FAITH AND UNFAITH.

By "THE DUCHESS."

CHAPTER XXXVI.—CONTINUED.

Horace, ascending the stairs cautiously, before the household is astir, opens the room where last he had seen Ruth, and comes gently in. He would have passed out to the inner chamber, thinking to rouse her to prepare in haste for their early wedding, when the half-kneeling, half crouching figure before the lounge attracts his notice.

"Ruth," he says, very gently, fearful lest he shall frighten her by too sudden a summons back to wakefulness; but there is no reply. How can she have fallen asleep in such an uncomfortable position? "Ruth," he calls again, rather louder, some vague fear sending the blood back to his heart; but again only silence greets his voice. And again he says, "Ruth!" this time with passionate terror in his tone; but, alas! there is still no response. For the first time she is deaf to his entreaty.

Catching her in his arms, he raises her from her kneeling posture, and, carrying her to the window, stares wildly into her calm face—the poor sad, pretty face of her who had endured so much, and borne so long, and loved so faithfully.

She is dead!—quite dead! Already the limbs are stiffening, the hands are icy cold, the lips, that in life would so gladly have returned kiss for kiss, are now silent and motionless beneath the despairing caresses he lavishes upon them in the vain hope of finding yet some warmth remaining.

But there is none. She is gone, past recall, past hearing all expressions of remorseful tenderness. In the terrible lonely dawn she had passed away, with no one near to hold her dying hand, without a sigh or moan, leaving no farewell word of love or forgiveness to the man who is now straining her lifeless body to his heart, as though to make one last final effort to bring her back to earth.

There is a happy smile upon her lips, her eyes are quite closed, almost she seems as one that sleepeth. The awful majesty of death is upon her, and no voice of earth, however anguished and imploring can reach her ice-bound heart. As the first faint touch of light that came to usher in her wedding morn broke upon the earth, she had died, and gone somewhere

"Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call earth."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?"
MILTON.

Two two months that Dorian has given himself in which to finish the business that, he said, had brought him home, have almost come to an end. Already winter is passing out of mind, and "Spring comes up this way."

The "checkered daffodil" and the soft plaintive primrose are bursting into bloom. The gentle rain comes with a passing cloud, and sinks lovingly into the earth's bosom and into the hearts of the opening buds.

The grass is springing; all the world is rich with fresh young life. The very snowdrops—pale blossoms, born of bitter winds and sunless skies—have perished out of sight.

Ruth is lying in her grave, cold and forgotten save by two—the man who has the most wronged her, and the woman who had most to forgive her. As yet, Clarissa cannot rise out of the depression that fell upon her when Horace's treachery was first made known to her. Her love had seemed so good, so tender, that it had so brightened all her life, and had been so much a part of her existence, that it seemed to carry to the grave with it all her youth and gladness. However untrue this young love of her life had been, still, while she believed in it, it had been beautiful to her, and it is with bitterest grief she has laid it aside; to her it had been a living thing, and even as it fades from her she cries to it aloud to stay, and feels her arms empty in that it no longer fills them.

"But, oh, not yet, not yet
Would my lost soul forget
How beautiful he was while he did live,
Or, when his eyes were dewy and lips wet,
What kisses tenderer than all regret
My love would give.

Strew roses on his breast,
He loved the roses best;
He never cared for lilies or for snow.

Let be this bitter end of his sweet quest;
Let be the pallid silence, that is rest,
And let all go!"

Mr. Winter's exquisite words come often to her; and yet, when the first pang is over, a sensation that may be almost called relief raises her soul and restores her somewhat to her old self.

She is graver—if possible, gentler, more tender—than in the days before grief had touched her. And, though her love had really died beyond all reawakening, still the memory of what once had been has left its mark upon her.

To Sir James she has never since mentioned the name of the man in whom she had once so firmly believed, though oftentimes it has occurred to her that relief might follow upon the bare asking of a question that might serve to make common the actual remembrance of him.

