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THE LONGEST DAY.
Summer, sweet summer, many-fingered summer!
We had thee very dear, as well we may.
It is the kernel of the year to-day—
All hail to thee! thou art a welcome comer.
If every insect were a fairy drummer,
And I a sfer that could deftly play,
We'd give the old earth such a roundelay
That she would cast all thought of labor from her.
Ah! what is this upon my window pane?
Some sulky, drooping cloud come pouting up,
Stamping its darkening foot along the plain;
Oh, how the spots are bubbling with rain!
And all the earth shines like a silver cup!

A TWISTED LINK.

By the Author of "Spencer's Wife," "Sir Harry Darcy," "A Rich Uncle," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XX.
SIR LIONEL'S FRIEND.
OUR opinion of Miss Asplin's abilities can scarcely be worth much, if you haven't exchanged half a dozen words with her," Sir Lionel remarked, with a jealous glance at the speaker.
"Nay, I judged by what I gathered from Mrs. Mayne, and did not use the word in the same sense as you appear to do. I meant that the fair Millicent—beg pardon—Miss Asplin is as keenly alive to her own interests as most of us. Is it treason to say this, that you glare at me so?"
Sir Lionel had turned round in bed so quickly as to disturb his wounded arm. He groaned:
"Confound it! What are you talking about, Bamfylde? Speak out plain, and then go away. I can't stand much nonsense just at present."
"I am very sorry that I made an ill-timed remark; forget it. Can I or Morrison do anything to make you more comfortable?"
"Sir Lionel made an angry gesture.
"You can drive me mad by mocking my impatience. What was it you said about Millicent?"
Captain Bamfylde raised his eyebrows with a deprecating air.
"My dear fellow, with all your knowledge of the sex, can it annoy you to learn that the old lover is in suspense till she has succeeded in bringing the more aristocratic one to her feet? Who can blame her if she aspires to be my Lady Trevor? or that, seeing how difficult a task she has set herself, she keeps a party in reserve? The Owens are well off, Mrs. Mayne tells me, so our little friend will not marry badly after all. She has a tact and spirit," he added, musingly. "It's quite refreshing to meet with a girl who has the wit to play the game of matrimony so skillfully!"
"Did nurse tell you—positively tell you—that these are Millicent's tactics?" asked Sir Lionel, after a long pause, which Captain Bamfylde had filled up by trimming his nails and humming an air.
"She's the dear, innocent old lady. Do you think that if she had been in the plot that she would have been so candid with me? No—no; she only wondered why dear Millicent would not consent to marry her betrothed at once; and I was merciful, and did not attempt to enlighten her."
At this moment, Morrison returned with the lemonade. Sir Lionel drank it eagerly, and then drew the clothes over his shoulders.
"I shall try to sleep. Don't come near me again to-day, Bamfylde."
The Captain seemed amused at this abrupt dismissal, and with a cheerful "Certainly not, if you are tired of me. Ta-ta!" he went away.
Mrs. Mayne was vexed and uneasy when she learned that "the master" was not well, and in spite of the chilliness of the weather, she sat all day with the door open, to intercept Morrison every time he came from Sir Lionel's apartment, and learn how the invalid was progressing.
These bulletins were always unsatisfactory. Sir Lionel did not sleep, but lay tossing to and fro, sometimes muttering to himself, and always imperatively waving Morrison away whenever he approached the bed.
"I wish I could go to him!" sighed the old lady, to the equally anxious but more reticent Millicent. "I know he must be suffering greatly, for whenever he is in pain or trouble, he always refuses sympathy, shuts himself up, and avoids everyone till the worst is over."
The Doctor came, shrugged his shoulders, and said his patient's aggravated symptoms were precisely what might have been anticipated after the rashness of the previous day; and that on no account must he make any more attempts to rise till the fever had subsided. Yet within an hour after his departure, the old butler came into the cedar-parlor to announce that his master had quitted his bed for the couch in his dressing-room. He added that in the effort, Sir Lionel had contrived to misplace the bandages around his arm, and had sent him to inquire whether Miss Asplin would come and arrange them for him.
