

THE VILLAGE ANGEL; Or Agatha's Recompense

CHAPTER LXIII.—Continued.

When she went, with her heart full of love and happiness, to talk to her about the case, Miss Brooke looked tired, languid, and unhappy; she had no more cheerful smiles or bright words, no more warm sympathy. On certainty as to the right and wrong of what she had to do was not the only cause of her suffering; she loved him still, this handsome earl who had done his best to ruin her. She could not take back from him, because he was an orphan of the love she had given him. She was a tender-hearted, loving woman, who had suffered a great wrong, but this wrong did not make her hate the evil-doer when she had recovered from her first shock of knowing that he was there under the same roof with her.

It was a fever—a torture of jealousy—that seized her, when Beatrice came, with flying feet and flushed, happy face, to tell her that she was going out driving, riding, or walking with the earl. She could not always control herself, and give the sweet, warm sympathy that they girl sought. Her heart would ache; her face grow pale; her eyes darken with shadows of pain. She loved Lord Kelso, and he had been more than the whole world to her, and she could not endure the thought that the same love and gentle words he had given to her now belonged to another.

There were times when, after she had seen Lord Kelso ride away from the park gates—she so happy, fair, and smiling, his stately, kind and handsome—she would go into her room, shut the door, and bring herself with her face on the floor, there to sob out her woe and grief with bitter sighs and bitter tears.

"Shame to me," she cried, "that I love him yet! I love him yet! Oh, my one love—my dear love! Would to Heaven that I might forget you, or might die! It was wonderful for her how she forgot her injuries—forgot the great wrong done to her, and thought only of him.

Beatrice came to her one day, knowing that Agatha was very clever with her pencil, to ask her to draw a design.

"I want it to embrace Lord Kelso's motto and crest; not the crest he uses now, with the Kelso arms, but those he bore when he was Sir Vane Carylon. I like them best."

"I will do my best to please you, Beatrice."

And the young girl leaned on Agatha's shoulder, as the white slender fingers deftly used the pencil.

"What is the crest?" asked Agatha; and her voice sounded cold and chill.

"A crown, with an olive branch," replied Beatrice.

It was with difficulty Agatha kept back her tears. How well she remembered it! How many hundred times had she seen it and kissed it!

"What is the motto?" she asked, gently.

"Vincit Veritas," replied Beatrice, smiling over the words as though she loved them, "and they suit him, Miss Brooke. He seems to be always the very embodiment of truth; it shines in his eyes and in his face—do you not think so?"

The question was like a dagger in her heart. She evaded it, making some answer that contented Beatrice without betraying herself.

CHAPTER LXIV

AS SHE LOOKED THEM, SHE NEVER LOOKED AGAIN.

September came and went, and as yet she had come to no decision. Lord Kelso was going away then—going to town on business connected with the marriage, and Beatrice confided to Agatha her sorrow at losing him.

"I have learned to love him well," she said. "At first, when I thought how soon we were to be married, I was not sorry, you know; but it seemed to me soon—that I had hardly had time to enjoy my betrothal, and it was almost over. But now I would not change it for the world, I would not have it one day later. I am miserable even that he is going to leave me for so short a time."

And she listened, knowing all, could not help but weep.

Lord Kelso went, leaving behind him Agatha's out-cries and groans; words, which she had read at the altar, and which were a tribute of suspense; she could come to no decision—the way was dark before her.

Lord Kelso was to return at the end of October for a few weeks, and then they were not to meet again until the wedding day; it was settled for the twenty-second of December.

The bright hours passed, and, with each one bringing her nearer to the one she loved, Beatrice became happier every day. She was in the highest spirits; her beautiful face was bright with smiles; to look at her was to feel young, and happy, and glad.

While every day the gentle heart of Agatha Brooke grew more heavy, more uncertain, more despairing—her thoughts and ideas did not seem to grow clearer.

Every day she saw greater preparations made for that marriage which seemed to her so cruel, and Beatrice, loving her every day, trusted her more and more. She talked to Agatha of the future, of that future which seemed so bright to her; of what she should do when she lived at Graywood, until there were times when the brave, patient spirit broke down, and Agatha turned away with a moan on her lips.

Nearer and nearer—every day now brought boxes and chests to the castle; every day brought some portion or other of the elaborate trousseau which might have been prepared for a princess.

Nothing else was spoken about; it was always Lord Kelso and the wedding—the wedding and the trousseau—until even Lady Penrith laughed and said the subject must be changed.