To-day, as Scrope comes up the lawn to meet her, as she bends over the "bright children of the sun," a sense of gladness that he is coming fills her. She feels no nervousness or weariness with him, only rest and peace, and something that is deeper still, though yet vague and absolutely unknown to her own heart.

She goes forward to meet him, a smile upon her lips, treading lightly on the young grass, that is emerald in hue—as the color of my own dear land—and through which

"The meek daisies show
Their breasts of satin snow,
Bedecked with tiny stars of gold and perfume sighs."

"You again?" she says, with a lovely smile. He was here only yesterday.

"What an uncivil speech! Do I come too often?" He has her hand in his, and is holding it inquiringly, but it is such a soft and kind inquiry.

"Not half often enough," she says, and hardly knows why his face flushes at her words, being still ignorant of the fact that he loves her with a love that passeth the love of most.

"Well, you shan't have to complain of that any longer," he says, gayly. "Shall I take up my residence here?"

"Do," says Miss Peyton, also in jest.

"I would much rather you took up yours at Scrope," he says, unthinkingly, and then he flushes again, and then silence falls between them.

Her foot is tapping the sward lightly, yet nervously. Her eyes are on the "daisies pied." Presently, as though some inner feeling compels her to it, she says—

"Why do you never speak to me of—Horace?"

"You forbade me," he says; "how could I disobey you? He is well, however, but, I think, not altogether happy. In his last letter to me he still spoke remorsefully of—her."

It is agony to him to say this, yet he does it bravely, knowing it will be the wisest thing for the woman he himself loves.

"Yes," she says, quite calmly. At this instant she knows her love for Horace Branscombe is quite dead. "Her death was terrible."

"Yet easy, I dare say. Disease of the heart, when it carries one off, is seldom painful. Clarissa, this is the very first time you have spoken of her, either."

"Is it?" She turns away from him, and, catching a branch, takes from it a leaf or two. "You have not spoken to me," she says.

"Because, as I said, you forbade me. Don't you know your word to me is law?"

"I don't think I know much," says Miss Peyton, with a sad listless smile, but she lets her hand lie in his, and does not turn away from him. "Horace is in Ceylon," she says, presently.

"Yes, and doing very well. Do you often think of him now?"

"Very often. I am glad he is getting on successfully."

"Have you forgotten nothing, Clarissa?"

"I have forgotten a great deal. How could it be otherwise? I have forgotten that I ever loved any one. It seems to me now impossible that I could have felt all that I did two months ago. Yet something lingers with me—something I cannot explain." She pauses, and looks idly down upon her white hands, the fingers of which are twining and intertwining nervously.

"Do you mean you have ceased to think of Horace in the light of a lover?" he asks, with an effort certainly, yet with determination. He will hear the truth now or never.

"What! wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?" she says, turning to him with some passion; and then her anger fades and her eyes fill with tears.

"If you can apply such a word to him, your love must be indeed dead," he says, in a curious tone, and, raising one of her hands, he lays it upon his breast.

"I wish it had never been born," she says, with a sigh, not looking at him.

"But it is dead?" persists he eagerly.

"Quite. I buried it that day you took me—to his—room; you remember?"

"How could I forget? Clarissa, if you are unhappy, so am I. Take pity upon me."

"You unhappy?" She lifts her eyes to his.

"Yes. All my life I have loved you. Is your heart beyond my reach?"

She makes him no answer.

"Without you I live but half a life," he goes on, entreatingly. "Every hour is filled with thoughts of you. I have no interests apart from you. Clarissa, if there is any hope for me, speak; say something."

"Would not his memory be a shadow between us always?" whispers she, in trembling accents. "Forgiveness is within our power, forgetfulness is beyond us! Jim is this thing wise that you are doing? Have you thought of it?"

"I have thought of it for more than a long year," says Sir James. "I think all my life, unconsciously, I have loved you."

"For so long?" she says, softly, and then, "How faithful you have been!"

"When change itself can give no more
'Tis easy to be true."

quotes he, tenderly; and then she goes nearer to him—tears in her eyes.

"You are too good for me," she says.

