exclaims, springing to his feet, with flashing eyes "By the right of my love for you, Lena. Have you forgotten the conservatory; have you forgotten the loving words you murmured in response to the passionate cry that came from my very soul? Have you forgotten the kiss you gave me while my lips were burning upon yours?"

"No, I have not forgotten!" I say wildly, in sudden wrath at the recollection; "nor have I forgotten it was *there*, in that conservatory, that I confided to you the secret of my pecuniary difficulties. But, if you imagine that, when you signed the check that relieved my necessities, you purchased the right to insult me, you are vastly mistaken! Thank goodness! I have been able to recover some of the money I have lost, and I can now repay what you lent me!"

I hurry to the cigerstore, and begin fumbling among my papers—too angry to remember that I may be about to alienate him for ever, and that he is at present the best friend I have in the world. For Algy Balfour is a young man, and, therefore, like all young men, slippery.

But Sir Thomas has followed me, and is clutching each of my wrists in his strong grip. My ebullition of anger seems to have quieted him down.

"Lena, you will drive me mad!" he says, but in a calm voice. "Think for a moment. I am a gentleman, and you *could* not, by any possibility, have had such a thought in my mind. Come, now, let me forget what you said. Let me tell you what my real object was in seeking you out."

I suffer him to lead me to a chair, do so myself.

"My estate is entailed, I needn't say," he begins; "but Lady Gage is amply provided for, and Hal Gage is a man who can absolutely to do what I like with the personally minus me in £11 000 a year. Now I have come to Paris to ask you to share that with me. We will be married on the sly. If I do not, you will die in a year, and I will be a miserable man. If I do, you will be the mistress of a Mayfair mansion, the mistress of a country seat, and Miss Vere—Sir Hamilton Cap-Jack Lorimbres, a black mailer, and an adventurer with whom I am associated to Mr. Vere, and agrees in the event of his not marrying her to pay him a thousand pounds as his share in the affair. Balfour as the price of his silence can remain her just. Mrs. Despard, after having made a conquest of Sir Thomas Gage an elderly gentleman of wealth, who assists her financially goes over to the Continent. She is followed to Paris by Sir Thomas Gage who declares himself madly in love with her. Lord Udolpho Dawsey, a young English man, seeks interviews with her but Mrs. Despard discreetly keeps him at a distance

## CHAPTER XI

*Three days after.*

*Hotel de Paris, Monte Carlo*

I OPEN your letter "dere dry, in rather a different atmosphere from that in which I last communicated to you my sayings and doings. They have put me into a charming apartment on the second flat in the cute angle of the hotel, that is, with some of the windows looking on the north, the square, and the distant Alps, and the rest opening out a vista of villa dotted coast, felucca studded bay, and, open Mediterranean. The air is very balmy, my room is redolent of violets, and my windows are all wide open

I attack my subject to day, "dere dry," in rather a different frame of mind to that in which I last confided to you my worries. Then, I was still chafing under the annoyance which the successive episodes of "Lord Udolpho Dawsey's Dream and "The Bad Baronet's Bathos" had inflicted upon me Then I was feeling persecuted, hunted down. Now, "my feet is on my native heath," my position is unassailable (for Algy Balfour is staying within easy reach), and I am merry as a cricket

For a good half-hour after Sir Thomas Gage left me that evening I sat motionless, in deep thought. Needless to particularize the subject of my thoughts I was weighing probabilities against possibilities, and I concluded by determining to—well, let things slide!

Then, finding that I was no further advanced than when I began my cogitations, I rang the bell, sent for a box at the Varietés, ordered dinner, and proceeded to make elaborate toilette.

After dinner I felt better. I always do. It sounds carnal to a degree, and gluttonous to a fault; but it is true.

After smoking a cigarette Mrs. Despard lounges down to the brougham, and drives off to the Boulevard des Italiens. The piece is a new one; a farcial comedy in three acts, rather wittier, rather less boisterous, rather more tart, than its predecessors, the author of the "Petite Mère Vergues de Paris." As for the plot, the less said the better, perhaps Suffice it that I am thoroughly amused, and go to bed in a good temper.