What was she to do? She had no one to help and advise her; she had no certain rules to guide her; she could not tell, as she generally did, at the first glance what was right and what was wrong.

It did not matter to Agatha that any one had ever prophesied to her that she would be a widow when she was doing now, not knowing right from wrong, she would not have believed them. Now she would have given much for a ray of light to guide her on a dark road.

The chill, serene month of October brought the earl back again to Penrith Castle. It was like a real coming home, for he had forgotten no one. Lady Penrith raised her hands and eyes in amazement at the number and splendor of the presents he brought with him. The children were in ecstasy; they wished that each a lover came every day; and Beatrice was happier in a quiet fashion.

She said less, but Agatha saw that she loved him more. Her loving heart could not rest until she had caught one glimpse of him. She went to one of the unused rooms of the eastern wing that she might watch him from thence as he mounted his horse. He looked well and strong, but there was no happiness in the dark handsome face.

She could have stretched out her hands to him with a loving cry. Ah, if she dare!

If that handsome head were turned to her but for a moment, and his dark eyes flashed recognition into hers!

"I shall do my best," she said, as she hurriedly retreated.

She had a glimpse of Beatrice for the next few days, only at times she caught sight of a glad young face, beautiful in its love and hope. Then, suddenly, as a thunderstorm breaks on a summer day, a shock came to her, an event happened, perhaps the most terrible and the most unlikely.

The whole party—it was a mild, warm day in October, one of those which come at rare intervals—and the whole party of guests, with Lord and Lady Penrith, had driven over to one of the neighboring manor-houses, where they were expected to take luncheon.

On such occasions, when the beautiful, stately old mansion was empty, it was Agatha's delight to roam over it, to visit the picture-gallery and the drawing-rooms, so full of beauty and luxury. Many little things had she seen this morning touched her heart deeply. Some music belonging to Beatrice lay upon the piano in the drawing-room; she saw her name written upon it in Vane's handwriting. She bent down and kissed it, her eyes filling with hot tears. Just then the sound of footsteps on the terrace attracted her attention; surely they had not returned yet. She went quickly to the window. She knew that the earl and Beatrice had ridden together. If any unforeseen incident had brought them back again—she must go and see.

But a strange figure was there. A carriage, evidently hired from the nearest railway station or hotel, stood before the grand entrance, and a lady had just descended from it, and was walking up to the hall-door—a tall, stately figure, clad in a black, simple dress, and wearing a black veil, quite a stranger to Penrith, for by mistake she had turned to the terrace on the left—a stranger, yet there was something almost terribly familiar in her style and carriage.

The lady went up to the great hall door, and Agatha heard a long, loud peal. In some vague way it struck horror into her—it filled her with dread, and then she re-approached herself for being weak and foolish; yet some impulse led her to the great entrance-hall, where she overheard a footman talking to the stranger.

A sudden horror, a dreadful trembling seized her—the tones of that voice were quite familiar. A half-sharp, half-imperious voice, with a piquant French accent. Her heart almost stood still; a chill terrible as the cold of death came over her. What could it mean? Surely as she was living, surely as the bright sun shone in a blue sky, that was the voice of Valerie d'Envers. She stood for a few moments in horrible distress and suspense; then she heard the same voice, but this time in far more imperious accents, say: "I have travelled some distance, at great inconvenience to myself, to see Lord and Lady Penrith on very important business, and I shall not go away until I have seen them. If they are not at home, I will wait here until they return."

It was Valerie—brilliant, beautiful Valerie. What had brought her here? Valerie, who had eloped with cruel words; Valerie, who had robbed her of her happiness, her life, and her love; Valerie, whose cruel, perfect face had bent over her in the agony that had been more bitter than the agony of death. Looking neither to the right nor the left—never deigning to let her eyes fall on the figure standing so silent, Valerie swept through the great entrance hall, and Agatha anxiously followed her with her eyes.

"Show me into a room where there is a fire," she said. "If I have to wait some hours, I shall feel the cold."

Agatha saw a peculiar smile on the servant's face, as he opened the door of one of the ante-rooms, where a good fire was blazing. She swept in, and the man closed the door. Agatha, with a white, wild look on her face, went up to him.

"Who is that lady, John?" she asked.

"I do not know, miss; she would not give any name or any card. She wants to see my lord and my lady—and see them she will. I should think she is a French lady by her accent and manner."