"Darling," says Scrope, and after that, somehow, it seems but a little thing, that his arms should close round her, and that her head should lie contentedly upon his shoulder.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"There's no life on earth but being in love."
BEN JOHNSON.

"Love framed with Mirth a gay fantastic round;
Loose were her tresses seen, her zone unbound;
And he, amidst his frolic play,
As if he would the charming air repay,
Shook thousand odors from his dewy wing."
COLLINS.

It is the afternoon of the same day, and Dorian with a keeper behind him, is trudging through the woods of Hythe, two trusty setters at his heels. He cannot be said to be altogether unhappy, because he has had a real good day with his gun, as his bag can testify, and, be a man never so disturbed by conflicting emotions, be he five fathoms deep in a hopeless attachment, still he will tramp through his heather, or ride to hounds, or smoke his favorite cigars, with the best, and find, indeed, pleasure therein. For, truly,—

"Man's love is of a man's life a thing apart;
'Tis woman's whole existence."

The sun is sinking to rest; the chill of a spring evening is in the air. Dismissing the man who holds the bag, he sends him home to the house by a nearer route, and, lighting a fresh cigar follows the path that leads through the fragrant wood into the grounds of Sartoris. The breath of the bluebells is already scenting the air; the ferns are growing thick and strong. He has come to a turn, that is all formed of rock, and is somewhat abrupt, because of the sharp angle that belongs to it, over which hart's tongues and other graceful weeds fall lazily, when, at a little distance from him, he sees Georgie sitting on the fallen trunk of a tree, her head leaning against an oak, her whole expression full of deep dejection.

As he comes nearer to her, he can see that she has been crying, and that even now two tears are lying heavily upon her cheeks.

A troubled expression crosses his face. She looks so childish, so helpless, with her hat upon the ground beside her, and her hands lying listlessly upon her lap, and no one near to comfort her or to kiss the melancholy from her large mournful eyes.

As she hears him coming, she starts to her feet, and, turning aside, hastily dries the tears upon her cheeks, lest he shall mark her agitation.

"What is the matter with you?" asks he, with quick but suppressed concern.

"Nothing," returns she, in a low tone.

"You can't be crying for nothing," says Dorian; "and even your voice is full of tears! Are you unhappy about anything?"

"What a question to ask me!" says Mrs. Branscombe, reproachfully, with a fresh irrepressible sob, that goes to his heart. He shifts his gun uneasily from one shoulder to the other, hardly knowing what to say. Is it his fault that she is so miserable? Must he blame himself because she has found it impossible to love him?

"I beg your pardon," he says, in a low tone. "Of course I have no right to ask you any questions."

"Yet I would answer you if I knew how," returns she, in a voice as subdued as his own.

The evening is falling silently, yet swiftly, throwing "her dusky veil o'er nature's face." A certain chill comes from the hills and damps the twilight air.

"It is getting late," says Branscombe, gently. "Will you come home with me?"

"Yes, I will go home," she says with a little troubled submissive sigh, and turning, goes with him down the narrow pathway that leads to the avenue.

Above them the branches struggle and wage a goblin war with each other, helped by the night-wind, which even now is rising with sullen purpose in its moan.

Dorian strides on silently, sad at heart, and very hopeless. He is making a vigorous effort to crush down all regretful memories, and is forcing himself to try and think with gladness of the time, now fast approaching, when he shall be once more parted from her who walks beside him with bent head and quivering lips. His presence is a grief to her. All these past weeks have proved this to him; her lips have been devoid of smiles; her eyes have lost their light, her voice its old gay ring. When he is gone, she may, perhaps, recover some of the gayety that once was hers. And, once gone, why should he ever return? And—

And then—then! A little bare cold hand creeps into the one of his that is hanging loosely by his side, and, nestling in it, presses it with nervous warmth.

Dorian's heart beats madly. He hardly dares believe it true that she should of her own accord, have given her hand to him; yet he holds it so closely in his own that his clasp almost hurts her. They do not speak; they do not turn even to look at each other, but go on their way, silent, uncertain, but no longer apart. By that one tender touch they have been united.