Millicent rose directly, and made a step

towards the door; then, coloring high, she paused and looked irresolutely at Mrs. Mayne.
"If I could but go to him myself!" cried the old lady, with a doubtful air. "Millicent is young and inexperienced, and may do more harm than good."
"You must not send me back with such a message as that," Morrison testily replied. "Sir Lionel is so irritable now, that I can do nothing to please him. You had better let missie go and do her best."
Still Mrs. Mayne hesitated between her affection for her master and her unwillingness to expose Millicent to the danger of such intercourse. However, the former feeling was the strongest, and she compromised with the latter by saying:
"You'll not stay, dear, longer than you can help; and, Morrison, you must go with her."
The butler nodded assent, and obeyed so far as to accompany her to the door of the dressing-room; but when he had opened it and announced her presence he quietly retreated to his own pantry, to have a secret whiff of tobacco, in lieu of the glass of ale he had not been able to enjoy at the village inn that day, according to the customs he never broke through but on such rare occasions as this.

CHAPTER XVII. ANGRY WORDS.

IF Captain Bamfylde meant to make Sir Lionel uncomfortable, he had fully succeeded; for, between bodily pain and mental uneasiness, he had passed a day of intense misery. The tale, so glibly told, tallied too well with what he had heard before, to leave any doubt on his mind of Millicent's betrothal to young Owen. Since that denial of any intention to marry, which she had given him under the elms in the park, he had lapped himself in the pleasant belief that she was free to receive the attentions it gratified him to bestow upon her. Like many another man who has been accustomed to make himself the first consideration, he never paused to think what might be the result of his endeavors to win her affections, or whether he was prepared to make her his wife.
His avowal had been precipitated by the affair with the poachers; but hitherto he had not regretted this. It was a new delight to evoke the varying expression of Millicent's lovely face; to see her eyes droop, and her cheeks crimson with a peachy bloom when he murmured his loving words in her ear. For a brief, a very brief interval of time, he had resolutely thrust aside all tormenting doubts and suspicions. Other women might be false, crafty, or mercenary, but what mattered it as long as Millicent was ingenuous, and his own?
Captain Bamfylde's speeches had altered all this. The old, hateful distrust, engendered by his step-mother's flight, came back in full force, and again he viewed all her sex through a distorted medium.
There was an injured tone in his voice as Millicent shyly approached him.
"I am ashamed to give you so much trouble; but you like to be thought charitable, don't you? I'm afraid you'll find a baronet, with fifteen thousand pounds a year, can be as ill-tempered and exacting as any more ordinary mortal."
Her blushes faded away, her pulses began to beat more temperately as he spoke. This was so different from the tender greeting she had been half fearfully expecting, that her composure returned.
"I suppose the heat and anguish of a limb fractured by a bullet, is as hard for a wealthy man to endure as for a poor one," she said, as she began to examine his arm. "How much you must have been suffering to-day!"
"Who says so? I have not complained."
"Your looks tell me so," she answered, with a compassionate glance at his fevered face.
"And you pity me. You, who have been the cause of it!" Millicent, you are as false as the rest. Say no more. I know you now!"
"Started at this unexpected attack, she silently performed her task. He watched her closely, but did not speak again until she had nearly completed it, when he said, in his ordinary manner:
"I received a letter from Lottie Damarrel's cousin this morning. He has got his majority, and Mrs. Damarrel seems inclined to withdraw her opposition to his suit."
"I am so glad—so very glad!" exclaimed Millicent, her face brightening.
"Of course you are! Next to being married themselves, women like to assist—is not that the phrase?—at the nuptials of their friends. But you don't laud her disinterested conduct in marrying a comparatively poor man, instead of angling for a rich one!"
"Lottie loves her cousin too well to regret that he cannot give her a set of diamonds and an opera-box," was the prompt response, qualified, however, with—"at least, I think so."