My visit to the theatre, however, reminds me unfavorably of a story Jack told me. He was staying at the Grand while *Nanche* was on. Of course he went to see it, and, to his surprise, saw, moreover a British matron "of the strictest sect of the Pharisees" enjoying it hugely a woman who sat next to him at dinner every day, and was constantly airing her French "How did you like *Nanche?*" he asked her next morning "Like it! I couldn't understand what it was all about," replied she. "But you speak French like a native!" "Ah, yes" the French of Racine and Fenelon, perhaps; but I never understand French *when I go to the Varietés!*"

I keep the sleep of the just from "dewy eve till morn" and then I send off Felicie to the Rue Scribe to secure me a Pullman for my journey south.

The day passes somehow how do such days pass? I take a stroll out to buy a few things. I lunch. I go out for a drive in the victoria, and leave a few cards. I, take occasional and wholly unnecessary, note of the packing; whatever Felicie may be, whatever other cause of complaint I may have against her, I need not trouble my head about the packing, it is her forte, and she never forgets anything nor puts anything in the wrong place.

As I stand over her, she heaves a deep sigh.

"What's the matter, Félicie?" I inquire.

"Oh, madame!"—with another portentous sigh—"I cannot help it. It is stronger than me. That fine gentleman! So pale! So drawn! He had lost his ribs with fatigue! How he loves you, that one!"

"Loves me?" I repeat sharply. "What are you talking about, Félicie? What one?"

"But that poor Seer Thomas! returns she; "and he is not so very old, see you! A gentleman eligible, but very, *very* much as a bloodhead. It is a disaster that he should be already married"

This is not the first time that Félicie has chanted the praises of Sir Thomas. She evidently considers *him*, at least, a man to be taken seriously, and she never raises a mutter in the proud pinnacle in her estimation, however serious his intentions may be towards her mistress, without having previously subjected his generosity to a practical test.

So Sir Thomas has been "getting at" Félicie: Much good may it do him! By this time three months I hope to be Mrs. Balfour of Balfour, and, having been duly thun whitewashed and provided with an undeniable character, I can begin a new life: I can dispense with the assistance of oils fogies like Sir Thomas, and the social countenance of senile tract-distributors like Lady Gage: I can—bah, what *can* I do!

Five o'clock has struck; and, with it, for the last time (perhaps, the very last, as I fear he knows I am well. Camille brings in the lamp. New for an early, a much satisfactory hour and then I drive down to the Hôtel de Paris Lyons Mediterranée for my tickets.

I pay my bill in a duchess, smile sweetly upon the obsequious Dimmy saying adieu to his charming and kindly wife, and deposit a handsome gratuity in my Camille's ever-ready palm A few minutes more, and I vanish from the scene Shall I ever tread these boards again, and, if so, how and when Shall I be better or worse? There is no denying that my position might be better but it is equally true that it might be worse very much worse

Which is it to be?

It is early when I get to the station but I proceed at once to my Pullman, leaving Felicie to attend to the registration of the luggage. There I find that of the four berths, three are two engaged, besides my own. I establish myself comfortably, and await the advent of my fellow travellers with some interest

Presently they make their appearance. A burly, fair-haired thirty-five-year-old Englishman—you could detect his nationality a mile off—his wife, a pretty, slender, blue eyed, provincial beauty of nineteen an English woman and a bride to boot, I could swear—in a brown velvet frock and a waterproof.

The husband is trying, in English, to make the guard understand that he is only going as far as Marseilles.

"Yase! yase!" answers the official "I spik Anglis. Ver good You will breakfast at Marseilles. You ave no time to lose. Take your car. Nice—Monte Carlo—alrayt!"

The bride comes to the rescue with her French But *that* the voluble conductor understands not at all

I proffer my services in the charming manner that I have always at command, and soon restore peace to the perturbed minds of my compatriots. Friendly relations being thus established, we subside into our respective seats and begin to rub noses—metaphorically speaking, be it understood

I verily believe that if on my travels I were to meet the King of the Cannibal Islands, in full war paint, I should find myself exchanging courtesies with him from mere force of habit.

Besides, in this vale of tears, one never knows who may not be useful I myself, have entertained an angel unawares more than once, and a little civility goes a long way, and one cannot possibly lose by it. After all, if your travelling acquaintances turn out "stale and unprofitable," you can always drop them.