"You are going abroad again?" she says, in a tone so low that he can scarcely hear her.

"I was going," he says, and then their fingers meet again and press each other gently.

Coming to the stile that leads into the next path, he lays down his gun, and mounting the steps, holds out his hand to help her to gain the top.

Then, springing down to the other side, he takes her to his arms to bring her to the ground beside her.

But when his arms have closed round her he leaves them there, and draws her to his heart, and lays his cheek against hers. With a little soft happy sob she lifts her arms and lays them round his neck; and then, he tells himself, there is nothing more on earth to be wished for.

"My wife—my darling!" he says unsteadily.

The minutes pass; then she looks up to him with soft speaking eyes. There are no tears upon her cheeks, but her face is pale as moonlight, and on it is a new deep meaning that Dorian has never seen there in all his life before—a gentle light, as kind as death, and as soft as holy love!

As she so stands, gazing solemnly into his face, with all her heart in her eyes, Dorian stoops and lays his lips on hers. She colors a lovely trembling crimson, and then returns the caress.

"You do love me at last?" he says. And then she says,—

"I do, with all my soul,"—in a tone not to be mistaken. Afterward, "Are you happy now?"

"Yes. How can I be otherwise? For

Thou with softest touch transfigurest
This toil-worn earth into a heaven of rest.

How could you so far have misjudged me?" he says, reproachfully, referring to the old wound. "What have I done to you, that you should believe me capable of such a thing?"

"It was my one sin," whispers she, nervously. "Is it too bad to be forgiven?"

"I wonder what you could do, I wouldn't forgive," replies he tenderly, "now I know you love me."

"I think you needn't have thrown my poor glove out of the window?" she says with childish reproach. "That was very unkind, I think."

"It was brutal," says Branscombe. "But I don't believe you did love me then."

"Well, I did. You broke my heart that day. It will take you all you know"—with an adorable smile—"to mend it again."

"My own love," says Dorian, "what can I do? I would offer you mine in exchange, but, you see, you broke it many a month ago, so the bargain would do you no good. Let us both make up our minds to heal each other's wounds, and so make restitution."

"Sweet heart, I bid you be healed," says Georgie, laying her small hand, with a pretty touch of tenderest coquetry, upon his breast. And then a second silence falls upon them, that lasts even longer than the first. The moments fly; the breezes grow stronger, and shake with petulant force the waving boughs. The night is falling, and "weeps perpetual dews, and saddens Nature's scene."

"Why do you not speak?" says Georgie, after a little bit, rubbing her cheek softly against his.

"Nothing. Don't you know that silence is the perfectest herald of joy: 'I were but little happy, if I could say how much.'"

"How true that is! yet somehow, I always want to talk," says Mrs. Branscombe—at which they both laugh.

"Come home," says Dorian; "it grows cold as charity, and I'm getting desperately hungry besides. Are you?"

"I'm starving," says Georgie, genially. "There now; they say people never want to eat anything when they are in love and when they are filled with joy. And I haven't been hungry for weeks, until this very moment."

"Just shows what awful stuff some fellows will talk," says Mr. Branscombe, with an air of very superior contempt. After which they go on their homeward journey until they reach the shrubbery.

Here voices coming to them from a side-path attract their notice.

"That is Clarissa," says Georgie; "I suppose she has come out to find me. Let us wait for her here."

"And Scrope is with her. I wish she would make up her mind to marry him," says Branscombe. "I am certain they are devoted to each other, only they can't see it. Want of brain, I suppose."

"They certainly are exceedingly foolish, both of them," says Georgie, emphatically.

The voices are drawing nearer; as their owners approach the corner that separates them from the Branscombe's, Clarissa says in a clear, audible tone,—

"I never in all my life knew two such silly people."

"Good gracious!" says Branscombe, going up to her. "What people?"

"You two!" says Clarissa, telling the truth out of sheer fright.

"You will be so kind as to explain yourself, Clarissa," says Dorian, with dignity. "Georgie and I have long ago made up our minds that Solon when compared with us was a very poor creature indeed."