"Ah! you no well to qualify that speech. She must be strangely unlike her sex, if she is so self-denying. And your own marriage, Miss Asplin: when does that take place? Don't blush, and look astonished to find me

so well-informed. You may trust me with the information. I shall be one of the first to congratulate Mr. Richard Owen on his luck in winning so fair a bride, and to assure him that I should never have indulged in a flirtation with you if I had known of the engagement."
Millicent's naturally hot temper was stirred by this speech, and a resentful reply was on her lips; but ere she could utter it their eyes met, and the jealous questioning—the eagerness to be reassured that she saw in his softened her displeasure.
"You are talking at random, Sir Lionel; and I have nothing to oppose to the malicious report you have stooped to repeat, but my own assurance that it is false!—that I am not, and never was engaged to the son of my kind friends, the Owens!"
"But he loves you—he has told me so. Ah! you cannot deny this; and you have encouraged his suit. You will marry him, if you do not succeed—"
He checked himself abruptly, and Millicent, too indignant with him to make any further attempt to defend herself, retreated from the couch.
"Shall I send Morrison to you, sir?"
"Are you going then, already? But I'll not detain you, if you do not wish it. Will you ask Mrs. Mayne if she has any salts or ammonia she can send me to relieve my head? I shall lose my senses if this throbbing continues much longer."
All her anger forgotten, Millicent flew in search of eau de Cologne, and bathed his temples, till his closed eyes and calmer breathing induced her to believe that he had fallen asleep. But as she softly rose from her knees to steal away, she suddenly grasped her hand, and drew her back to her former position.
"Have I been unjust to count your word, Millicent? Say yes, and I declare that I will believe you in the face of all other evidence."
"She did not reply, and he passionately added:
"Oh, Millicent, be merciful! If you knew how much I have had to make me the jealous, suspicious wretch I am, you could not torture me thus! Be honest with me! Really, I had rather hear you say, 'It's all true; I confess to having wavered between the old love and the new one,' than have to think that you are deliberately duping me!"
Sir Lionel let go the hand he had been holding, and pettishly retorted:
"Do me the justice to remember that I have never professed to have been such a perfect character as Mr. Richard Owen. I am what the world has made me; but—and now his eyes again sought hers—"but I love you, Millicent!"
"You are ill!" Sir Lionel, and, perhaps, easily excited!" she answered. "When you are better, I think you will be ashamed of these captious speeches!"
"Nay, I am sorry already; so kiss and forgive me before you go. What! won't you, Millicent?"
Without appearing to hear this, she rang the bell for Morrison, and left the room. Millicent was more deeply affected by this foolish quarrel than the occasion of it seemed to merit; nor did her reflections, when she had satisfied Mrs. Mayne, and escaped to her chamber, remove the unpleasant impression. It was not Sir Lionel's aloofness that disturbed her; that she could pardon. Perhaps she loved him none the less for his eagerness to know that she was wholly his own; but he had spoken of their intercourse as a "flirtation in which he was indulging," and her blood cursed hotly through her veins every time these words occurred to her memory.
"He says he loves me, and I believe that he does; but is it as a wife that he seeks me? Will he forget all the traditions of his rank, and unite himself to an obscure surgeon's daughter? or is he amusing himself with me, and fancying that for his carresses I shall barter my good-name? Mrs. Mayne warned me that there were danger in his attentions—warned me in words that I shudder to recall; and Captain Bamfylde is at his elbow to prompt him to evil!"
Then Millicent flung herself on her knees beside her bed, and, with hands tightly locked in other asked herself: "What shall I do? Oh, Heaven! direct and help me, for I have no strength left to pursue anything! I love him more than my life—my happiness—my life!—No, no; not more than my honor! He shall never—never look upon me and loathe me!"
Not one sign of this hour of passionate wrestling with herself did Millicent betray when she descended to the cedar-parlor on the ensuing morning. She took care to make herself so many tasks that there was no time for sitting still and listening to Mrs. Mayne's lamentations over the bad night Sir Lionel had passed; and he did not venture to arouse remark by sending for her again.