So, very soon, I am in full possession of the chief facts in their history, past, present and future. They are a newly-married couple. He ran over to England the other day, "to get married," as he called it, and now they are taking his bride back with him to Marseilles.

She was a Miss Wolfley, Bella Wolfley, daughter of Wolfley, Tugg, ship brokers, Cardiff. She came to her Harry with a cheque for £5,000 in her hand. Pretty little fortune, eh! He is Harry Simkins, partner in the firm of Boufaron & Simkins, ship brokers, Quai du Moulinet, Marseilles. He used to direct the London house; but Boufaron wants to learn the business, so there have changed about. And it is a great advantage to have married a girl who can speak French like Bella, isn't it?

Just at this moment—just as the warning whistle is screeching its shrillest, and the brazen bell is clanging most cracked enough—just as the belated passengers are seeking their compartments most bewilderedly, and the guards are most contrariously shouting, "All aboard!"—the door of our carriage is flung open, and a huge bundle of furs is hoisted in—with a vigor that deposits it upon the Englishman's lap.

"——— you, sir!" cries the bundle "——do you mean by it? Right on my bad foot, too! Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!"

"Oh, *hush*, Harry, *hush!*" rebukes his spouse "How *can* you use such *fearful* language!"

As for me, just as I record the poor man's exclamations in blanks, so also do I *hear* them in blanks. I look upon anyone as a cad who swears habitually, especially in a woman's presence; but for a good rattling volley of malediction, cheited by any sudden or traitorous attack, I have a sort of sneaking kindness. So I hear it in blanks. It is a great relief to the feelings. I am told Indeed, I sometime celebrate a little Commanion Service on my own account.

"Do you think the bundle of furs is absorbed at the storm? Is he aroused, or apologizes for the injury it has inflicted? Oh dear, no!

As the long train rumbles slowly out of the station, it turns down its voluminous collar, puffs a cloud from its huge cigar, and shrugs its weight shoulders.

The intruder takes off his hat, and replaces it with a fez of silky Astrachan. During the operation I take a good look at him. He is old, certainly, but I can not tell his age. He may be anything between sixty and a hundred. His hair is short, stubbly, nearly white, and not over plentiful. His face is hairless, save for a pair of bushy iron-grey eyebrows and one inch of waxed moustache, waxed at the ends, and bristling like a tooth-brush. His hooked nose almost meets his chin; from a distance you would imagine the two were holding his cigar, instead of his lips. His steely eyes he keeps veiled for the most part behind his fleshy eyelids; but he has a trick of flashing them upon you every now and then with a suddenness and a directness quite startling

But the Englishman is bent upon his revenge. Finding that the stranger takes no notice of his ostentatious attempts at diverting from his wife's vicicity the clouds of smoke that are filling the carriage, he addresses him directly in what he believes to be French.

"*Par ferman, ji vous!*" he bawls in his ear, as he ing to a deaf man. "*Non!* *Par exemple!* *Non!* *Dam pas!* *Dam!*"

My cousin, amused at the affair, turns to me in pure English. "I am quite deaf I am sorry if I inconvenit these ladies but my medical man orders me to smoke and smoke I shall Doctor's order you know. Indeed Open the window, if you like, but smoke I must

"I'm sure *I* don't object I put it amiably "I am very fond of the smell of tobacco when it's good

"I rather like it myself chimes in Bella "I always meet I prefer some with pipe in the smoking carriage

Harry looks rather foolish I suspect he is calculating how many "old fools, "infernal foreigners and the like he has let fly during his minutes

"So much the better, says the old man, in response to our courteous remarks, "but it would have been all the same I should have smoked just as usual.