"A perfect fool!" says Mrs. Branscombe, with conviction.

The brightness of their tone, their whole manner, tell Clarissa that some good and wonderful change has taken place.

"Then why is Dorian going abroad, instead of staying at home like other people?" she says, uncertainly, still puzzled.

"He isn't going anywhere; I have forbidden him!" says Mrs. Branscombe, with saucy shyness.

"Oh, Jim, they have made it up!" says Miss Peyton, making this vulgar remark with so much joyand feeling in her voice as robs it of all its commonplaceness. She turns to Scrope as she says this, her eyes large with delight.

"We have," says Georgie, sweetly. "Haven't we, Dorian?" And then again slipping her hand into his, "He is going to stay at home always for the future: aren't you Dorian?

"I am going to stay just wherever you are for the rest of my life," says Dorian; and then Clarissa and James know that everything has come all right.

"Then you will be at home for our wedding," says Scrope, taking Clarissa's hand and turning to Branscombe.

Clarissa blushes very much, and Georgie, going up to her, kisses her heartily.

"It is altogether quite too nice," says Mrs. Branscombe with tears in her eyes.

"If you don't look out, Scrope, she will kiss you too," says Dorian. "Look here it is nearly six o'clock, and dinner will be at seven. Come back, you two, and dine with us."

"I should like to very much," says Clarissa, "as papa is in town."

"Well, then, come," says Georgie, tucking her arm comfortably in to hers, "and we'll send you home at eleven."

I hope you will send me home too," says Scrope, meekly.

"Yes, by the other road," says Mrs. Branscombe, with a small grimace. And then she presses Clarissa's arm against her side, and tells her, without the slightest provocation, that she is a "darling," and that everything is quite, quite, quite roo delicious!"

. . . .

That evening, in the library, when Georgie and Dorian are once more alone, Branscombe, turning to her, takes her in his arms.

"You are quite happy?" he asks questioningly. "You have no regrets now?"

"Not one," very earnestly. "But you, Dorian,"—she slips an arm round his neck, and brings his face down closer to her own, as though to read the expression of his eyes more clearly—"are you satisfied? Think how unkind I was to you; and, after all,"—naively—"I am only pretty; there is really nothing in me. You have my whole heart, of course, you know that; I am yours, indeed, but then"—discontentedly—"what am I?"

"I know: you are my own darling," says Branscombe, very softly.

THE END.

C. A. Livingstone, Plattsville, Ont., says: I have much pleasure in recommending Dr. Thomas Eclectric Oil, from having used it myself, and having sold it for some time. In my own case I will say for it that it is the best preparation I have ever tried for rheumatism.

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TAKE CARE OF THE LITTLE ONES.

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Alexis Cyr, of Grant Isle, Aroostook Co. Maine, writes: "Having used Northrop & Lyman's valuable Emulsion of Cod Liver Oil with Hypophosphites of Lime and Soda, and derived great benefit from it, I take take the liberty of asking you for quotations, and also whether you will be willing to give me the agency for this place, as I am confident there would be a large sale for it in this vicinity when it merits were made known.

The interesting and imposing ceremony of conferring the Pallium upon an archbishop was witnessed in Milwaukee, Wis, on Sunday last. Milwaukee had been raised to a Metropolitan See over two years. The Most Rev. recipient, Archbishop Heiss, was formerly Bishop of La Cross, and was transferred to Milwaukee as Coadjutor to Archbishop Henni, on the 14th of March, 1880, with the title of Archbishop of Adrianople, *in part. infid.* Bishop Klautbauer, of Green Bay, conferred the Pallium, celebrating Pontifical High Mass. Bishop Ireland, of St. Paul, preached the sermon. The Papal Brief accompanying the Pallium, and creating Most Rev. Michael Heiss Archbishop of Milwaukee, is said to have been in the English language. If true, it is the first official message of that nature ever sent in that language.

Chicago has had a box-nailing contest. The feat was to make thirty boxes, each two feet long, a foot wide, and a foot high, and fastened by twenty-seven nails, the boards being previously sawed. The winner's time was exactly half an hour.