It was an interminable week that followed. Millicent took an inventory of the contents of the plate and linen closet, and contrived to go to bed every night so laggard that she slept heavily, despite the aching at her heart. Sir Lionel was improving, and Captain Bamfylde spent the greater part of each day with him; but she had seen neither of them, when Sunday came round, and she

went to the village church to find comfort in listening to the fervent teachings of Mr. Hearman.
It was one of those days which we sometimes have in February, so soft and cloudless, that the snowdrops threw out their white bells, the primroses peeped through the dead leaves in the copses, and here and there a violet opened, and scented the breeze that lingered over it.
Soothed by the beauty of the morning, Millicent lingered behind her companions, and was strolling slowly up the shaded walk in the gardens, when she saw Sir Lionel coming down it. His step was unsteady, his cheek pale, but the feverish symptoms had subsided, and he was fast recovering his pristine strength.
He held out his hand.
"You would not come to me, Millicent, so I am obliged to come and meet you. Aren't you going to congratulate me on being able to do so?"
Her eloquent look satisfied him though she did not speak; and he stood gazing at her with genuine admiration, as he proceeded to say:
"And so you have been to church; and remembered me, I hope, in your orisons. Do you always make yourself so dangerously bewitching when you go to the village?"
At another time the question would have raised a blush. Millicent's glass had already hinted that the tight-fitting jacket, with its fur trimming, and the velvet bonnet with the scarlet tassel that mingled with her hair, were extremely becoming. But now she looked very sober, and somewhat irrelevantly asked if he had seen Mrs. Mayne.
"Not yet," she answered.
"Her heart is sore. She had been indulging in a hope that your first use would be to seek Mrs. Mayne, and frankly tell her that he had made an avowal of love to the young girl who was under her protection."
"He owed me this," she mentally exclaimed. "He knows that I have neither father nor brother to shield me from calumny, and that my good-name is at the mercy of the first person who sees us together, and yet he has not done it."
"Now grieve you are, my Millicent!" said Sir Lionel. "But perhaps you are tired. Shall I turn, and walk with you to the house?"
But the scent of a cigar warned her that Captain Bamfylde was not far off, and she hastily answered:
"No—no!"
"And why? Am I still unforgotten? I thought we were going to bury all the annoyances of the past in oblivion, and be happy in the present."
"And the future?" she demanded.
"He looked surprised at the soberness with which she spoke; but answered, lightly:
"Cannot we leave that to take care of itself?"
And now Millicent caught sight of the Captain sauntering towards them.
"Some one is coming. He will see us. Pray let me go!" she faltered; but Sir Lionel held her trembling fingers more firmly than before.
"It is only Bamfylde, an acquaintance, or as he would style himself, a friend of mine. He is nobody, and I will not be deprived of the pleasure of interchanging a few words with you for such a trivial reason. Remember, it is nearly a week since I saw you, Millicent. Why would you wish to leave me so quickly?"
But her opposition had ceased. A few more steps, and she saw that they should be face to face with the Captain. By Sir Lionel's manner in this rencontre she would judge him. By the course he took she would shape her own; and, with a great effort, she stilled the quivering of her lips, that had grown white with emotion.
These were moments never to be forgotten, and Millicent could scarcely breathe as each succeeding one brought her closer to the turning point of her life. She dared not glance at Sir Lionel, or the wild appeal in her eyes might have awakened him to a consciousness of what he was suffering.
"If he loves me honorably," she said to herself—oh! that of!—what agony it was to be obliged to utter it!—"if he loves me honorably, he will introduce me to his friend in such a manner that this bold man will never again presume to look at me as he does now when we chance to meet."
And then her heart stood still, and she grew faint; for Captain Bamfylde, with all that covert insolence in his eyes she so bitterly resented, was close beside her.
"Don't let me keep you from your ramble," Sir Lionel said, as he passed. "I find I'm not so strong as I fancied myself, so I'll go back to the house with Miss Asplin."
Captain Bamfylde laughed his little soft, mocking laugh. And Millicent's teeth metly met in her lip, and her hand clenched. Why was she powerless to avenge the insult that lurked in this mirth?