John had no more to say, and Agatha knew that it would not be safe to indulge any curiosity. It was Valerie, there could be no denying that; as mistakes, and judging from her manner, Valerie in her most impatient and determined mood.

At first Agatha felt quite sure that it was to seek her that the Frenchwoman was there. She must have heard that she had made her way into the world of pure and good women from which she declared her shut out. She had come to betray her; to tell the story of her fatal mistake; to ruin her by driving her from this haven of rest, where she had found peace. It must be that—there was nothing else to bring her here. Yet why would she persecute her? Why, after this long interval of time seek to do her harm? Valerie could know nothing of the Penriths. It could be from no interest in them that she was anxious to betray her. Another thing was how could it be possible that she could have traced her there? Then another, and even more terrible idea, came to her—one that made her tremble. It was, perhaps, not for her that Valerie had come, but for Lord Kelso.

She knew nothing of what had passed between Sir Vane and Valerie, but she was wiser now than when she lived in the beautiful castle by the lake. She had thought it all so simple, and had come to the conclusion that when she lived at Graywood, until there were times when the brave, patient spirit broke down, and Agatha turned away with a moan on her lips.

Nearer and nearer—every day now brought boxes and chests to the castle; every day brought some portion or other of the elaborate trousseau which might have been prepared for a princess.

Nothing else was spoken about; it was always Lord Kelso and the wedding—the wedding and the trousseau—until even Lady Penrith laughed and said the subject must be changed.

What was she to do? She had no one to help and advise her; she had no certain rules to guide her; she could not tell, as she generally did, at the first glance what was right and what was wrong.

It did not matter to Agatha that any one had ever prophesied to her that she would be a widow when she was doing now, not knowing right from wrong, she would not have believed them. Now she would have given much for a ray of light to guide her on a dark road.

The chill, serene month of October brought the earl back again to Penrith Castle. It was like a real coming home, for he had forgotten no one. Lady Penrith raised her hands and eyes in amazement at the number and splendor of the presents he brought with him. The children were in ecstasy; they wished that each a lover came every day; and Beatrice was happier in a quiet fashion.

She said less, but Agatha saw that she loved him more. Her loving heart could not rest until she had caught one glimpse of him. She went to one of the unused rooms of the eastern wing that she might watch him from thence as he mounted his horse. He looked well and strong, but there was no happiness in the dark handsome face.

She could have stretched out her hands to him with a loving cry. Ah, if she dare!

She knew, afterward all that passed when time had healed the bitter wounds. At first no word was said of the strange lady; then the footman came to tell Lady Penrith that a visitor was waiting for her.

"A French lady," said Lady Penrith. "I have no idea who it can be."

She went at once to the ante-room, where Valerie, tall and stately, awaited her. She rose in silence when the mistress of the castle entered, and made her most stately bow.

"You wish to see me," said Lady Penrith, quietly, wondering who this brilliant beautiful Frenchwoman could be.

"Yes, I have come some distance to see you, Lady Penrith; I wish also to see Lord Kelso, and—and a gentleman who is staying here."

"I do not quite understand," said Lady Penrith, haughtily.

"You will understand afterward, madam. I cannot explain. I must see Lord Penrith. You will kindly allow me to ask you one question! Have you a gentleman visiting you called Lord Kelso?"

"I do not understand the question," replied Lady Penrith. "I do not feel inclined to answer it."

"I know that I am doing something quite unconventional, Lady Penrith, but I feel quite sure, when you know the motive, you will say that I am more than justified. I have a carriage waiting, and my time is limited. May I ask if I can see Lord Penrith?"

"I do not know what to say. This is a very unusual proceeding. Would you tell me to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?"

"You will not know my name when you hear it, Lady Penrith; but I will tell it to you with pleasure. I am Valerie d'Envers, and Lady Penrith, in her turn, bowed.

She knew the name was one of the best in France. That slightly changed the aspect of affairs. A noble lady would not be there on a trifling errand.

"I wish," continued Valerie "to make a communication to you and to Lord Penrith; but it must be made in the presence of Lord Kelso."

Then Lady Penrith began to fear, began to wonder what was coming; her face grew pale, and she rang the bell with a trembling hand.

"I wish to see Lord Penrith at once," she said. "Ask him not to delay."

CHAPTER LXV

A FOLLY OR A CRIME.