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CARRIED BY STORM!

By the Author of "Guy Earlscourt's Wife," "A Wonderful Woman," "A Mad Marriage," "Redmond O'Donnell," etc.

CHAPTER I.—*Continued.*

Outside there is the accompaniment of fast falling rains, dully sighing wind, wetness, blackness, night. I set it down here in different words, and much more than Miss Ventnor told me, much more than she knew herself that memorable night. Bit by bit the strange affair has come to light, and to the knowledge of those interested therein, among whom no one is, or has been, more vividly interested than myself. If I do not carry you away as I was carried away that evening, it is because pen, ink, and paper do not constitute a handsome young lady in silk attire, with sweet clear voice, sweet shining eyes, and a story-telling talent that would have done honor to one of those improper creatures in the Decameron, who told tales by moonlight in the garden of Boccaccio to the listening Florentines. This, in my way, and with additions, is the story Olga Ventnor told me that wet October night—the tragic story of the Sleafords.

CHAPTER II.

WHICH BEGINS AT THE BEGINNING.

The village of Brightbrook! You do not know it, perhaps, and yet it is not unknown to fame or fashion in the heated months—but it was both, twenty odd years ago, when Olga Ventnor first set her blue, bright eyes upon it. A slim lassie, an only child, an heiress, a dainty, upright, fair-haired fairy, all Swiss muslin, Valenciennes lace, Hamburg embroideries, many tucks, and much ruffling. Straight as a dart, white as a lily—a delicate little aristocrat, from the crown of her golden head to the sole of her sandled foot; idolized by papa, adored by mamma, paid court to by friends, relatives, playmates, teachers, servants, village folk—a small princess, by royal right of beauty, birth, wealth. That is a correct picture of Miss Olga Ventnor, *ætat* ten.

And yet, in spite of all, of spoiling and flattery enough to ruin an army of innocents, she was a charming child, simple and natural, with a laugh all wild and free, pretty childish ways, full of flawless health and rosy life. It was for her sake—the apple of his eye, and the pride of his life—that Colonel Ventnor resigned Swiss mountains, Lake Como sunsets, ascents of Vesuvius, Texan plains on fleet mustangs, yachting adown the picturesque coast of Maine, camping out on the Andirondacks, mountain trout baked in cream, and all the other delights of his existence, and built this pretty villa in Brightbrook, and came down here in the month of roses, with eight "in help," and a pretty, pallid, invalid wife—forswore all wild, wandering ways for ever, so that little Olga might run wild among the clover and buttercups, and from much fresh air, and sweet milk, and strawberries picked with her own taper fingers, grow up to blooming health and maidenhood.

Colonel Ventnor—he had served with distinction all through the "unpleasantness"—was a very rich man, and the descendant of a family of very rich men. Such a thing as a poor Ventnor perhaps had never been heard of. They were wealthy always, high-bred always, holding enviable positions under Government always, never defiling their patrician fingers with trade or commerce of any kind, and, in a general way considering their status and superiority to all earthly pursuits, with quite as many brains as was good for them. Of these mighty men, Colonel Raymond Livingston Ventnor was the last, and little Olga, in her Swiss tucks and Leghorn sun-hat, the very last daughter of the house, born, if ever embryo belle and heiress was yet, with a golden spoon in her mouth.

'We must marry her to Frank Livingston in about ten years from now, said the family conclave, 'and so keep everything in the family. Pity she is not a boy—too bad to sink the Ventnor for Livingston—but Frank can add the old name by-and-by when he marries Olga.'

Perhaps the imperial ukase was not read in form to the bride elect, but it met the approval of papa and mamma, and certainly was announced to the future bridegroom, a slim, very pretty young fellow of eighteen or so, with a passion for baseball, and another for pencil drawing. He was really a bright lad, and at this age quite a wonder to see in the way of tallness, and slimness, and straightness. And he only grinned when his fond mamma folded him with effusion in her arms, and announced, with joyful tears, that he—he—her Francis—her darling boy, and not Anselm Van Dyack, nor Phillip Vandewelode, had been chosen for the distinguished position of prince consort to the heiress of many Ventnors.