"Of course you will walk back with Miss Asplin, my dear fellow. I should be delighted to do the same were I in your place. This path leads to the lake, I think." An remark

and with one jaunt, rude stare into the young girl's face, he walked jauntily on.
That Sir Lionel had seen his impertinence, and was displeased with it, his dark frown evinced; but he was proceeding to speak of something, when Millicent turned towards him.
There was something in her glittering eyes that startled from his careless security. He tried to pass his uninjured arm around her, but she retreated.
"Touch me not! Come no nearer!" she exclaimed, in choked accents. "I should be degraded in the sight of all good men if I ever listened to you again!"
"She fled on so swiftly, that it was not until she reached the glass door leading into the cedar-parlor that he succeeded in overtaking her. Then, in agitated tones, he asked:
"What have I done to offend you so deeply? Do you blame me for Bamfylde's insolence? I pledge you my word that it never shall occur again. He shall apologise to you."
"For what? For treating me as the shameless thing you would make me?" burst from her lips. "The fault is yours—yours! Why have you tried to make me love you? Heaven forgive you, and help me!"
She would no longer be detained, but, turning from the door, ran round to the principal entrance, and went to her own room.
CHAPTER XXII.
MILlicENT MAKES A RESOLUTION.
"I thought I saw you come to the window more than an hour ago, my dear," said Mrs. Mayne, when Millicent joined her, "but I believe I was half asleep. The time seems so long when you are away."
"Millicent put her arm caressingly over the old lady's shoulder, but did not speak. Such unusual gravity made Mrs. Mayne look up, and see that there was trouble in the downcast eyes, but she wisely forbore to notice it. Millicent would tell her by-and-by, in her own way.
"Sir Lionel had been in to see me, dear," she observed, after a little pause. "He looks very sadly, and scarcely spoke, except to ask how I was, and what had become of you. I told him he ought to have a change of air, but he took no notice of what I said."
Millicent came round and sat on the foot-stool at the old lady's feet, and rested her head on her knee.
"Would you think me very unkind if I were to leave you?" she said, presently.
Mrs. Mayne started, but after awhile, she answered:
"No, dear; not if you feel that it will be better for you to leave Beechenhurst. But I shall miss you, dreadfully, my Millicent."
Millicent's face was hidden from her, but she could hear the convulsive sobs that shook the girl's slight frame, and this deterred her from saying more.
"I should like to go to-morrow, if possible," Millicent said, after a long pause.
"So soon?" exclaimed the startled old lady, "and where? Back to the Owens?"
"Anywhere but there," was the quick reply. "I have not thought of any plan. I suppose I must go to London, as I originally intended."
Mrs. Mayne put her arms around her pet, as if to shield her from the trials and evils she foreboded.
"I meant to have kept you so safe, my poor child, she murmured. "Must you leave me? Surely Sir Lionel had not dared!"
"Hush!" said Millicent, raising her head. "It is not him I fear, but myself! Oh! dear—dear friend, don't try to keep me here! My heart will break if this struggle lasts much longer!"
Mrs. Mayne was frightened at the way in which this was said.
"You shall go, dear. Goodness forbid that I should selfishly hinder you from doing right. But you must not depart secretly, or in haste. We will not give anyone occasion to tattle about you. To-morrow, the servants shall be told that the time for which you promised to stay with me is over, and in a week or two you shall go to London, if you will; but Morrison shall put advertisements in the local papers. Who knows but you might procure a situation somewhere near enough for me to see you sometimes?"
At first, Millicent was about to declare that she would rather go to the antipodes, than remain where she was likely to hear the name of Beechenhurst or its master; but tears of regret were trickling down Mrs. Mayne's cheeks, so she refrained from offering any opposition to her wishes.
It required more than common fortitude to appear smiling and indifferent when one and another expressed their sorrow as her projected departure was openly discussed. Perhaps Sir Lionel was the last to hear of it—nor would he have learned it then, if he had not reprimanded Morrison one morning for mislaying a paper Captain Bamfylde was asking for.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)
History classes are to take the place of spelling-schools. Contestants will be fed on dates.