The old man is decidedly a bear The one thing that attracts me about him is the blaze of his only piece of jewelry—an enormous single stone diamond ring that flashes lightnings across the sem darkness whenever he raises his hand to his cigar

Soon the lessthery conversation I am carrying on with Mr and Mrs Simpkins gives way to my desire to look into my new book, and to their inclination to give way to congugal amenities. The bear is provided with a pile of newspapers, apparently indited in every language under the sun He does not attempt to read them but seems to be skimming the cream of each My novel is decorously wrapped in brown paper, and inscribed in large characters, "*Mémoires de Madame de Deffans.*" It certainly is written in French; but I have to confess that beneath the brown cover is another one in yellow, imprinted in the curiosity-teasing words, "*Le Sept Maléfices Infaits*" When I add that these seven ladies are simply incarnation of the seven capital sins, the potentialities of the story for shocking or amusing, as the case may be), will be evident

I shall not say whether I am shocked or amused with what I read I only know that, during the perusal, I fall adeep in my seat, and awake with a start to find the train pulled up in the Lyons station.

But the bear has evidently been wide awake all the time He is still puffing at a long cigar. And the newspaper he is now engaged upon seems to be some combination of Syro-Phœnician and Chinese. Time. Considerably past midnight.

* * *

"Hulla! where are we now?" inquires Mr. Simkins, waking up, as does his better half, from a stentorian slumber, in which each has apparently been trying to outvie the other in profundity and variety of snore. Verily, I should not care to sup next door to these two, even sitting at any hotel where the partitions were not extra thick!

At any rate, that is *one* subject upon which they can never quarrel.

By Bella's request, we sing "the merry five" both given to nocturnal harmony. But what a torture it is, that sound, to the non-snoring bed fellow. Shall I ever forget my sad experiences in the same direction! I fear not.

"This is Lyons,' I answered, benignantly: "there is a very good buffet here. But I suppose you dined before starting; and they always serve a cupital meal at Marseilles.

"Dined! Of course we did,' returned my Briton: "but I'm devilish hungry all the same Feel like a pound of steak and baked potatoes. What say you, lovey!

"I think I might eat something if I tried," answered the bride: "these foreign dinners are so unsatisfactory." And to me. "Won't you join us?"

"No, indeed, thank you," I say, with a smile: "I get out of the train as little as possible when I am travelling. And my maid will come round directly with a cup of coffee and a roll.

Madame looks at me with increased respect now that she knows I am accompanied by a maid, and makes for the door.

As she passes the Bear, her voluminous crinolinette knocks over an open despatch-box which he had been putting into order, and scatters its contents about the floor.

"Sacre——!" roars the old man, foaming at the mouth, with other observations to the same effect.

The unhappy woman, aware that she is being solemnly cursed, seeks to assist the irsed stranger's wrath by falling on her knees and wildly scraping the papers together. But he pushes her back without ceremony.

"Go and feed yourself, he growls vicously; "you are making bad worse Go away!"

In abject terror, she turns and flies for her life. My ursine friend does not move for a moment, but sits looking at the litter, and muttering a combination of oaths in some uncouth language—probably Kaukschatkan

I do not know what moves me to it; but I bend down and begin to pick up the document quickly with the tips of my fingers, and deftly to make packets thereof, which I tie up with the string my dressing bag always contains.

"Let it alone!" grunts my ursinity, as I place my first packet at his side. I do not take any notice, but continue my task.

"Let it alone, I say!" with growing ferocity.

I proceeded with my third and fourth packets.

"Is she crazy!" he resumes. "Madame, *will* you leave those papers alone?"

But I finished my collection with the sixth packet, picking up the despatch-box, drop my companion a sleepy courtesy (crinkle, owing to the paucity of room), and sink back into my seat, feeling an almost irresistable inclination to address some scathing remarks to this extraordinary being.

"Humph!" he grunts, and subsides into silence.

At that moment Félicie, who has pru-

dently loiged her own inner were ear upon the door with my coffee and Pain Lait crusty sup and a conscious the while that the Bear, shelving my face with a keen eye

Here, the bell clange frantically and I hollow out that "All aboard!" and at the last moment, my compagnon makes the opportunity in the nonwhisted state is at Paris, but the with the in mouths full of stables, or the monkeys of the Zoo

"Simply disgraceful, bursts out, Englishman to me, I tumble out of the carriage. "The was the worse upthings in the Continent They give you twenty minute and the courses and dessert in three minutes ffiy, so far so good But they take care to serve up their soup unfavorably hot that, by the time you have done it, it's time to book it!