'And you need never lower your family, nor slave yourself to death painting pictures now, my dearest, dearest boy! Olga Ventnor's fortune must be simply immense—IMMENSE!'

'All right mother,' says Frank, still grinning, 'and when is it to be—this week or next? Or am I to wait until she grows up? I am on hand always; when you want me please to ring the bell.

'Frank, this is no theme for jesting. They will not permit it for at least ten years. Say her education is finished at eighteen, then two years of travel, then the wedding. Meantime, whenever you see little Olga be just as nice as possible—impressions made at her age often last through life.

Frank throws back his head, and laughs immoderately.

'Did I ever dream in my wildest dime-novel-days it would come to this? Did I ever think that, like Dick Swiveller, I would have a young woman growing up for me? Don't wear that face, mother, or you will be the death of me. I'll run down to Brightbrook next week, it you like, and do a little stroke of courting, and hunt butterflies with the little dear until the end of July.'

So Frank runs down, and is made welcome at the pretty white villa, all embowered in pink vases and scented honeysuckle like a cottage in a picture, and by none more gladly than little Olga. All that mere money can buy is hers, but even money has its limits as to power, and it cannot buy her a playmate and constant companion of her own age. The child is a little lonely, surrounded by love and splendor. Brother or sister she has never had, mamma is always ailing and lying on the sofa, papa is away a great deal. Jeannette, the bonne, is lazy and stupid, and says it is too hot to play, and in all Brightbrook there is no one this dainty little curled darling may stoop to romp with. Yes, by the by, there is one, just one, of whom more anon, but she is not always available. So the little princess, forgetting the repose which makes the caste of Vere de Vere, utters a scream of joy at sight of cousin Frank, and flings herself absolutely plump into his arms.

'Oh! I am so glad!' she cries out, 'Oh! Frank, how nice of you to come. I've been wanting you every day of my life since we came down here—oh, ever and ever so! Mamma, you know I've been wanting cousin Frank.'

Mamma smiles. Frank lifts the little white-robed, golden-haired, rose-cheeked vision up higher than his head, kisses her, and with her perched on his shoulderr, and shrieking with delight, starts off for the first game of romps. It is all as it should be. Mrs. Colonel Ventnor settles her muslins and laces, lies back in her blue satin chair, and resumes her book very well pleased.

Frank's one week lasts well into September. Brightbrook abounds in cool hill-side streams and tarns from which it takes its name, and these sparkling waters abound in turn with fine trout. Fishing is dreamy, lazy, insouciant sort of work, suited to sleepy, artistic fancies, and this young fellow spends a good deal of his time armed with rod and line and lunch basket, and waited upon dutifully by his devoted little handmaiden, Princess Olga. All the world adores her, she in turn adores Frank. He is the handsomest, the cleverest, the dearest cousin in all the world. He paints her picture, he bears her aloft in triumph upon his shoulder, he sings her German drinking songs, he teaches her to bait her hook and catch fish, he takes for long rambles in the woods, he instructs her in the art of waltzing, he tells her the most wonderful goblin tales ever human brains invented.

And all this without a jot of reference to his mother's romance of the future. That he laughs at—simply because she is the prettiest little darling in the world, and he is fond of children. Marry her in ten years—ten years forsooth! Why not say half a century at once, and have done with it. He is seventeen—ten years looks a long perspective, a little for ever, to eyes seventeen years old.

October comes. With the first black blast and whistling drift of maple leaves, these birds of summer forsake their fragile nest and flutter back to the stately family home of the Ventnors on Madison-avenue. The pretty white villa, with its roses and verandahs, and conservatories, sun-dial, is shut up, and only an old man his daughter left to care for it until the next June honeysuckles blow.

Little Olga goes back to her books and her piano, under an all-accomplished governess Frank goes in for painting, and takes a trip to the everglades of Florida. Early next summer the Ventnor family return, making a mighty stir throughout Brightbrook, and in due course down comes Frank.

