

OUR NEW NEIGHBOR.

CHAPTER VIII.—(CONTINUED.)

This, however, was no such easy matter as she imagined, and the days slipped by, bringing her no further certitude, except that her carefully-laid plans were in danger of subversion. She was a strong-natured woman, and accustomed to dominion; her overpowering desire to rule the destinies of others was due rather to love of power and the passion for extended influence, for bringing her personal will to bear upon a wide area, than to benevolence. To things and persons that acknowledged her sway, Caroline Harcourt was always ready to be the smiling Providence; where she found resistance, she was stern and unyielding.

But hitherto she had found little resistance. In most of her encounters with her fellows, that quality which, for want of a better name, we call will, had proved itself stronger than the corresponding quality in her opponent. It had conquered.

It was difficult, therefore, for her even to understand failure; and the independence which was beginning to be shown by those she had considered as her puppets and vassals—by Sir Walter, who took no more motive of her solemn warning than if it had been a gust of wind whistling in his ears—by Melbury, that, in spite of her covert hints and open example, took up the white lady of Fairfield House—and by Sibyl and Mrs. White, who made Mrs. Rosebay their intimate friend—had a curious effect upon her.

One or two of her friends observed that a change had come over her. She was not so calm as formerly. She had fits of brooding. She looked, now and then, restless and uneasy. It was conjectured that she had been living beyond her means, and was faced by the disagreeable problem of where and how to begin to retrench.

But those who thus conjectured were wrong. The truth was that one feeling, which had crept into Caroline Harcourt's soul, was slowly, but surely, drawing to itself all her energies.

Most of us at some period of our life have known what passionate indignation means. It may be noble, as when the wrongs of others kindle in great souls a fire that, enduring through life, stirs them to lofty determination, and deeds of heroic daring. More often it is ignoble, as indeed must be the case when any tincture of self-feeling colors it. But, noble or ignoble, it is always disturbing.

Caroline's will was crossed; her grasp on things was being loosened; her well-laid schemes were proving unsubstantial as a vain girl's castles in the air; she was angry, but no one took notice of her anger; she felt, though not for worlds would she have confessed it, that she had miscalculated. Either she was smaller and weaker, or her world was larger and more unmanageable than she had imagined. Is there any wonder that the demoniac element, which lies hidden in so many natures of unsuspected urbanity, should spring up, hot and eager for the fray—that she should find a relief to her wounded self-feeling in bitterly hating the woman who, innocently, but none the less effectually, was crossing her at every point?

Such was the fact. Caroline had begun by a mild dislike; the dislike expanded into an active hatred; and, since in her darkened soul there were no houses of refuge—where, round any one object, tender feelings were wont to throng, and, with their dove-like glances and soft melodious voice, reprove the harsher passions—day by day this bitter hatred grew. She became malignant.

She was condemned, moreover, now to the penalty of meeting Mrs. Rosebay everywhere; for the little world of Melbury, when once they had ventured to call upon the mysterious white lady, found her, one and all, so charming,

that no social gathering was considered complete without her. To avoid meeting her, Caroline would have been compelled to shut herself out from society altogether.

There are mental complaints upon which a neighbor's perfection acts as an irritant.

Adeline's beauty, her faultless taste in dress, her amiability, the gentleness of her address, her tender devotion to the child she had adopted, only intensified Caroline's feeling towards her. In self-justification, she was compelled to put them down as subtle devices to catch the unwary; and she made up her mind that, sooner or later, in her own trap the mysterious white lady should be caught.

As yet, however, she could do nothing but throw out hints, which, she noticed, were received with surprised incredulity. Her solicitor's theory that Mrs. Cockburn and Mrs. Rosebay were the same was only a theory. He was endeavoring to work out the matter; but the dilatoriness of lawyers is proverbial, and Miss Harcourt was again and again foiled in her effort to meet James Darrent.

Thus the greater part of that month of August wore away. For the young people it was a halcyon period. The weather was superb—clear, bright, and tranquil; the fruit was ripening, the flowers were in their full beauty; Nature, one might have said, was pausing to review her work, before she dashed over it her storm-hand, marring its perfection. And they made the most of their time. There were luncheons at the Park, and afternoon meetings at Fairfield House. Mrs. Rosebay's popularity had grown so rapidly that she had ventured upon an "at home" of her own, which was numerously attended, for it was discovered that the white lady had a delightful musical talent, and a voice of much richness and power; but beyond and above these were the botanical expeditions to common and woods, of which James Darrent was leader. Glorious rambles, when, knee-deep in purple heather, or struggling manfully through bracken and furze, they toiled on, with the wide heavens overhead, and the lovely lands steeped in sunshine; meadows of vivid green, yellowing cornfields, sun-crowned hills and "kneeling hamlets" around them; while under their feet were things quaint and beautiful, that, when discovered, and brought to the friend, who was fast becoming a master to one at least of these young hearts, were greeted with that quiet pleased smile which Sibyl said was like an order of merit, to be worn with pride and remembered with satisfaction.

She, like Miss Harcourt, was a person whom circumstances and natural disposition had rendered self-assertive, but the strong coloring of generous feeling which ran like a thread of gold through her nature, and her instant responsiveness to whatever in her surroundings was good and noble, prevented the tendency from being so dangerous.

During these August days it had its distinct effect.

Sibyl appropriated James Darrent. She walked by his side through the woods, when the rest of the party were scattered, she waited upon him, at their improvised meals; she addressed most of her conversation to him, and, undesignedly, with the simple girlish desire to be pleasing, poured out volumes of vivacious observations, which waited humbly for correction by his larger intelligence. She knew that he had been ill, that his last spell of wandering had knocked him up, and she watched with the devotion and jealousy of a young mother, lest from long fasting or fatigue he should suffer any injury.