It was not easy to find Lord Penrith; he had gone to speak to the head gardener, who was waiting for him, and the two had walked together to some distant spot of the garden. While the footman was looking for him the two ladies sat in perfect silence. At first Lady Penrith had felt no alarm; but the proceeding was rather unusual, and the lady herself did not look comfortable.

Yet at the minutes passed, and those dark eyes, with their sombre depths of passion and power, watched her with that silent, intense gaze, Lady Penrith began to feel sick at heart. What could it be?

Nothing surely, which could hurt her husband or hurt Beatrice—beautiful, happy Beatrice—surely nothing could hurt her! Yet the thought fastened like a serpent on her heart, her face grew pale and still; the dark eyes of the other woman never wavered, never took their glance from her. It was a relief to her when she heard her husband's footsteps.

"Here is Lord Penrith," she said; but no change came over the solemn gloom of the beautiful foreign face. The very sight of him, when he opened the door, gave Lady Penrith a sense of protection; nothing could go very far wrong when her husband was near. He looked at Valerie in wonder, quick enough to see the sombre beauty of her face, and to recognize from its expression that she was there on no peaceful errand.

He glanced at his wife.

"You want me, Philippa?" he said; and then the strange lady arose from her seat and stood before him, tall, erect, and stately.

"No; it is I who wish to see you, Lord Penrith," she added. "I have come from some distance, and at some inconvenience, for the purpose of seeing you and Lady Penrith. Would you kindly see that the door is closed, and that we have no interruption?"

For all answer Lord Penrith turned and locked the door.

"We are quite secure now," he said; "no one will come near us."

"I am a stranger to you, Lord Penrith," said the stately lady; "let me introduce myself to you. I am Valerie d'Envers; the name you will recognize as one well known in France."

He bowed low, feeling, as his wife had done, that there was something unusual and extraordinary to bring this lady, in this fashion, to them.

"Do you admit the fact," she asked. "Do you doubt my identity? If so, I can prove it to you in many ways."

"I do not dispute it," said the earl.

"I should like briefly to say a few more words about myself," she continued, "so that you can rest assured of my respectability and responsibility. Unlike most French unmarried ladies, I am perfectly independent. My father left me a good fortune, and I have been accustomed to spend one-half of my time among my friends in Paris; the other half has been spent with my aunt, Madame La Baronne d'Envers, at the Chateau of Bellefleur, in Switzerland, and it is in consequence of what I saw there that I am here now."

"I must explain that my aunt lost the greater part of her fortune, and that, in order to make up her income, she, during the spring and summer, lets the greater part of the chateau to the rich English who go abroad. You will understand soon why I tell you this. In what I have to say, do not for one moment imagine that I am speaking untruthfully. If you did you will find it out and punish me, but every word I have to say to you is as true as it is that the sun shines in heaven; therefore, as I tell you my story, do not seek comfort in these words: 'It cannot be true.' It is true. I should not have come all this way to tell lies." She looked suddenly up into Lord Penrith's face. "You have staying with you now the Earl of Kelso, and who Sir Vane Carylon come years ago, but who succeeded very unexpectedly, and through some terribly sudden death, to the Kelso title and estates."

Lord Penrith bowed. This was a true statement, and there was nothing to be answered.

"I have read," she continued, "in papers which should be well informed, that Lord Kelso is about to marry your eldest daughter, Beatrice Penrith."

"Oh, Heaven! Beatrice!" cried Lady Penrith. It seemed as though her fears and doubts were to be realized; she stretched out her hands as though she would ward off a blow. "Beatrice," she repeated, and Lord Penrith went up to her; he knew how she loved this beautiful child; he threw his strong arm round her.

"Hush, Philippa!" he said, gently; "wait and hear—there are always two sides to every question. Listen; perhaps we can reply."

"I am sorry for you," said Valerie to Lady Penrith. "If I could do my duty without stabbing you to the heart I would, but I cannot. You have accepted Lord Kelso as a suitor for your daughter, therefore you consider him an honorable man."

"I believe so," said Lord Penrith, stiffly. He did not like the lady's manner, or the triumph that he saw shining in her dark eyes. If wrong had been done to Beatrice, great heaven! how he would avenge it!

"You would not take a servant into your household without strict inquiries as to character, honesty, and integrity, would you, Lord Penrith?"

"Certainly not," he replied; "although I do not see what that has to do with the question."