A year has made its mark on that young man. His fine tenor voice is changing to an ugly bass, a callow down is forming on his upper lip, and is loved and caressed as a youthful mother may her first-born babe. He is absent a great deal from the cottage, and he very seldom takes Olga with him anywhere now.

Nobody knows where he spends his time. Olga is the only one who inquires; Olga, piqued and pouting, yet too proud even at eleven to let him see how much she cares.

'Where have you been now?' she will ask.

'Oh, up the village!'

It is his invariable answer, and it being a dull little village, and Mr. Francis of a lively turn, and fond of life, even rough and rollicking life, it is a little puzzling. Olga does not like it at all; he is not nearly so nice as on the preceding year; he leaves her to Jeannette and mamma, and amuses himself very well without her. The absences grow more and prolonged.

He stays away whole days, and his latch key opens the hall-door gently far into the dim watches of the night. Lying awake, looking at the summer moonlight stealing whitely in, the child will hear that cautious click, that light footstep passing the door, and presently the little Swiss clock on the mantel will chime out, silvery and sharp, two or three. Three in the morning, and up at the village. It is odd. But presently the mystery is solved for Olga in quite a sudden and awful way.

CHAPTER III.

HOW LITTLE OLGA GETS LOST.

'Cousin Frank!"

There is no reply. Stretched on the sun-steeped grass, his straw hat pulled over his face, his long length casting a prodigious shadow in the afternoon sunshine, cousin Frank is leagues away in the lovely land of dreams.

'Frank! cousin Frank! Frank Livingston! Oh, dear!' sighs Olga, impatiently. 'No wonder he is asleep. It struck three this morning before—Frank! Oh! how stupid you are! Do, do wake up!'

Thus adjured, and further urged by the pointed toe of a most Cinderella-like shoe of blue kid, Frank consents to slowly and lazily open his handsome eyes.

'Oh!' she says, with a pout, 'at last! You are worse than the Seven Sleepers. Here you have been fast asleep for tha past two hours, and all that tiresome time I have been waiting here. I think it is horrid of you, Frank Livingston, to act so!'

'To act so? To act how, fairest of fancy cousins? What has your Frank, the most abject of thy slaves, Lady Olga, been doing now, to evoke your frown? There is no harm in taking, a snooze on the grass, is there?' says Frank, with a prolonged yawn.

Miss Olga stands beside him, slim, straight, white, blonde, pouting, and very, very pretty.

'There is harm in never coming home until half past three in the morning every night. It you didn't do that you wouldn't sleep on the grass all the next afternoon. What would mamma say?'

He rises suddenly on his elbow and looks at her. Pretty well this for a demoiselle of eleven! She stands rolling the gravel with one blue boot-tip, her wide-brimmed leghorn hat shading her face, the long, almost flaxen ringlets falling to her slender waist, her delicate lips pouting, the light figure upright as a dart.

'Princess Olga,' Frank says, after a pause and a stare, 'what an uncommonly pretty little thing you are getting to be! I must make a sketch of you just as you stand; that sunshine on your yellow curls and white dress is capital! Do not stir, please; my sketch-book is here; I will dash you off in all your loveliness in the twinkling of a bedpost!'

Frank's sketch-book and Frank himself are never far apart. He takes it up now, as it lies at his elbow, selects a fair and unspotted page, points a broad black pencil, and begins.

'Just as you are—do not move. "Just as I am, and waiting not, to rid myself of one-some sort of blot"—how is it the hymn goes? And so you heard me come in last night? Now, who would think such pretty little pink ears could be so sharp. !'

'Last night!' pouts Olga; 'this morning you mean. Half-past three. I heard the clock strike.'

'Don't believe the clock—it is a foul slanderer. Those little jewelled jimcracks that play tunes before they strike always tell lies. Did you tell mamma about it this morning, Olly?'

She flings back her head, and her blue eyes—very like Frank's own—kindle.

'Tell mamma! I am not a tell-tale, cousin Frank.'

The young fellow, sketching busily, draws a breath of relief.

'Most gracious princess, you are a little

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