Why not have the soup and attack the *entrée*, I wonder But I remember that it is one of our insular peculiarities to eat steadily through the whole bill of fare, and to consider one's self robbed if even a single item has to be omitted

"And then the railway officials, continued the wronged one: "insolent rabble! I took down the number of the carriage, No 298, on purpose to have no trouble about getting back, and when the bell rang, I found the train had been shunted about, and 298 was not to be seen where I left it So I hailed a guard in French and I *Yes Good!* *Day Aegh What!* That's plain enough I should think, and—would you believe it? the beggar only grunned, and said, "*Day I no hav, messieu, anoplen.* *Day I ostour* as if I had been asking him, in his own gibberish, where my *cuplon was*"

I exchanged friendly salutations with the happy couple, and they turn round to the Bear. He is still scrutinizing me I find. "Good night, sir, I venture to say.

To my great surprise, he removes his cap from his head, and his perpetual cigar from his lips.

"Good night, madame," he says quite politely, with a serious smile and a tilt nod: "sleep sound"

I retire into my sleeping-quarters, effect my *toilette* with rapidity and discretion, and proceed to "couch myself Then I hear from the same inhuman dressing bag my sister fish, and administer unto myself the least suspicion of old Cognac Then, being really tired out with my day's work, I begin to woo the gentle Morpheus, with full confidence that he will smile upon my suit

But, alas! I have reckoned without my host I should say my demi-god

Weary as I am, I toss about for hours without so much as a wink of sleep.

I know from experience whether it affects other people the same way, but when I am on a long night journey, and awake, the whirl and rattle of the wheels always seem to me some monotonous chorus that the serpent like train, with its dragon eyes and its nebulous breath, is singing to while away the time. The burden of its song is always different, but I can generally make out the words. To-night, I seem to recognize every five or sixth given to nocturnal harmony. But what a torture it is, that sound, to the non-snoring bed fellow. Shall I ever forget my sad experiences in the same direction! I fear not.

"Rum-bling, along! I'm rumbling along! Rum-bling along! I'm rumbling along!"

After several audible kisses, the happy couple have sought their respective berths, and are already snoring out a most discordant duet Not so, however, my Bear. For I can still smell the perfume of his Havana; I can hear the sound at regular intervals of each long-drawn puff, and the crackling of his papers as he sorts them and puts them away.

Extraordinary old creature! I find that he exercises me strangely. Why should he have spoken to me so politely just now, after being so cantankerous all the evening? Why did he smile that curious smile at me? Why has he been watching me so narrowly all the way? In a word, who is he, and what is he?

For the matter of that, he might be anything or anybody He might be a millionaire prince, or a well-to-do traveller in the jewelry line; he might be a Knight of Industry, or a Director of the Bank of France; he might be a theatrical manager. He might be—what might he not be!

At this point of my meditations I believe I fall asleep at last. But I dreamt very uneasily, and the question which chiefly preoccupied me, and to which I attribute my abnormal wakefulness almost entirely, was: What is there in me, in manner or men, to attract this elderly person's attention so markedly I cannot put "fascinate," though of course I should like to; for, though he stared at me most conscientiously, there was no admiration in his gaze. He looked amused; he looked as if he were "spraising me mentally, or metaphorically weighing my points; he looked sometimes as if he were trying to rout me up from the memories of his Datant Long Ago, but he did not look fascinated, or even moderately amused.

I wake, therefore, from troubled slumbers with this interesting riddle still unsolved It must have been very late when I went to sleep; naturally enough, it is very late when I wake. Before I open my eyes, I am aware of voices in gay conversation. They are dressing, three two turtle doves, and are congratulating each other upon the approaching termination of their journey.

"Pray! cry the bride comes up to my berth, and shakes the curtains.

"Wouldn't you like to get up now" she says. "We shall be at Marseilles in twenty minutes. You have just time to dress for breakfast.

I thank her feebly, and rouse myself.

"Your maid came round at some station or other about eight o'clock with some chocolate for you: but she couldn't waken you, so she gave it to me and I drank it. I hope you're not angry."

I tell the good soul that I am delighted, and I hurry on my clothes, so that, by the time we glide into the handsome station of Paris, I am armed at all points.

(*To be continued.*)