"Only this," she replied, her lips curling—"only this, that if you had made as many inquiries about your daughter's lover as you would have made over a household or a groom, you would not have consented to his becoming your daughter's husband."

"Oh, Beatrice! my beautiful, bright Beatrice!" wailed Lady Penrith.

And then her husband spoke sharply.

"We have heard nothing that affects Beatrice yet," he said.

"But you made enquiries about him," persisted Valerie, "you would have found out that he was not fit to marry a young, innocent girl like your daughter; that although he bears the name of a great man, although people say there is no real harm in him, and that he is his own worst enemy, there are deeper, darker crimes to be laid to his charge—crimes that have blackened his soul until, I repeat, the white, pure soul of your daughter would shudder at contact with it."

"Assertion is not proof," said Lord Penrith coldly.

"I can give you proof," she said. "All the world—that is, all the fashionable world of London—knows and will remember the terrible scandal about Lady G—"

She was young and beautiful; her husband was many years older than herself, she had three little daughters—baby girls. Sir Vane was a young man then, handsome enough to win the heart of any woman—he won hers; he took the poor, hapless lady from her husband, her children and her home. She gave up all the world for him. He tired of her in a few months. The love that was to have been immortal died, as withered love always does, and she has been lost ever since. Do you call that a folly or a crime, Lord Penrith?"

"A crime," he answered, in a loud, clear voice; but Lady Penrith laid her gentle hand on his husband's shoulder, and cried out—"You are right," said Valerie; "it was a crime. No honorable man could ever give his daughter to a man whose hands were red with the heart's blood of another woman. There are people in the world," she continued, "who profess to think lightly of such things, and will tell you that a young man must sow his wild oats. You are not one of those, Lord Penrith?"

"I am not," he replied, proudly.

"I thought not. I pass over many such stories I have heard, and I will relate the one I know myself to be true, and in which I must, unfortunately, take a part."

Lord Penrith laid his hand caressingly on the gentle head of his wife. It was some comfort that whatever they had to bear, they could bear it better together.

"I have told you," continued Valerie, "that I lived with my aunt, Madame d'Envers, in the Chateau Bellefleur, and that it was her habit during the spring and summer to let part of the castle and the grounds. I think it is about five years since a young Englishman wrote to her, signing himself 'Heriot,' and saying that he would like to take the chateau, not for a few months, but for a year or two. There was only himself, his wife, and their servants. The terms he offered were so liberal that my aunt said at once she had to do with the rich English who did not count money. They agreed, and the Englishman brought his wife, and settled down comfortably at the chateau."

"They must have been enormously rich, as my aunt said, for they spent no luxury; they had everything in the wide world they wished; carriages, horses; they went where they would, and did as they would. When I went, as usual, to spend some months at her chateau, I found my aunt enchanted with her lodgers, above all with the fair, beautiful girl they called Mrs. Heriot."

"They must have been enormously rich, as my aunt said, for they spent no luxury; they had everything in the wide world they wished; carriages, horses; they went where they would, and did as they would. When I went, as usual, to spend some months at her chateau, I found my aunt enchanted with her lodgers, above all with the fair, beautiful girl they called Mrs. Heriot."

"It was only natural that I should be very much with them; we were all young, and Mr. Heriot, one of the most charming and fascinating of men—no one could resist him. I did not think at first there was anything strange in the matter; it seemed to me quite natural that a young husband, devoted as Mr. Heriot was to his wife, would naturally prefer the beautiful solitude of Bellefleur to crowded places, where he would have less time to spend with her. There were times when I envied her, and thought how strange it was that she should have everything, and I—nothing. She was unlike any one else; she was fair as an angel, and what was more, she had the fair, white soul of an angel. I must bear this testimony to her—that she was, without exception, the best, the purest, the most perfect woman I have ever known. She had the most spiritual soul. When I have looked at her I have often thought that her heart lived in heaven. She was so kind, so charitable, so good to the poor, so tender and loving to every one. If I tried I could not describe her; I bow to her in involuntary homage now, as I speak of her."

"At first I had no suspicion, but after a time we talked, as all girls do, about love and marriage. My suspicions were first aroused when I found that she had not been married in a church."

"I need not go through the details, nor weary you by telling you how I found out the truth, and the truth was shocking and revealing."

"Mr. Heriot, whom you know as Sir Vane and Lord Kelso, had most cruelly deceived this girl. She was as innocent as an angel, and he had taken advantage of her innocence. He had deceived her in the most heartless fashion, and while she believed herself to be his wife, she was no more married to him than I, Lord Penrith, am married to you."