It was a pretty sight to watch this young girl, as yet perfectly unconscious of anything but her own hero-worship, which to her was the most natural thing in the world, opening out the treasures of her soul unreservedly. It was pathetic to see how, day by day, the adoration which was now a delight, which might presently be a bondage, increased.

For there was nothing to check it. During these days of close intercourse she never heard from his lips one word which was below the level of the idea she had formed with regard to him; she never saw him perform an ungracious or selfish action.

When Maggie said, in her enthusiasm, "I do believe Uncle James is perfect!" Sibyl answered, with far more seriousness, "I am sure he is."

Now where was this man's secret? As it happened, on the very day when these remarks were exchanged, John Darrent and his wife—they were sitting by the spread table on the lawn, in expectation of their young people's return from a day's excursion—discussed the same question.

"I want to speak to you, John," Eleanor Darrent began. "I am in some little perplexity."

Her husband turned his face towards her, and she went on, with unusual hesitation—

"It is about Sibyl. You will laugh at me, and I deserve to be laughed at; but the feeling remains. I am so afraid she is becoming too fond of James."

John Darrent did not laugh, neither did he appear very much surprised; he asked his wife what made her think so.

She answered—

"It would puzzle me to answer that question. In fact, the reasons for my fear are so intangible that it seems altogether a treason to the poor child to mention, or even to entertain it; however—"

"Yes," John Darrent filled up the pause, "it is well to be on our guard against all contingencies. If my brother James carried off the young heiress, there would be a nice outcry, my dear, about our match-making qualities."

"An outcry that would affect me very little," said Eleanor Darrent, serenely. "I wonder, by-the-by, if it has ever occurred to James that she is an heiress."

"Probably not. He lives with his head in the clouds."

There followed a pause, during which John Darrent looked out meditatively into the serene and solemn evening sky; then he said—

"I am afraid, in another quarter there is a tender feeling for him. Did you notice Mrs. Rosebay's face yesterday at lunch?"

"When he was telling us about his encounter with the lion?"

"Yes?"

"I remember; I was afraid for a moment that she was going to faint. She is peculiarly sensitive."

"That may be; but I am of opinion that she would not have been brought to the verge of fainting if I had been the hero of the narrative. However, it is useless to discuss these questions. Things must take their own course. Only I should like to know what James' secret is."

"I think I can tell you," said Eleanor Darrent; "I am not sure," smilingly, "that it is not a family failing. I see it in Maggie; I have seen it in some who were born before Maggie—I mean absolute unselfishness."

"Perhaps you are right," said John Darrent, musingly. "If ever a human being could be said to live outside himself, it is my brother James."

"And," said his wife, "so many men are self-centred, that in a man who is unselfish there is a peculiar charm. But who is that at the gate?"

"Wonderful to say, Caroline Harcourt herself," said John Darrent, in a low voice, and rising from his seat.

(To be continued.)

A BEAUTIFUL THOUGHT.

"Nothing can lay the foundation for permanent happiness in married life, unless it be consistent religious principle. Two hearts, sanctified by Divine grace, may unite and flow on through life harmoniously together with nothing to disturb their peace. Two kindred

streams which unite and flow on together, mingling their waters, and becoming inseparably one, gliding gently and peacefully on towards the ocean, is one of the most beautiful objects of nature. But two hearts, united in genuine affection, and sanctified by the grace of God, flowing on in the same channel of holy affection, and unitedly seeking the same exalted objects—the glory of God, and the happiness of His creatures—is one of the most beautiful things in the universe."

What do you like next to yourself? asks an exchange. A gauze under shirt from White's, 65 King Street, west. Every size in stock at White's, the shirt man.

Children's Department.

THREE IN A BED.

Gay little velvet coats,
Ong, two, three;
Any home happier
Could there be?
Topsey and Johnny
And sleepy Ned,
Purring so cosily,
Three in a bed.

Woe to the stupid mouse,
Prowling about!
Old mother Pussy
Is on the lookout.
Little cats, big cats,
All must be fed,
In the sky parlor
Three in a bed.

Mother's a gypsy puss—
Often she moves,
Thinking much travel
Her children improves.
High-minded family,
Very well bred;
No falling out you see!
Three in a bed.

CAST A LINE FOR YOURSELF.

A young man stood listlessly watching some anglers on a bridge. He was poor and dejected. At last, approaching a basket filled with wholesome-looking fish, he sighed:

"If now I had these I would be happy. I could sell them at a fair price and buy me food and lodging."

"I will give you just as many and just as good fish," said the owner, who had chanced to overhear his words, "if you will do me a trifling favor."

"What is it?" asked the other.

"Only to tend this line till I come back; I wish to go on a short errand."

The proposal was gladly accepted. The old man was gone so long that the young man began to get impatient. Meanwhile the hungry fish snapped greedily at the baited hook, and the young man lost all his depression in the excitement of pulling them in; and when the owner of the line returned he had caught a large number. Counting out from them as many as were in the basket, and presenting them to the young man, the old fisherman said:

"I fulfil my promise, from the fish you have caught to teach you whenever you see others earning what you need, to waste no time in fruitless wishing, but cast a line for yourself."

LETTER FROM CUBA.

HOTEL PASAGE, Havana, Cuba.

DEAR CHILDREN,—For a long time I have been promising the good editor of your paper a letter—a letter for you—and as I am writing a letter to our own paper, "The Cuba Guild," I will try and fulfil my promise and send one to you also.

We have a great many stories to tell of little boys and little girls in connection with our mission work here in Cuba.