"A low wall from Lady Penrith, and again her husband soothed her with loving words.

"Do not forget that we have heard only one side to every question. Let us wait before we judge."

"You shall have every chance of judging," said Valerie; "you shall bring us face to face."

CHAPTER LXVI

Husband and wife looked still at each other—what was to be done?

"I do not ask a favor that you should sum non him," she said; "I demand it as a right. I appeal to you, bring her this man who has spoiled my life, and see how he meets the charges made against him."

Lord Penrith rang the bell and unlocked the door. Lord Kelso if he will come here," he said to the servant-man, and again there was a pause.

Valerie would have continued talking, but Lord Penrith said: "There will be no need now for another word until he comes."

Then he drew Lady Penrith away from the table to the other end of the room, and the two stood in earnest conversation together.

Under the same roof and at the same time two other scenes were taking place full of interest.

Agatha, who knew that Valerie was with Lord and Lady Penrith, was almost mad with suspense. Was it about her and about Vane that she was there? It must be one or the other. What would happen? Would she be sent away in disgrace, or would anything go wrong with Beatrice and Lord Kelso?

"I would rather die myself," she said, "than anything should happen to Beatrice." She tried to attend to the children's lessons, but it was impossible; she could not even hear what they said; all her heart, thought, and interest were with Valerie. What was she doing?—what was she saying? She could not bear it. She left the lessons and the children to their fate and went to her own room; while Lord Kelso and Beatrice, having half an hour to spare, had found their way into the music room. There was no fear of interruption, no fear of intruders, and happy Beatrice enjoyed half an hour with her stately lover.

"Oh, love, if you were only here, beside me in this mellow light. And all the ways be choked with snow, 'T would be a true Arabian night,"

sang Beatrice, and Lord Kelso, smiling at the clear young voice and pretty words, said: "I am here, Beatrice—you have not the one love I suppose."

"Only one," said the girl, raising her eyes to his, "and I shall never have another—you and you only. One life will not be enough to love you in."

If life, with a sharp pang of pain, how unworthy he was of this sweet, girlish idyl. When he was with Beatrice, as with Agatha, he always wished himself a better man.

"My little love," he whispered, "I wish I were more worthy of your love, but I will do my best to make you very happy."

"I could be anything else but happy," she said. "I should be happy if even I love you once each day, but to be with you every day, and all day long, is too much happiness to bear thinking about. I say to myself often it can never be true, I cannot realize it. When you have been staying here and go away again, it is just as though sunlight changed to darkest night. I am to live in days in brightest sunshine, am I not?"

"Yes, always, my darling," he said.

Just then a footman came to the door with a message that Lord Penrith would be much obliged if Lord Kelso would go to him at once, he wanted to see him.

"That is unkind," said Beatrice, "just the only few minutes I have to spend with you. If papa knew how cruel it was he would never have sent for you."

She smiled as he whispered some loving words to her, and no one living ever saw the same smile on her face again.

He went, wondering what particular business the earl could have with him just before dinner, and regretted that he had not spent the half hour with Beatrice—it was too bad. He had no more idea of what awaited him than a laughing child has of grim death.

"Come in!" said Lord Penrith, who was longing to be able to speak his mind, but who was restrained by prudence for a time.

Lord Kelso went in. They knew he was guilty, and that she had spoken the truth, when they saw his face—as it looked when his eyes fell upon her.

Lord Penrith left his wife's side, and advanced to meet him.

"I want you, Lord Kelso," he said. "This lady, Mademoiselle d'Envers, has come here expressly to make certain charges against you. I would not believe them, but she challenged me to bring you face to face with her."

The woman loved him—her face changed, paled, grew crimson, and quivered; her eyes glowed and darkened.

Lord Kelso, who had quickly recovered his self-possession, turned to her with a look, which she returned.

"This is your vengeance," he said.

"Yes," she replied, "this is my vengeance."

"Will you answer some questions, Lord Kelso," she said, "questions which I shall ask on your honor as a gentleman?"

He looked contemptuously at her, but made no reply.

"Is the story told of you and Lady G—true or not?" she asked.

"Of what consequence can it be to you?" he replied. "I would not condescend to answer you."

"No! I felt sure that you would speak the truth; if not, Lord Penrith, who wishes to know the truth, had better put the question himself."